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The Mysterious Affair at Styles

Agatha Christie · *1920 · original English text*

The intense interest aroused by what was known as the Styles Case has somewhat subsided, and Arthur Hastings, invalided home from the Front, sets down what happened in an Essex country house. Christie's first novel introduces Hercule Poirot. The hosted text is complete.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

Who killed the mistress of Styles, and what can a small, precise Belgian refugee see that a loyal friend cannot?

"The intense interest aroused in the public by what was known at the time as "The Styles Case" has now somewhat subsided."
Arthur Hastings · The opening of Chapter I, "I Go to Styles"

A country-house household, a new marriage, a quarrel, strychnine, and a trial: the first Poirot novel is a classic closed puzzle. This is Christie's original English, PG #863. The opening is exact, including the quotation marks around "The Styles Case." The book ends with a last exchange and THE END. A mystery for a wide older band; a poisoning and a wartime convalescence, taught without cheap thrill. Do not reveal the murderer on the map.

KEY CHARACTERS

Hercule Poirot
The Belgian refugee whose method solves the Styles Case; his first novel appearance.

Arthur Hastings
The narrator, invalided home from the Front, loyal and not always clear-sighted.

the household at Styles
The widow, the new marriage, and the family among whom the crime occurs.

the official inquiry
Inquest, police, and a trial that may run ahead of the truth.

THE STYLES CASE

> *"The intense interest aroused in the public by what was known at the time as "The Styles Case" has now somewhat subsided."*
> **Arthur Hastings** · Chapter I

Grades 7–12
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01
I Go to Styles
CHAPTER I

Hastings, invalided home, is invited to Styles Court. The house already has its tensions: a widow, a new husband, stepsons, and a visitor's eye.

- The first sentence is exact, including 'The Styles Case' in quotation marks.
- Hastings is the friend and the narrator, not the detective.
- The wartime convalescence is the frame, not a separate plot.

> *"The intense interest aroused in the public by what was known at the time as "The Styles Case" has now somewhat subsided."*
> **Arthur Hastings** · Chapter I

02
A Household, and a Night
THE DAYS BEFORE THE DEATH

Routines, a quarrel, a locked room in a manner of speaking, and the night of the tragedy. The facts must be kept straight.

- Christie is already exact about times, cups, and doors.
- Do not turn the map into a spoiler sheet.
- The household's money and marriages are part of the motive-world.

03
Poirot Investigates
THE INQUIRY

A small Belgian, a refugee in the village, is asked to look. Order, method, and the little grey cells enter English detection.

- This is Poirot's first appearance in a novel; keep his manner as this text gives it.
- Hastings's guesses are part of the design.
- Inquests and rumours follow; the public case is not the same as the truth.

04
A Trial, and a Tightening
THE LATER CHAPTERS

An arrest, a courtroom, and the sense that the obvious is not enough. Poirot is not finished.

- A first mystery may still surprise; do not name the culprit here.
- The legal turn is a stage, not the last word.
- War-time England remains the weather of the book.

05
A Last Exchange
THE CLOSE

The case is laid out, and Hastings is left with a human remainder as well as a solved puzzle. The hosted text ends at THE END.

- The solution belongs to a first reading, not to a map.
- The last talk of hunting again is this edition's farewell.
- A clean, complete first Poirot, for a wide older band; a poisoning taught without cheap thrill.

A Closed Puzzle · Method · A Country House · Friendship · Wartime England

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 7–12

1. The hosted text is Agatha Christie's original English (Project Gutenberg #863), complete, ending at THE END. The opening is exact: "The intense interest aroused in the public by what was known at the time as "The Styles Case" has now somewhat subsided." Quote this page.
2. This is the first Hercule Poirot novel. Do not name the murderer on the map. A poisoning and a wartime convalescence, for a wide older band, taught without cheap thrill.
3. The first chapter is titled "I Go to Styles." This is not The Murder on the Links (a later book on the site); keep the plots distinct.

Quotations are verbatim from the original English text, Project Gutenberg #863, The Mysterious Affair at Styles, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/the-mysterious-affair-at-styles/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.