

Death on the Nile

مرگ بر روی رودخانه نیل

Agatha Christie
آگاتا کریستی

مترجم: محمدصادق شریعتی



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Introduction

'She cares too much, that little one,' Poirot said to himself. 'It is not safe. No, it is not safe.'

Early in this extremely popular mystery story, Agatha Christie's most famous detective, Hercule Poirot, 'observes an imbalance in the relationship between two young lovers in a London restaurant. He fears — and we, the readers, fear with him — that there is danger ahead. From the beginning of the novel, the author carefully builds a complicated plot that mixes murder and love, theft and politics. We are presented with an exciting adventure story that, like all great murder mysteries, keeps us guessing until the final pages. Look for clues as you read, but be prepared for more than a few surprises!

Born in the town of Torquay in the south of England on 15 September 1890, Dame¹ Agatha Christie was the leading British writer of mystery novels during her lifetime, and has remained extraordinarily popular since her death in 1976. Her books have been translated into many languages, and her play *The Mousetrap* has run continuously in London for more than fifty years. How did she become such an amazing and long-lasting success?

As a child, Agatha Christie was given the freedom to discover the world and her talent. She was educated at home, taught herself to read, and could choose her own books and form her own ideas. At the age of sixteen she went to her first formal school, in Paris, to complete her education.

Later in life Dame Agatha said that she had not planned to be a writer, but by the time she was eleven years old she had already

1. Dame: a title given to a woman as a special honour for her work

had a poem printed in the local newspaper, and before she was twenty several more of her poems had been published in *The Poetry Review* and she had written a number of short stories.

In 1914 the First World War began and Agatha married Archibald Christie. She worked in a hospital during the war, and from this experience she gained knowledge of poisons. This proved useful when she started writing detective stories: forty-one of her novels and twenty-four short stories contain murder by poison. At about the same time as the Christies' only child, Rosalind, was born in 1919, Agatha's sister encouraged her to begin a serious writing career. She recognised Agatha's ability and dared her to write a mystery novel.

The young writer decided that she needed a detective and, as in the war-time hospital, she noticed details in the world around her. At the time her home town was full of former First World War officers and soldiers from Belgium and Agatha decided that one of them would make the perfect model for Hercule Poirot. He starred in her first detective novel, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* (1920).

Over the years Agatha Christie wrote about several different detectives, but Poirot had no equal in the hearts of her readers until she created Miss Marple, based partly on her own grandmother. She did not plan to put Miss Marple into a series of books, but the public loved her and she eventually appeared in twelve Christie novels and twenty short stories. Agatha Christie wrote no fewer than sixty-six detective novels and several plays in addition to the record-breaking *The Mousetrap*, as well as six novels using the name Mary Westmacott. Her extraordinary success was the result of a simple method: Christie wrote about the world she knew, noticing every detail about real, ordinary people and places. An idea for a new novel could come into her head when she was taking a walk or shopping for a new hat; she filled

dozens of notebooks with ideas, plots and characters. She was, as her grandson Mathew Prichard has described her, 'a person who listened more than she talked, who saw more than she was seen.'

Agatha Christie's other great interest was the Middle East, which she learned to love when she began travelling with her second husband, Max Mallowan, in the 1930s. She loved the desert, where she and Max studied the lives of ancient peoples. She helped with these serious explorations and also used the places in some of her favourite books, especially in *Death on the Nile*, *Murder in Mesopotamia* and *They Came to Baghdad*. She wrote enthusiastically about her travels in this part of the world in the book that ended her long writing career: the story of her own life, which came out the year after her death.

Towards the end of their careers, both Agatha Christie and Max Mallowan were honoured by the British government for their work. Agatha became a Dame in 1971. This honour came from a nation that was grateful for her entertaining stories, and also for the fact that she helped to define the English character and way of life for the rest of the world.

Death on the Nile brings together many of the best features of an Agatha Christie novel: murder, a colourful foreign background, a group of interesting suspects, and a surprising solution by the amazing Monsieur Hercule Poirot. It is not surprising that Dame Agatha's detective novels continue to charm and entertain millions of readers around the world. The popularity of her stories goes beyond the printed page. There have been many television and film productions of her mysteries, and there is even a very popular computer game based on *Death on the Nile*. Doubtless Agatha Christie's stories will continue to excite readers and audiences for many, many years.