

ETC Book Review

Book Title: The Murder of Roger Ackroyd

Author: Agatha Christie

Additional details: Book Acc No. - 141825

Introduction:

The Murder of Roger Ackroyd is a marvelous piece of literature. Agatha Christie is famed for her detective and crime novels, and after discovering one of her thrilling ‘unputdownable’ crime books, “And Then There Were None”, it made me inclined to try out yet another one of her mysteries. Well, another fact that drove me to take one of her books is this quote:

“The eye is always caught by light, but shadows have more to say.” -by Gregory Maguire, voicing the intrinsic nature of life and its importance to develop a detective outlook to life as well.

As I collected this book from the library, after that fateful ETC class, I had no qualms that this book was going to take me on a roller coaster ride of emotions and in a way was going to help me improve my grammar, sentence formation and add to my vocabulary (well, its a fact; her books are like that!). Added to the hope of being wrapped in mystery, being a silent observer, making connections and detective trails on my own.

Summary:

The book opens on an ominous note - The sudden death of Mrs. Ferrars, a widowed neighbor of the narrator Dr. Sheppard. We’re also introduced to his curious and overly enthusiastic sister, Caroline, who serves as a local gossip hub- a blabbermouth on one end yet undeniably charismatic and cunning when it comes to extracting information.

The story unfolds in a quiet English village of King’s Abbot, at one of the well-famed houses, Fernly Park, belonging to a country squire, Roger Ackroyd, his relatives, and Ralph, his adopted son. Then, fast forward to the night, just a few hours before Ackroyd’s murder, where Ralph Paton, who seems unusually tense and withdrawn on the night of the tragedy, utters the mysterious line: *“I’ve got to play a lone hand.”*

That very evening, Dr. Sheppard dines at Fernly Park. After dinner, the guests go their separate ways. On his walk back, the doctor encounters a strange man heading toward Fernly Park but doesn’t think much of it. Later that night, he receives a chilling phone call —

allegedly from the butler Parker — reporting that Roger Ackroyd has been murdered. But soon, it's revealed that Parker never made that call...

Then we are introduced to the legendary, the one and only Hercule Poirot, now retired and living quietly in the village. Alongside Inspector Raglan, Colonel Melrose, Major Blunt, Raymond, and yes — Dr. Sheppard himself — they start off with interviews and sketching the possibilities. Poirot begins his signature style of investigation: calm, calculated, and peppered with those famous “little grey cells.”

Suspicious fall on Ralph, who's mysteriously gone missing, and Parker, whose behavior seems questionable. Through small yet significant discoveries by the legendary Poirot and now his trusted “sidekick” Dr. Sheppard, they discuss, contemplate, and divulge information in secret and connect the puzzles one by one, matching the suspect.

What follows is a masterfully woven web of clues, red herrings, and psychological tension... and then comes the final, jaw-dropping reveal.

So, who did it?
You'll have to read the book to find out! 🤔

Analysis and Opinion

The book was well-rounded in all aspects, dealing with intrigue, confusion, a well-set plot, and crime references. The tailored and well-articulated character sketch of each character was developed through conversations, viewpoints, actions, and unspoken emotions. The entirety of the book was similar to investigating a crime scene yourself, shining an inner-detective among all of us as readers. The storyline and plot were extremely well-written and kept the readers going even when they had other work to do. :)

However, I felt that the description of each individual's character from the narrator's point of view kept the discussion quite one-sided and left little room for extended imagination. There are quite a few seemingly dry and dismissive parts, causing us to overlook key details and many characters, alibis, timelines, psychological wordplay, and small clues, making the mystery difficult to follow and requiring multiple re-reads. However, that just enhances the mystery and makes the book more rewarding in a sense.

Flora, the niece of Roger Ackroyd, stood out to me as a particularly intriguing yet compelling figure in the story and the plot. At first glance, she comes across as overly dramatic, playing into the role of the delicate, emotional young woman. However, it quickly becomes clear that her flair for drama masks a clever and calculated side—a hidden weapon no one quite expects (I didn't either!). What fascinated me was how she used this carefully crafted image to her advantage, managing to gain sympathy and trust

while concealing her actions. Her facade isn't just for show; it's a survival mechanism in a world where appearances often matter more than truth.

One lesson the book conveys can be poetically put up in the form of a saying from Frank Herbert's *Dune*: "The mystery of life isn't a problem to solve. A process cannot be understood by stopping it. Understanding must move with the flow of the process, must join it and flow with it." This quote speaks volumes about the investigation tactics utilized by Poirot to narrow down the suspects. Rather than stopping at each clue, he sees behavioral pattern changes over time, letting people reveal themselves either directly or indirectly. Another example is Flora's confession about not seeing her uncle at the time she said she had — it's a key example of how the *process* of events unfolds and how people change their stories as pressure builds.

Direct speech reference: Caroline said, "Mark my words, something is going on between Mrs. Ferrars and Roger Ackroyd."

Indirect speech reference: Dr. Sheppard explained that he had found the door locked and had called for Parker.

Personal Connection:

The book "*The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*" truly made me rethink how I view people and situations in everyday/day-to-day life. The book traverses deep psychology, and that's exactly what left a lasting impact on me. It made me rethink how I perceive people in everyday life — how easily trust can be misplaced and how guilt can drive someone to act out in the most unexpected ways. Poirot's methods made me reflect on how to pick up on subtle lies, not by what people say but by how they say it — their actions often speak louder than their words.

Poirot's hypothesis of 'Observation is the key' made me aware of how to pick up on inconsistencies — the nervous glances, the overexplained stories, the small things that don't quite add up. In life, people often reveal more through what they don't say. It taught me to listen not just with our ears but with intuition.

The story drove home the idea that trust is a double-edged sword — while it brings people closer, it can also blind us to the truth. The murderer's ability to pull the wool over everyone's eyes for so long shocked me and made me realize how important it is to stay observant and not take things at face value.

Another viewpoint discussed in the story is how consistent support and trust can break down walls, allowing hidden truths to come out. However, what really stood out to me was how the mystery wasn't just about figuring out who did it — it had a lot of emotions running underneath. The way people hid their true selves, struggled with their

own thoughts, and how relationships played a role made the story so much deeper than a simple crime novel.

Conclusion:

The book *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* is far more than just a detective story — it's a mind game, a battle against our own senses: what we see and hear versus what we're meant to notice. The unexpected twists will leave you speechless for days. Christie's clever use of deception, with small yet meaningful hints dropped in the most surprising places, makes the story all the more enthralling.

I definitely recommend this book to all avid readers — even those who haven't explored crime or detective novels before. It's a cleverly crafted masterpiece that will spin your mind and keep you thinking long after it ends. If you're someone who enjoys uncovering reasons, loves a challenge of quick wit, or has an interest in psychology, this book will deeply resonate with you.

Well, that's for my review; Do read the book so that you don't miss out on one of the thriller