

# UNIT 14

## AGATHA CHRISTIE

(1890–1976)



### BEFORE YOU READ

Agatha Christie was a famous mystery writer. Even today, long after her death, she is one of the most popular writers in the world.

Discuss these questions with a partner.

1. What are mystery stories about?
2. What are some famous mystery television shows or movies?
3. Look at the picture of Agatha Christie. What can you say about her?

Now read about Agatha Christie.

# AGATHA CHRISTIE

Agatha Christie is often called the “Queen of Crime.” But Christie was not a thief or a murderer. She was a very respectable woman. She earned this title because she wrote some of the most popular mysteries and **detective stories** in the world.

Agatha was born in 1890 in Devonshire, England. As a child, she loved to hear and tell stories. Agatha never went to school, but she was very **bright**. She loved books and taught herself to read before she was five years old.

Agatha wrote her first short story when she was 18 years old. Her first **novel**, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, was published in 1920. By then, she was married to Archibald Christie. Soon after, she wrote four more popular novels. In 1926, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* was published. Some people didn’t like it because an unusual character was the murderer. Others called it one of the greatest detective stories of all time. It was the book that made her famous.

Christie was very successful. But her marriage was unhappy. Her husband, Archibald, was in love with a woman named Nancy Neele, and Agatha was devastated. She was also upset because some people didn’t like her new book. On December 3, 1926, Agatha Christie did something very mysterious. She got into her car, drove away, and disappeared. Someone found her car the next day. Christie’s coat was on the seat and the car lights were on. For ten days, thousands of police officers and volunteers looked for her. The newspapers wrote stories about the real-life mystery of the mystery writer.

On the eleventh day, someone found Christie at a hotel. She was talking with other guests and acting very normal. She

said her name was Teresa Neele, the same last name as her husband’s lover! Christie never explained her actions, but she and her husband got divorced a short time later. In 1930, she married Max Mallowan. He was an archeologist, a scientist who studies ancient cultures. He was 14 years younger than she was. They were very happy together. Christie once said, “It’s wonderful to be married to an archeologist—the older you get, the more interested he is in you.”

Christie tried to write a novel for Christmas each year. She wrote for over 50 years and produced a **remarkable** amount of work. She wrote 66 novels, 15 plays, and 157 short stories. Once, one of Christie’s books saved someone’s life. A little girl was very sick. The doctors tried everything, but she only got worse. One of the girl’s nurses was reading Christie’s mystery story *The Pale Horse*. In the story, the murderer kills his **victim** with a poison called thallium. The victim’s **symptoms** described in the book were like the little girl’s symptoms. The nurse thought, “Did this little girl **swallow** thallium?” She told the doctors about the **case**. They tried a new medicine and saved the girl’s life.

Agatha Christie liked to write stories about two detectives. Their names were Miss Marple and Hercule Poirot. Miss Marple is a quiet, unmarried woman who lives in a small village. She notices everything that happens. She is very bright and always solves the crimes before the police do. Hercule Poirot is a retired Belgian detective. He has a very good opinion of himself and is very neat and meticulous. Readers loved the characters of Miss Marple and Hercule Poirot and always wanted to read their next cases.

Sometime in the 1940s, Christie wrote the last cases for Miss Marple and Hercule Poirot. Readers wanted more of these stories, so Christie asked for the books to be published after she died. She died on January 12, 1976. Both books became immediate best sellers.

Agatha Christie's books have sold over a billion copies in English and another billion in over 45 other languages. Her books still continue to sell. She is now the most popular British author in the world and the fifth best selling author of all time. That is why some call her the "Queen of Crime."

## VOCABULARY

### ◆ MEANING

What is the best meaning of the underlined words? Circle the letter of the correct answer.

1. Agatha Christie wrote detective stories.  
a. untrue stories about faraway places      b. love stories with a happy ending      c. stories where someone tries to solve a crime
2. In a mystery story, there is usually a murderer and a victim.  
a. person who is hurt or killed in a crime      b. person who helps with a crime      c. person who sees a crime
3. Agatha was very bright as a child.  
a. intelligent      b. serious      c. well mannered
4. Miss Marple always solved the case before the police did.  
a. story that people talk about      b. money problem      c. situation that the police investigate
5. Christie produced a remarkable number of stories.  
a. common      b. unusual      c. small
6. The victim's symptoms were like the little girl's symptoms.  
a. things that make someone feel better      b. things that are sad      c. things that show that someone might be sick
7. The nurse wondered if the girl swallowed thallium.  
a. touched it with her hand      b. smelled it and breathed it in      c. put it in her mouth and down her throat
8. Christie wrote a novel for Christmas each year.  
a. story which is not true      b. true story about a real person      c. book with short stories