



AGATHA CHRISTIE'S



THE

MOUSETRAP





WhoDunIt!



Bio of Agatha Christie

Agatha Christie was a world renowned writer in the early 1900's. She was born in Torquay, England to Fredrick and Clara Miller, and was the youngest of three. She never received formal education but taught herself to read by age five. After her father died her mother began traveling around the world and took Christie with her. This was when Christie began her love of travel. She met her first husband Archie Christie when he was an aviator with the Royal Flying Corps. They were married on Christmas Eve in 1914 before Archie returned to war on Boxing Day. On August 5th 1919 Christie gave birth to her daughter Rosalind. Her marriage to Archie ended when he left her for another woman in 1926, which led her to begin traveling again. In 1930 in Bagdad she met Max Mallowan, an archeologist. When she received a wire that her daughter had become ill he traveled back home with her, and soon after he proposed.

Agatha Christie was first published after her older sister challenged her to write a novel. Her first book *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* first introduced her famous detective Hercule Poirot. Miss Marple was another famous character in her books who was the inspiration for Jessica Fletcher in the television series *Murder She Wrote*. Agatha Christie wrote for fifty-six years and wrote sixty-six novels. She also wrote many plays including *The Mousetrap*, *And Then There Were None*, and *The Unexpected Guest*.

Agatha Christie died on January 12th 1976. Her grandson Mathew Prichard runs Agatha Christie Ltd. He also hosts agathachristie.com.

<http://www.bard.org/education/pdfs/mousetrap.pdf>

<http://agathachristie.com/about-christie/christies-life/biography/>



The Case!

History of The Mousetrap . . .

The Mousetrap is the longest running show ever, and is currently playing at St. Martins Theatre in London, England's West End. It has become a staple at the theatre since its 1952 opening. *The Mousetrap* has had 382 actors appear in the play, and during its run there have been 116 miles of shirts ironed, and 415 tons of ice-cream sold and the play has been performed over 24,000 times. The original set was replaced for the first time in 2000 without missing a show. The show's cast has been honored with many famous names including Sir Richard Attenborough as the original Sergeant Trotter. Although the original producer Peter Saunders sold the rights for a film and an American tour, sadly a film cannot be released until six months after the play's run. Currently there is not a closing performance in sight!

<http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/agatha-christies-long-running-play-the-mousetrap-opens>

<https://www.the-mousetrap.co.uk/online/default.asp>

Summary . . .

The play begins in an old house that has been converted into a hotel called Monkswell Manor. Mollie and Giles, a young newlywed couple, have inherited the home and turned it into a hotel and are preparing for their first guests. Over the radio there is a report of a recent murder, and an approaching snow storm. As the guests arrive and discuss the recent murder there is a telephone call from the police informing Mollie that they are coming to ask her husband some questions about the murder. Sergeant Trotter arrives and announces that everyone in the house is in danger as Monkswell Manor was listed in a notebook found at the scene of the murder. Sergeant Trotter believes the next victim along with the murderer is in the house, and everyone is in danger. It does not take long for the first guest to be killed leaving the rest to wonder who among them is next, and who wants them dead!

Terms to know while watching *The Mousetrap*



Review these terms with your students and discuss them in the context of *The Mousetrap*.

Plot—The arrangement of dramatic incidents or the story of the play’s actions.

Subtext—The meanings beneath the text usually revealed through oral delivery of the text or the actions of the person speaking the text.

Exposition—That part of the play that reveals what has happened before, exposing theme, characters, and previous events.

Climax—The culminating event of a series of events; the point of highest dramatic tension; the decisive turning point of the action.

Crisis—A decisive state of things, the turning point at which something must soon terminate or suffer a material change; a crucial situation whose outcome decides which consequences will follow.

Denouement—Unknotting or unraveling of the main dramatic complication of the plot, producing the final outcome.

Foreshadowing—An event that predicts future outcomes often through symbolic objects, actions or sayings.

Symbolism—Investing objects with non-intrinsic meanings.

Red Herrings—A term derived from the practice of drawing a smoked herring across a trail to confuse hunting dogs; later became known as something that distracts attention from the real issue.

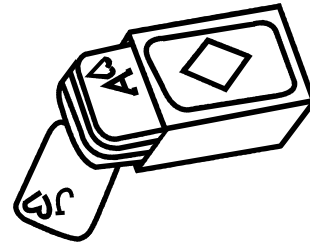
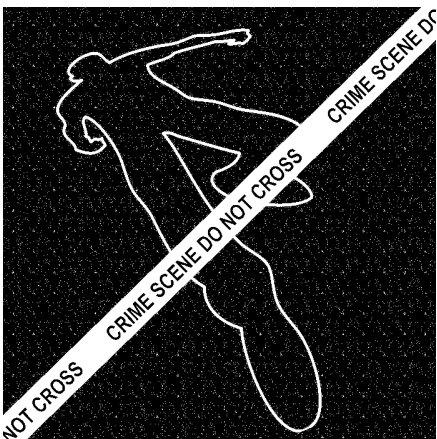
Definitions from:<http://us.penguingroup.com/static/pdf/teachersguides/mousetrap.pdf>

The Scene of the Crime

Use these below activities to explore Mysteries . . .

Murder:

Begin by setting the scene for the students. They are arriving at a party at a mansion where they do not know the host and they do not know anyone else. One student is secretly and randomly selected as the "Murderer." Students begin walking around the room shaking hands with one another. As the "Murderer" walks around shaking hands he/she should quietly select a "Victim." When they shake hands the "Murderer" lightly tickles the "Victims" hand with his finger. The "Victim" then, keeping the "Murderer" a secret, waits 10 seconds so the "Murderer" can move away, before acting out a dramatic death. Have the class stand in a circle and ask them who they think the "Murderer" is, and allow the class to pick 3 suspects. When a student accuses someone as the "Murderer" they must offer a reason for their accusation (ex. Susan was over in the corner where Sam died). The accused then must defend themselves. Once every suspect and accuser has spoken the class together will vote for who they would like to find guilty. The person who loses the vote is out. Repeat the game until only the "Murderer" is left, or is discovered.



Social Climbers Cards:

In *The Mousetrap* some of the characters defend others because of their relationship or feel they should not be accused because of their social stature. Using a deck of playing cards explore how we perceive others and protect others for our own benefit.

Begin by removing all face cards and Aces. Shuffle all the number cards and pass them out to the students face down. Tell them not to look at their card.

Rules of the Game:

Everyone walks around the room with their card on their forehead facing away from them so everyone else can see what card they have. No one should look at their card. The object of the game is to find a partner that when the numbers on their card and your card are added together you will have the highest total in the whole class. When students find their partner they should step to the front of the classroom so everyone knows they are "taken," leaving the lower numbered cards in the middle of the room without a partner.

After the game is over go through and see which partners had the highest card, and which partnership won. Discuss how those with lower cards were less desirable partners than those with higher cards, and how this relates to social stature in our relationships.

The Scene of the Crime

Continued . . .

More by Agatha Christie:

Agatha Christie was a skilled playwright and novelist and is known as one of the greatest mystery writers ever. Choose from the list below and explore one of Christie's other excellent "Who-dun-its!"

Novels:

- *And Then There Were None*
- *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*
- *A Murder is Announced*
- *Murder on the Orient Express*
- *The Thirteen Problems*
- *Towards Zero*
- *Endless Night*
- *Crooked House*
- *Ordeal by Innocence*
- *The Moving Finger*

Plays:

- *Go Back for Murder*
- *The Unexpected Guest*
- *Verdict*
- *Spider's Web*
- *A Daughter's a Daughter*
- *The Hollow*
- *Murder on the Nile/Hidden Horizon*
- *Appointment with Death*
- *Ten Little Indians*

List taken from

www.AgathaChristie.com

List taken from

www.IMBD.com



WALNUT STREET THEATRE

A Rich History



Walnut Street Theatre is the oldest theatre in America, celebrating 200 years in 2009. Standing at the corner of Ninth and Walnut Streets in Philadelphia for two hundred years, Walnut Street Theatre's National Historic Landmark structure has housed two centuries' worth of American popular entertainment. Most noteworthy American actors of the 19th century and many from the 20th century have appeared on stage at the Walnut. Some of the Walnut's shining stars include: Edwin Forrest, Edwin Booth, Edmund Kean, the Drews, the Barrymores, George M. Cohan, Will Rogers, The Marx Brothers, Helen Hayes, Henry Fonda, Katharine Hepburn, Marlon Brando, Jessica Tandy, Ethel Waters, Audrey Hepburn, Sidney Poitier, Lauren Bacall, George C. Scott, Jane Fonda, Robert Redford, Julie Harris, Jack Lemon, and William Shatner.

Over the years audiences have clapped and cheered for circus, opera, vaudeville, lectures, music, dance, motion pictures, and of course, the live theatre productions for which it is best known today. When the theatre opened its doors on February 2, 1809, the pounding of hooves mingled with the shrieks of delight from the crowd as teams of horses circled a dirt riding ring. A few years later, an 80-foot dome was added to the theatre, making it the tallest structure in Philadelphia at that time. The theatre's career as an equestrian circus did not last long, however, and by 1812 the building had been converted to a legitimate theatre, featuring a real stage where the ring had stood. The Walnut's first theatrical production, *The Rivals*, had President Thomas Jefferson and the Marquis de Lafayette in attendance on opening night.



Visit Walnut Street Theatre, a National Historic Landmark, on the corners of 9th and Walnut in Philadelphia

Walnut Street Theatre is home to many firsts in the American theater scene. In 1837, the Walnut was the first theatre to install gas footlights, and in 1855, the Walnut became the first theatre to install air conditioning. The first copyright law protecting American plays had its roots at the Walnut. The curtain call, now a tradition in every theatre, started at the Walnut with the post-play appearance of noted 19th Century actor Edmund Kean. In 1863, the theatre was purchased by Edwin Booth, a son of one of the most famous theatrical families of the day. Unfortunately, fame would soon turn to notoriety for Booth when his brother John Wilkes Booth assassinated the President at Ford's Theatre in Washington, DC. Edwin Booth, with his business partner and brother-in-law, John Sleeper Clark, managed to hold on to the Walnut in those dark days and go on to guide it for many years.

During the 1880s, the Walnut experienced many renovations, including a new stage for more elaborate musical comedies. In 1920, the interior was again rebuilt within the old exterior using structural steel in a design by William H. Lee. The Walnut remained a significant player on the American theatre scene throughout the twentieth century. Purchased by the Shubert Organization in the 1940s, the theatre was home to many pre-Broadway try-outs of plays that would go on to become American classics, such as *A Streetcar Named Desire* starring Marlon Brando, *A Raisin in the Sun* featuring Sydney Poitier, and *The Diary of Anne Frank* featuring Susan Strasberg. *Mister Roberts*, starring Henry Fonda, opened at the Walnut in 1948. Fonda, recently discharged from the Navy, used his own uniform in the play. His daughter, Jane Fonda appeared in *There Was a Little Girl* in 1960. In 1961, Neil Simon's first Broadway play, *Come Blow Your Horn* debuted.

In 1964, Walnut Street Theatre was designated a National Historic Landmark. Then in 1969 the theatre was renovated again to become a Performing Arts Center. During this period a variety of live entertainments were represented at the Walnut including dance, music, and theatre. In 1976 the Walnut hosted the first televised Carter-Ford presidential debate.

The Walnut began its most recent incarnation as a self-producing, non-profit regional theatre when Bernard Havard took the helm in 1982, founding the Walnut Street Theatre Company with a vision of once again creating theatre in a space that is so steeped in the American theatre's traditions and history. Today, you can experience the realization of that dream when you attend a live performance. With over 56,000 subscribers annually, the Walnut Street Theatre is the most subscribed theatre company in the world.

Invest in the history of Walnut Street Theatre!

Visit www.amazon.com to pick up your copy of

America's Longest Run: A History of the Walnut Street Theatre

by Andrew Davis and *Images of America: Walnut Street Theatre*

by Bernard Havard and Mark D. Sylvester

For more information about the current season, theatre school classes, employment opportunities and the historical legacy of Walnut Street Theatre, visit us online at www.walnutstreettheatre.org