



## The Double Clue and other Hercule Poirot Stories by Agatha Christie



### About the book

A man is found shot in a locked room. A wealthy banker disappears while posting a letter. A thief vanishes with a haul of rubies and emeralds. And, in the golden sands of Egypt, the men who discovered an ancient tomb are dying one by one . . . Hercule Poirot, the fussy Belgian detective with the egg-shaped head and neat and tidy moustache, solved some of the world's most puzzling crimes. This book contains four of the very best stories, selected by John Curran, author of *Agatha Christie's Secret Notebooks*, and Sophie Hannah, who wrote the brand new Hercule Poirot novel, *The Monogram Murders*.

### About the author

**Agatha Christie** is known throughout the world as the Queen of Crime. Her books have sold over a billion copies in English with another billion in foreign languages. She is the most widely published author of all time, outsold only by the Bible and Shakespeare. She is the author of 80 crime novels and short story collections, 19 plays, and six novels written under the name Mary Westmacott.

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Here is a range of activities to try as you read the book. See the key at the bottom of the page to explain the symbols we've used.

## Before reading



- What do you know about Agatha Christie?
- What would you expect from an Agatha Christie book or story?
- What do you know about Hercule Poirot?
- What does the cover make you think about?



- Do an internet search, visit your nearest library and/or talk to other people to see what you can find out about the life and writing of Agatha Christie.  
Prepare some notes and, if you are in a group, present your findings to the group. See what else others have found.



- Read Sophie Hannah's 'Introduction'. Highlight, underline or copy out the sentences that you feel capture the main messages of this introduction.  
Now try to identify one sentence that captures *the most important* point.  
If you can, talk to someone else about the sentence you have chosen and why.  
Does this sentence make you want to read on in this collection? Why or why not?

## KEY



### After reading pages 1–13



- Who is the narrator of this story, the 'I'?
- Who are the other characters? Make a list of the characters, who they are and what you have found out about each.



- Imagine you are Captain Hastings. Write a letter to your elderly mother telling her about this case and your suspicions so far.
- Now, imagine you are Poirot. You find this letter lying around and read it. Do you agree with Hastings's ideas or not? What do you think happened?



- What "puzzles" Poirot at the bottom of page 13?

### After reading the rest



- What does "blackmail" mean on page 15?
- Who was blackmailing whom and why?



- At the top of page 16 Poirot writes a note and sends it by "special messenger." Who do you think he was writing to and what did he say?
- Write his note. Try to use the kind of language that you think Poirot would use. If you are in a group, pass it to someone else to read.



- Go back and try to find the place in the story where Poirot first figures out what happened.



- Imagine you are Poirot. You are sitting at a table with Hastings and Japp. Explain to them what happened to Mr Protheroe and how you solved the case. If you are in a group, ask other people to pretend to be Hastings and Japp and ask you questions.



- Does Poirot like tea? What makes you think this?

### KEY

### After reading pages 19–38



- Who is John Curran, writer of the introduction to this story (p. 19)?  
Use the internet or a library to see what you can find out about John Curran.
- What does John Curran mean by *an armchair detective*? Can you think of any *armchair detectives*? And any detectives who are definitely not armchair detectives? (If you have read *Too Good to be True*, is Perez an armchair detective?)



- What do you think about Poirot's categories of disappearances on page 22? Is there anything missing?
- What do you think happened? Start writing a newspaper article about this disappearance. Compare with others.



- Draw a map tracking Mr Davenheim's movements, showing exactly where he was from the moment he caught the 12.40 train from Victoria to Chingside.



- On page 38, Poirot receives a telegram. Read this out loud.  
Poirot then says "All is solved!"  
How did the telegram help Poirot solve the mystery?

### After reading the rest



- Add to or change your map now that we have the full story. Share with someone else.



- Write down the story of Mr Davenheim's disappearance in 100 words.  
OR
- Go back and revise your earlier newspaper article.



- Look back at the introduction on page 19. Which "part of Mrs Davenheim's adventure will be very familiar to modern readers"?

#### KEY

### After reading pages 45–57



- On page 47 we learn that “the word *publicity* occurred regularly in Mr Hardman’s conversation.” What does this tell us about Mr Hardman?
- Are there certain words that ‘occur (very) regularly’ in your conversation, or in the conversation of people you know? Talk about some examples.



- On page 48 we learn that the emerald necklace once belonged to Catherine dé Medici. Use the internet, your library or people you know to find out whatever you can about Catherine dé Medici. What does this tell us about the necklace?



- In these pages we learn that Lady Runcorn’s aunt was a “kleptomaniac”. *Scan* through this first part of the story to find the word “kleptomaniac”.
- Do you know what this means? If not, look it up in a dictionary.
- Do you know any kleptomaniacs? How do they explain their behaviour?



- Read through these pages and find some of the *adjectives* used to describe Mr Hardman, Mr Johnson, Lady Runcorn, Bernard Parker or Countess Rossakoff (or all five characters).
- Use these (and other words!) to write a short description of one or all of these characters.
- Think or talk about which famous actors or actresses you would choose to play these characters in a film of this story. Talk through your choices.



- Who do you think stole the jewels? Why?

### After reading the rest



- Look back at the introduction on page 45. *Is* it “Russian grammar that leads to Poirot solving the mystery”? Why or why not?
- At the very bottom of page 62 Poirot says that Rossakoff is “a remarkable woman” and that he thinks he will meet her again. Why does he say this? And do *you* think she is “remarkable”? How else would you describe her?

#### KEY

### After reading pages 63–83



- How long has it been since this story was first published? Show how you worked this out.



- John Curran's introduction states the places (outside of Britain) where Poirot has solved mysteries. Find these on a map or globe.
- Have you been to any of these places? Talk to other people to see if you can find someone who has visited each and ask them what they remember.



- What does it mean to say a tomb was "cursed"?  
Do you believe in curses? Do you know any stories about curses?



- Write your own story about a curse. This could be a story you have heard or a story you are making up yourself.
- Make a *mind-map* or *spider-gram* of all the characters we have met so far in this story and what we know about them.



- What do you think caused each of these deaths? Why do you think so?
- What is happening to Poirot at the bottom of page 83?

### After reading the rest



- Imagine you are Captain Hastings. Write in your diary. Write about what happened and how Poirot solved this mystery. Include as much detail as you like.



- Use a library, the internet or a museum to find out as much as you can about Ancient Egyptian "belief and thought" (see page 88). Make notes.  
Use your notes to write a short article or blog, or tell others about what you have found out.

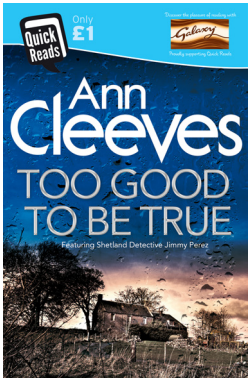
#### KEY

## After reading the book...

These are some questions to think about individually or as a group

- Have these stories made you want to read more Agatha Christie? Why or why not?
- What can you say about Poirot and Hasting's friendship? Do they like each other? Are they both kind to each other?
- Why do you think Hercule Poirot is such a popular detective?
- How is Poirot similar to, and different from, Jimmy Perez (from *Too Good To Be True*)? How is the *atmosphere* of the Poirot stories different from the *atmosphere* of the Perez book?
- If you were going to write a series of detective books and had to invent a detective, what would he or she be like?

If you liked this, you might enjoy...



## Continuing your reading journey

As well as Quick Reads, The Reading Agency runs lots of programmes to help keep you reading.

**Reading Ahead** invites you to pick six reads and record your reading in a diary in order to get a certificate. If you're thinking about improving your reading or would like to read more, then this is for you. Find out more at [www.readingahead.org.uk](http://www.readingahead.org.uk)

**World Book Night** is an annual celebration of reading and books on 23 April, which sees passionate volunteers give out books in their communities to share their love of reading. Find out more at [worldbooknight.org](http://worldbooknight.org)

Reading together with a child will help them to develop a lifelong love of reading. Our **Chatterbooks** children's reading groups and **Summer Reading Challenge** inspire children to read more and share the books they love. Find out more at [www.readingagency.org.uk/children](http://www.readingagency.org.uk/children)

### KEY

## Notes for practitioners

These resources have been designed for those reading Quick Reads independently, as well as for those using Quick Reads in a group.

As practitioners, you could therefore refer your students to these resources as independent study material, or use them with groups in the classroom. We have included activities focussed on discussion and reflection, close reading, writing, ICT, maths and other ways to explore a topic or theme.

Quick Reads have been created specifically for adults who are less confident in their reading, who may not see themselves as readers or who may feel that it has been a long time since they have read. They will also appeal to younger people who feel daunted by reading their first book. Quick Reads, and these materials, aim to develop lifelong reading habits.

In the terms of the English Adult Literacy Core Curriculum levels, Quick Reads are often seen as suitable for those at Entry 3, Level 1 or Level 2. Adult literacy or functional skills English learners below Entry 3 are likely to find them too challenging (as may some Entry 3 learners), but everyone is different, so it is always worth having a look.

ESOL learners - those learning or developing their English as an additional language - often find Quick Reads a helpful introduction to reading books in English and a useful way to develop vocabulary and awareness of language structures. Quick Reads are frequently used by ESOL teachers teaching at Entry 3 or above. What works with individual learners will depend on the learners and the particular books.

Quick Reads could potentially be used with a range of groups and levels, depending of course on how you use them. It is worth remembering that Quick Reads are authentic texts - real books written by real authors - and so can be particularly motivating for adult learners. However, the needs, strengths and interests between and within groups vary (whether your group is a Functional Skills English class, an adult literacy class, a GCSE class or an ESOL class) and so at times you may want to adjust the language, as well as adapt and play around with the ideas. You may find that you prefer some activities to others and that you will want to rework them for your particular group(s) and context(s).

We hope that if you do use these with your students, you try things out that you haven't tried before, and let us - and your colleagues - know what worked well and not so well.

Email us at [quickreads@readingagency.org.uk](mailto:quickreads@readingagency.org.uk)

To find out more about **Quick Reads**, visit [www.readingagency.org.uk/quickreads](http://www.readingagency.org.uk/quickreads)

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