Answer the following :

1. Describe the setting of the house of Monkswell Manor and the elements of the Great hall.

The house does not give the look of an ancient house. It has tall windows up Centre with two arches opening up, one to Right and one to Left. Up left is the door to the library. Down Left the door to the dining room and to right is an open fireplace. The hall is furnished as a living room. The curtains and furniture are shabby and old fashioned. There is a combined desk and bookcase Left, with a radio and a telephone on it and a chair beside it. There is another chair up Right Centre by the window, a Canterbury containing newspapers and magazines by the fireplace. A table lamp stands on the sofa table.

1. What happens when the curtain rises in the beginning of Act 1 Scene 1?

When the curtain rises in the beginning of Act 1 Scene 1, there is a complete darkness on the stage. The music fades and gives place to a sharp whistle of the tune of ‘Three Blind Mice’. Then a woman’s loud scream is heard, followed by a mixture of male and female voices. Then a police whistle sounds followed by several other police whistles, all of which slowly go silent.

1. Who was murdered in the start of the play and where did the murder take place? Describe the person whom did the police want to interview in connection with this murder?

The murdered woman was a Mrs. Maureen Lyon. According to Scotland Yard the crime took place at twenty-four Culver Street, Paddington. In connection with the murder, the police warned to interrogate a man seen in the neighbourhood. The man was seen wearing a dark overcoat, light scarf and a soft felt hat.

1. Who is Mrs. Barlow?

Mrs. Barlow is the caretaker and housekeeper of Monkswell Manor.

1. Describe Mollie Ralston and Giles? What is their relation? What is Mollie’s connection to Monkswell manor and how does she manage it?

Mollie Ralston is a tall, beautiful and young woman with naïve looks, and is in her twenties. Giles is a rather proud attractive young man in his twenties. They are husband and wife. Mollie has inherited Monkswell manor from her aunt, and runs it as a guest house along with Giles.

1. What was Giles complaining about?

Giles had to go to the village to get a chicken-netting, but the one he got was not the right type of netting. He went to another store but that was completely useless. Practically a whole day was wasted. He was half frozen. The car was skidding badly. The snow was falling heavily.

1. Why does Giles say “We are rather stupids in this business”?

Giles complains about daily women employees being a nuisance because they have to do everything themselves. Mollie reminds him it is a partnership. Giles agrees as long as he doesn’t have to cook. Mollie reminds him cooking is her field and chides him for the misspelled signboard of the guest house, calling it a disaster and pointing out the mistake of the missing ‘S’. Giles reminds her to check if the rooms are ready and if she has taken the rent in advance. Mollie confirms the room allocation and says that she may have forgotten to take the rent in advance to which Giles comments and says, ”We are rather stupids in this business.”

1. What does Giles suggest regarding the managing of the guest house? What is the rent they have fixed for the guests who come there?  
   Giles suggests that they should have taken a correspondence course in Hotel keeping as they were sure to get into some trouble in some way. The rent they charge their guests is seven guineas every week.
2. Who is Christopher Wren? Describe him. What are his thoughts about Mollie Ralston?  
   Christopher Wren is a rather wild looking neurotic young man. His hair is long and untidy and he wears a woven artistic tie. He has a trusting and almost childish nature. When he meets Mollie, he says that she is not what he had imagined her to be. He had been thinking of her as the wife of a retired General of the Indian Army. He expected her to be terribly serious and Memsahibish (haughty like a Mem).
3. What is Christopher’s opinion about the interior of the house? Why does he say so?

He says that the place is quite heavenly. The desk is lovely in size and shape. However when he points at the sofa table he realizes that it was an imitation. The table looks real according to him and he declares that he is going to love the place. He also enquires about a purple upper-class mahogany sideboard with great solid carved fruits on it and later about centre mahogany table.

1. What does Christopher say to Giles about the weather? Does Giles like him? Which room is Christopher staying in?  
   Christopher says to Giles that the terrible weather takes them back to the time of Dickens, Scrooge and irritating Tiny Tim. Giles does not like him for his comments. After confirming with Mollie he takes Christopher to the Oak room where he is supposed to be staying.
2. What is Christopher’s view of people?  
   Christopher likes knowing everything about people as he says they are very interesting. Mollie replies that some are trusting and others are not. Christopher however disagrees saying that they never really know what everyone is like or what they are really thinking. He adds that the only people who really know what other people are like artists. It is probably because these artists are very inquisitive in nature and more observant. So if they are portrait painters it gets expressed on the canvas.
3. What does Christopher tell Mollie about his profession?  
   Mollie inquires if Christopher is a painter to which he replies that he is an architect. He says his parents baptized him hoping he would become an architect. He then says that his prefabricated houses may become a part of history.
4. What does Christopher say about Englishwomen?  
   According to Christopher Wren praises often embarrass them. European women accept praises as usual things, but the feminine spirit in Englishwomen is totally drained in them by their husbands. There is something very rude and unpleasant about English husbands.
5. Describe Mrs. Boyle and her luggage? What is her complaint?   
   Mrs. Boyle enters through the archway carrying a suitcase, some magazines and her gloves. She is a large impressive woman in a very bad mood. She says that it is nasty weather and her luggage is being carried by one Major Metcalf.
6. Describe Mrs. Boyle and her luggage. What is her complaint?   
   Mrs. Boyle mentions that the drive of the guesthouse is risky to drive on. She further says that they had to share a taxi from the station- and there was great difficulty in getting that. No one was instructed to receive them which should have been attended to, and the drive should have been cleared of snow.
7. What is Mrs. Boyle’s opinion of Mollie? What comments does she pass about the guesthouse?  
   Mrs. Boyle surveys Mollie with great displeasure. She then says that Mollie is too young and inexperienced to run an establishment like this. She then goes on to survey the house and comments that it is a very old house. She also worries that there may be wood ants that most people do not pay attention to, and suggests a coat of paint for the wood.
8. What does Major Metcalf say about the storm?  
   Major Metcalf says that there is a perfect snow-storm outside and they thought they would not be able to reach here. He adds that if the snow-storm were to continue then they would have five or six feet of snow by morning. He had not seen anything like it since he was on leave in nineteen forty.
9. What are the different rooms finally allocated to, Christopher Wren, Mrs. Boyle and Major Metcalf?  
   Christopher Wren is put in the Rose room, Mrs. Boyle in the Oak room and Major Metcalf in the Blue Room.
10. What is Mrs. Boyle’s query regarding the running of the guest house? What does she suggest?  
    Mrs. Boyle asks if they are finding it difficult to get servants to run the guest house. She suggests that it is essential to have proper help staff before setting up a guest house.
11. How does Mrs. Boyle express her dissatisfaction with the guest house? What does Giles recommend? What is her final decision?

Mrs. Boyle says that at her age the facilities offered by an establishment are more important than its appearance. If she had not believed that this institution was running well she would never have gone there. She thought it had all home comforts.

1. What does Giles recommend to Mrs. Boyle? What is her final decision?

Giles tells Mrs. Boyle that there is no compulsion for her to stay if she is not satisfied. If she has any wrong idea then it would be perhaps better for her to go elsewhere. He offers to call for a taxi to take her back as the roads are not yet blocked. He then states that they have had a very large number of applications for the rooms, so they should have no problem to fill her place easily. Mrs. Boyle then reacts and says that she is certainly not leaving before she has tried the place.

1. Describe Miss Casewell. What is her concern?

She is a young woman of manly shape and carries a box. She has a long dark coat, a light scarf and no hat. She enters and says in a deep manly voice that her car is stranded about half a mile down the road in a pile of snow.

1. What does Miss Casewell say about the weather? What joke does she mention? What does she say about the news?

Miss Casewell says she is in no hurry as she wants to get warmed. She mentions that according to the weather forecast heavy snowfalls are expected and motorists are warned. Giles jokes saying they can always eat their hens when asked about the food supplies to which Miss Case well jokes and says that they might have to eat each other before that and she laughs loudly.

1. What does Miss Casewell say about the news?

Miss Casewell says that the paper has the usual news about political problems and a rather sensational murder.

1. What are some of the details that the guests discuss about the murder? What is their opinion?

Christopher is interested in murder. Miss Casewell states that the murderer is possibly a person with an abnormal desire to kill. She adds that he strangled a woman somewhere near Paddington and may be a sex maniac. Giles inquires as to who the woman is to be told that it is a Mrs. Maureen Lyon.

1. What dinner do Mollie and Giles plan for the guests? What does Christopher suggest?

Mollie and Giles plan a nice dinner of minced beef and cereal, peas, and mashed potatoes. They decide on stewed figs and custard for dessert. Christopher then suggests an omelette and adding wine to the minced beef and cereals to give it a continental flavor.

1. What do Mollie and Giles think about their guests?

Mollie says that Christopher is sweet and he has put on an apron and is arranging everything but Giles expresses doubt about him. Mollie thinks that Miss Casewell is rather odd and Giles agrees. They finally agree that all their guests are rather difficult with the exception of Major Metcalf.

1. Describe Mr. Paravicini?

He is a foreigner, dark and elderly with a rather stylish moustache. He is a slightly taller version of Hercule Poirot which may give a wrong impression to the audience. He wears a heavy fur lined overcoat.

1. What problem is Mr. Paravicini facing?

Mr. Paravicini says that to hi good luck he found the guest house and an attractive hostess as his Rolls Royce, had run into a pile of snow. There was blinding snow everywhere. He did not know where he was and thought he would freeze to death.

1. What does Mr. Paravicini mention about his luggage?

Mr. Paravicini says that he took a little bag, and staggered through the snow. He says that it is nothing to bother about as he has locked the car securely and is sure no thieves will be moving about. He says his wants are simple and the little bag is his only luggage.

1. Why does Mr. Paravicini call himself an ‘uninvited guest’? How do Mollie and Giles react?

Mr. Paravicini calls himself the unexpected guest or the uninvited guest as had arrived from nowhere out of the storm. He further says that after his arrival there would be no arrivals or departures. Mollie and Giles smile weakly at this.

**ACT 1 – Scene II**

1. Describe the breakfast lunch and dinner that the guests were served? What does Mrs. Boyle comment on the same?

Mrs. Boyle says that it is dishonest not to have been informed that the guest house was newly started. Major Metcalf replies saying that everything has got to have a beginning. The breakfast was excellent with good coffee, scrambled eggs, homemade marmalade. He goes on to say that the lunch was excellent too with corned beef being disguised in red wine and that they were to be served pie for dinner. Mrs. Boyle however expresses disdain saying they are non-professionals and that there should be a proper staff.

1. What facilities did Mrs. Boyle expect according to the advertisement?

Mrs. Boyle was expecting that the place would have a comfortable writing room, and would be a much larger place altogether – with bridge and other facilities.

1. What is the opinion of Mrs. Boyle and Major Metcalf about Christopher?

Mrs. Boyle says that Christopher is a very strange young man and wonders if he is mentally unstable. Major Metcalf enquires if he escaped from a lunatic asylum. To this Mrs. Boyle says that she wouldn’t at all be surprised if it were true.

1. Briefly state the discussion between Mrs. Boyle and Miss Casewell about Mollie and her social status.

Mrs. Boyle says that Mollie is an incredible young woman who doesn’t know anything about housework. She enquires if there are any back stairs to dispose the garbage to which Miss Casewell replies that there are. Mrs. Boyle then says that all housework should always be done in the morning before lunch. Miss Casewell tells Mrs. Boyle that Mollie had to cook the lunch. Mrs. Boyle states that everything is very disorganized and non-professional, and there should be a proper staff. Miss Casewell then says that it is not that easy nowadays. Mrs. Boyle then replies that the lower classes have to finish any new business enterprise they have started with enthusiasm, thus indicating that Mollie and her husband belong to the lower classes.

1. What comparison does Mrs. Boyle between England and other countries?

Mrs. Boyle says that life is easier abroad because she thinks that the country has sadly deteriorated and is not what it used to be. She had to sell her house last year and everything was very difficult.

1. Why does Mrs. Boyle get annoyed with Miss Casewell?

Mrs. Boyle gets annoyed with Miss Casewell because she ignores her request to turn off the radio and starts to dance saying this is her favourite song and asks her to shift to the writing table to write her letters. After a while Mrs. Boyle gets angry picks up her letter and shifts to the library while cursing at Miss Casewell.

1. Why did Miss Casewell drive Mrs. Boyle away from the hall?

**Ans>** Miss Casewell wanted the chair on which Mrs. Boyle was sitting as it was the best chair in the hall. Hence Miss Casewell drove Mrs. Boyle away from the hall

1. What does Miss Casewell keep thinking about?

**Ans>** Miss Casewell keeps thinking about her past - ice on a bedroom jug, painful red swellings raw and bleeding – one thin coarse blanket – a child shivering with cold and fear.

1. Why was Mollie surprised when she picked up the phone?

**Ans>** Mollie was surprised when she picked up the phone as the call was from the Berkshire Police.

1. Why was it impossible for Superintendent Hogben to come to the manor?

**Ans>** It was impossible for Superintendent Hogben to come to the manor because they were completely snowbound.

1. What does Mollie tell Giles in a worried tone?

**Ans>** Mollie tells Giles in a worried tone that the Berkshire police were sending a sergeant or inspector over to the manor.

1. Who was the inspector be sent to the manor? What were the hosts expected to do on his arrival?

**Ans>** The inspector being sent to the manor was Sergeant Trotter. Mollie was expected to convince her husband Giles to listen carefully to him and they were both expected to follow the instructions of Sergeant Trotter upon his arrival.

1. What assumptions do Mollie and Giles make for the impending visit they are due to receive from the police?

**Ans>** Mollie says they must have doe something or ignored some regulation regarding the running of the guest house. She then thinks that it must be the nylon stockings they got from Gibraltar. Giles tries to recall if he got the radio license or if it was regarding the narrow escape from a car accident that he had recently.

1. How does Mollie express her frustration after receiving the police phone call?

**Ans>** Mollie expresses her frustration by saying that they should have never started the guesthouse in the first place. She says that they will be blocked by snow for days, their stock of food will be exhausted and that everyone is quite angry with the way things are.

1. How does Giles console Mollie? What does he say about the police visit?

**Ans>** Giles tells Mollie not to wory as everything is going well at the moment. He assures her that he has filled the coal scuttles and stoked the stove. He tells her that there must be a very serious situation if a police seargant has to be sent to their guest house in terrible weather.

1. What is Mrs. Boyle’s complaint about the library?

**Ans>** Mrs. Boyle complains that the central heating in the library is almost dead. She says she is paying rent of seven guineas a week and does not want to freeze.

1. Elaborate the conversation between Mrs. Boyle and Mollie about Christopher Wren and Mr. Paravicini?

**Ans>** Mrs. Boyle tells Mollie that she finds Christopher to be a strange young man. Mollie tells her that he is an architect, to which Mrs. Boyle says she needs to confirm the same. Mollie then says she knows just the same about Mrs. Boyle and Christopher, that they are guests paying rent. Mrs. Boyle then brings her attention to the fact that she does not know anything about Mr. Paravicini either who arrived on her doorstep out of nowhere. Here Mollie reminds Mrs. Boyle that she being a magistrate should know that to refuse shelter to a genuine traveller is against the law.

1. How does Mrs. Boyle react when Mr. Paravicini enters the hall?

**Ans>** Mrs. Boyle literally jumps in shock and surprise as Mr. Paravicini quietly comes up behind her in the hall.

1. What warning does Mr. Paravicini give Mollie about? How does she react?

**Ans>** Mr. Paravicini warns Mollie that both she and her husband are too credulous. He enquires whether they have any references regarding the guests at their guest house. Mollie then asks him if it the regular practice as she always thought that the guests usually just walked in and booked a room to stay.

1. What is Mr. Paravicini’s suggestion to Mollie regarding her guests?

**Ans>** Mr. Paravicini tells Mollie that it is always good to know a little about the people who stay at her guest house.

1. What concern does Major Metcalf express to Mollie? What is her comment?

**Ans>** Major Metcalf asks Mollie if her husband is near as the pipes of the downstairs cloakroom were frozen. Mollie replies that she is having a really bad day first with the police phone call and then the frozen pipes.

1. Describe some of the guest’s reactions when they hear about the police phone call?

**Ans>** When they hear about the police phone call Mrs. Boyle is shocked, while Major Metcalf expresses his disbelief quite loudly asking why the police were called.

1. What is Mrs. Boyle’s comment about the police? Why?

**Ans>** Mrs. Boyle says the police force is paid to enjoy themselves going around playing winter sports. This is because Detective Trotter arrives at the manor wearing skis.

1. How do the guests react to the arrival of Detective Trotter?

**Ans>** On Detective Trotter’s arrival at the manor Mrs. Boyle says the police force is paid to enjoy themselves going around playing winter sports. Mr. Paravicini angrily whispers to Mollie, asking why she called the police. Christopher casually enquires as to who the energetic looking new man is. Finally Giles introduces Detective Trotter as the new arrival to everyone present.

1. What do Mrs. Boyle and Mr. Christopher think of Detective Trotter?

**Ans>** After Detective Trotter arrives at the manor Christopher says that he is very attractive, as he finds all policemen to be attractive. Mrs. Boyle however comments that he has no brains and this can be noticed in a glance.

1. What concern does Major Metcalf express regarding the telephone? What reason does he suggest?

**Ans>** Major Metcalf informs Mollie that the telephone line is not working. This he says may be due to the weight of the snow.

1. What joke does Christopher crack regarding the disconnected telephone line? Is it funny?

**Ans>** Regarding the disconnected telephone line Christopher Wren jokes, laughing in an excited manner that they are all quite cut off, and quite separated from outside contact. This he says is his private joke. No, it isn’t funny.

1. Where does Giles suggest the interrogation be done? What is Detective Trotter’s reply?

**Ans>** Giles suggests that if Mollie and himself need to be interrogated, it can be done in the privacy of the library. To this Detective Trotter says that it will save time if everyone is present and asks to sit at a table in the hall itself.

1. What does Sergeant Trotter tell Mollie about his visit?

**Ans>** When Mollie asks if they have done anything wrong, Sergeant Trotter tells her he is there to provide them police protection.

1. What explanation does Sergeant Trotter give for the police protection?

**Ans>** Sergeant Trotter informs Mollie that his arrival concerns the death of Mrs. Maureen Lyon of twenty four Culver street who was murdered by being strangled and asks if they knew the victim.

1. What does Sergeant Trotter tell Mollie and Giles about Maureen Lyon?

**Ans>** Sergeant Trotter informs Mollie and Giles that Maureen Lyon was in fact Maureen Stanning the wife of a farmer John Stanning who lived at Longridge Farm. She had a police record and her fingerprints were on file for easy identification.

1. What was the significance of the Longridge Farm case?

**Ans>** Sergeant Trotter said that the case involved the presentation of the Corrigan children in court and their police protection. The children – two boys and a girl, were repeatedly ill-treated by Mr. and Mrs. Stanning while in their care and one child died from neglect. The Stannings were finally imprisoned for life. Mr. Stanning died in prison, while Mrs. Stanning completed her jail term and was duly released, just the day before Sergeant Trotter’s visit.

1. What was the clue found at the murder scene of Mrs. Lyon? Where did it lead?

**Ans>** A notebook was found at the murder scene of Mrs. Lyon. It contained two addresses – One was twenty- four Culver Street and the other was Monkswell manor.

1. What was the actual reason for Detective Trotter to be at Monkswell manor?

**Ans>** Since one of the addresses was Monkswell manor, it was essential for the police to know if there was any connection between that address or any one at that address and the murder victim. Detective Trotter had been sent to find out full details regarding the same and ensure the safety of everyone in the house.

1. Why was Detective trotter sent instead of Superintendent Hogben?

**Ans>** As the weather was relatively bad and only Sergeant Trotter knew how to ski, hence he was sent to Monkswell manor instead of Superintendent Hogben.

1. What was the danger proposed by Detective Trotter? How did Giles react?

**Ans>** Detective Trotter said that there was an imminent danger of somebody getting killed in the manor and he was there to prevent that occurrence before it took place. He indicated a danger more to the ladies present. At this information Giles became very nervous and excited

1. What details did Detective Trotter share with Mollie?

**Ans>** Detective Trotter told Mollie that below the two addresses was written “Three Blind Mice” and on the dead woman’s body was a paper with ‘This is the First’ written on it along with the drawing of three little mice and the music notes of the nursery rhyme.

1. What did Detective Trotter reveal about the whereabouts of the Corrigan children?

**Ans>** Detective Trotter stated that of the three children the boy of eleven was the one who died. The girl was adopted by someone, but they were still trying to find out her present place of living. Finally the elder boy he said; would be about twenty two. He was not heard from ever since he left the army. According to the army psychologist, he was definitely suffering from schizophrenia.

1. Who according to Mollie killed Mrs. Lyon?

**Ans>** After the details given by detective Trotter, Mollie then said that it must have been the elder son of twenty two who had murdered Mrs. Lyon.

1. What did Sergeant Trotter question Mollie and Giles about? Why?

**Ans>** Sergeant Trotter asked Mollie and Giles if they had any connection to the murderer or to the Longridge Farm case. This was done in order to make sure that they were not hiding the murderer, who was supposed to be a mad man and who would possibly come to Monkswell manor to kill some one.