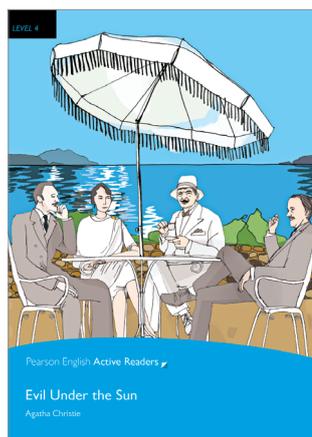


# Evil Under the Sun

Agatha Christie



## About the author

Agatha Christie was born in 1890 in Devon, England. She was the youngest child of an American father and an English mother. Her father died when she was eleven and the young Agatha became very attached to her mother. She never attended school because her mother disapproved of it, and she was educated at home in a house full of books. As a young woman, Agatha was described as tall with reddish-gold hair, fun and bright company, although shy at times. She married Lieutenant Archibald Christie in 1914 and in 1919, gave birth to her only child, Rosalind. They divorced in 1928. Two years earlier, following the death of her mother, Agatha had completely disappeared for ten days, adding real life mystery to fiction. She married again in 1930. She had a phenomenal literary career as a writer of crime stories. She published sixty-six novels, 154 short stories and twenty plays. Her book sales are surpassed only by the Bible and the works of Shakespeare. In 1971, she was awarded England's highest honour, the *Order of the British Empire*. She died in January, 1976, and is buried in the churchyard in Cholsey, Oxfordshire, near where she lived.

## Summary

The Belgian detective, Poirot, is staying at a hotel when a beautiful actress, Arlena, is found strangled to death on the beach. There are many guests with a motive for killing her, including her husband, his daughter, Arlena's lover, Patrick and his wife, Christine. They all have alibis, however, and the police and Poirot try to piece together the different parts of the puzzle. In the end, Poirot solves the mystery and discovers the identity of the murderer.

**Chapters 1–2:** Poirot is on holiday. As he is chatting to some other hotel guests, a very beautiful woman, Arlena Marshall, passes the group and heads for the beach. She sits down there with a handsome man, Patrick Redfern. All the men stare at her in admiration except her husband, Kenneth Marshall. Then Rosamund Darnley, an attractive clothes designer, sits down next to Poirot. She talks about feeling unhappy and how she and Kenneth Marshall were old childhood friends. She disapproves of Arlena and feels sorry for Patrick's wife, Christine. Meanwhile, Kenneth's daughter, Linda, is in her room thinking about how much she hates her stepmother, Arlena. Later, Poirot overhears an argument between Christine and Patrick. She is jealous of Arlena.

**Chapters 3–4:** Another guest, Mr Blatt, an unpleasant loud man, gives Christine a lift to the mainland, where she meets Linda, who was looking for a book in a shop. Later that day, Poirot consoles Christine about her husband's behaviour and he overhears Patrick and Arlena confessing their love for each other. Some days later, Linda is looking at a little book and telling herself she will do something. She tells her father she's going for a swim but goes to buy some candles instead. Back at the hotel, Christine invites Linda to go swimming and sees the candles. Poirot goes to the beach and meets Arlena, who is going somewhere in a boat alone. Then Kenneth and Patrick appear. Patrick seems to be waiting for someone. Kenneth has a swim and goes back to his room. Patrick goes for a row in a boat with another guest, Miss Brewster. They arrive at Pixy Cove and see somebody lying face down on the beach. It is Arlena and she's been strangled. Patrick stays with the body while Miss Brewster goes to get the police.

**Chapters 5–6:** The police estimate the time of death to be between 11 and 11.40 a.m. With Poirot, they interview Mr Marshall. He says he was writing letters at the time of the murder. The police also find out that Arlena was a rich woman and that her husband would inherit her money. Next they interview Linda, who says she went for a swim that morning and then to Gull Cove with Christine. She says that Christine left her to play tennis at 11.45 a.m. The police interview Patrick, who says he was in love with Arlena and then Christine, who says that Arlena was a horrible woman and that it would be normal for her to experience bad things like violence or blackmail.

## Evil Under the Sun

**Chapters 7–8:** Christine tells the police that she thought a man was blackmailing Arlena and the police believe Arlena went to Pixy Cove to meet the blackmailer. Poirot and the police interview other guests and Miss Brewster says she didn't like Arlena because her cousin had married into the family of one of her ex-lovers, Sir Robert Erskine. Arlena had convinced Sir Robert to leave money to her when he died. Poirot and the police search Arlena's room, where they find some love letters and then Kenneth's room, where they find the letter he was replying to on the morning of the murder. In Linda's room, Poirot finds some burnt paper, hair and a pin in the fireplace. Then Poirot interviews a servant, who says that Linda couldn't have gone swimming that morning because all her swimsuits were dry and that she had heard a bath running at 12 o'clock and had felt surprised. Rosamund now tells the police that she had forgotten to tell them that she went back to the hotel the morning of the murder and had seen Kenneth typing letters, thus collaborating his alibi.

**Chapters 9–10:** In the cave at Pixy Cove, Poirot notices that the air smells of perfume and finds a box with drugs in it. He then talks to Blatt, who seems very nervous and Mr Marshall tells the police that he had seen Rosamund in the mirror when he was typing. Some time later, there is a court hearing but no conclusions are formed. Poirot interviews Christine again and she tells him that she had seen Linda with some candles. He also shows her a book that Linda had about magic and poisons. Then he talks to Rosamund and tells her that he smelt her perfume, the same one that Arlena uses, in the cave at Pixy Cove. Rosamund denies going to the cave again. He then tries to talk to Linda about the candles, but she runs away, frightened.

**Chapters 11–12:** Poirot finds out that two other women were strangled recently. One, Alice Corrigan, had money and was on her way to meet her husband when she was murdered. Her body was found by a sports teacher. The police suspected the husband, but he had an alibi. There was no evidence about the death of the other woman but the police thought it was connected. Poirot invites some of the guests on a picnic and when they get back, they find that Linda has taken too many sleeping pills and has written a suicide note admitting to Arlena's murder. However, Poirot realises that the true murderer is Patrick, aided by Christine. Patrick had previously killed Alice Corrigan for her money. He had started seeing Arlena, who gave him lots of money, but he didn't

want any problems from Mr Marshall so he decided to kill her before he found out. When Patrick and Miss Brewster found the body on the beach, it wasn't Arlena but Christine dressed up as her, pretending to be dead. Arlena was hiding in the cave because she felt guilty about having arranged to meet Patrick and didn't want to be seen. When Miss Brewster left to get the police, Christine left too and Arlena came out of the cave and Patrick strangled her.

### Background and themes

**Murder mystery:** As in nearly all Agatha Christie's novels, the major theme is murder and its subsequent detection. There are a large number of suspects, each with a motive or an opportunity. Poirot manages to solve the mystery because he is clever enough to see the things that others, including the police, fail to see.

**Deceptive appearances:** This book shows that you can't judge a book by its cover. At the very beginning, one of the guests suggests that no evil could exist in this peaceful holiday setting, yet it does. Furthermore, many of the characters appear to be something they are not; Arlena seems to be a manipulator when she is really a fool and Rosamund seems to be a successful confident businesswoman when really she would prefer to be a happily married housewife.

**Love, fidelity and jealousy:** Arlena provokes admiration in men and jealousy in women. Her beauty appears to invite infidelity in stupid men, who nevertheless seem to realise that other less attractive women are the ones who are really of value.

### Discussion activities

#### Before reading

- Discuss:** Explain to the students that the people in the story are on holiday when a murder takes place. Put them in groups to discuss the following questions: *How often do you go on holiday? Where do you usually go? What do you like doing on holiday? What have been your best and worst holidays so far?*
- Pair work and write:** Write the word *murder* on the board and put students in pairs to brainstorm words related to murder. After two minutes stop and ask how many words each pair has. The pair with the most wins. Now, write all the words on the board and ask the students to choose one word and write a definition of it. Ask students to interact with each other, reading out their definitions and other students must guess the word.

## Evil Under the Sun

### Chapters 1–2

#### While reading (after Chapter 1)

- 3 Group work:** Write the names of the following characters on the board: *Poirot, Mrs Gardener, Reverend Stephen Lane, Miss Brewster, Christine Redfern, Arlena Marshall, Patrick Redfern*. Divide the class into groups and give one character to each group. Ask them to look back over Chapter 1 and write two true and two false sentences about the character. Then rearrange the groups so that all the characters are represented in the new groups. Students read out their sentences and the others have to decide if they are true or false.
- 4 Discuss:** (p. 7, after 'I have a good life really, and I know it!') Put students in groups and ask them to discuss whether they think women these days have to choose between family and career. Get them to talk about the difficulties working mothers may have and if the situation is the same for men.

#### After reading

- 5 Discuss:** Explain the word UNFAITHFUL and put students in groups to discuss the following questions: *Why are people sometimes unfaithful? Why do people stay in a relationship when their partner is being unfaithful? What can be the results of this?*

### Chapters 3–4

#### After reading

- 6 Role play:** Put the students in pairs and tell them that one has to take the role of Miss Brewster and the other the role of a police officer she first speaks to at the police station. Brainstorm some questions the officer might ask first (see Discussion activities key). Now have students act out the conversation.
- 7 Pair work:** Ask students to make a list of all the hotel guests. Now get them to discuss how likely it is that each of them murdered Arlena and why. Get feedback from the whole class and take a class vote about who is the most likely person.

### Chapters 5–6

#### After reading

- 8 Write, ask and answer:** Write *How was Arlena killed?* on the board and elicit the answer (she was strangled). Now tell students to write similar questions about Chapters 5–6. Students then interact with each other, asking and answering each other's questions.
- 9 Write and guess:** Write *blackmail* on the board and explain it is a crime. Have students brainstorm names of crimes and write them on the board. Add some of your own. Now ask students to choose one crime and write a definition. Students then interact, reading out their definitions and the others have to guess the crime.

### Chapters 7–8

#### While reading (p. 46, after 'He's so British!')

- 10 Write:** Ask students to imagine they are Mrs Gardener and write a postcard to a relative in America. Tell them to mention what they were doing before the murder, the murder itself and Mrs Gardener's opinion of the whole thing.

#### After reading

- 11 Write and guess:** Write *Patrick heard Arlena talking to a man about blackmail* on the board. Elicit which word is wrong from the students (Christine not Patrick). Now students choose a sentence that somebody said from Chapters 7–8 and rewrite it changing one word. Students interact, reading out their sentences and the other students have to identify and correct the mistake.

### Chapters 9–10

#### While reading (end of p. 63)

- 12 Pair work:** Ask the students to discuss how the discovery of the drugs has changed the case. *Who put them there and why? Why is this related to Arlena's murder?* Get feedback from the class and try to reach a consensus.

#### After reading

- 13 Pair work:** Write the following words on the board: *scissors, ladder, reporters, magic, puzzle, perfume*. Put the students in pairs to discuss and write about how these words were significant in Chapters 9–10.

### Chapters 11–12

#### While reading (p. 75, after 'so you have noticed that?')

- 14 Game: ALIBI:** Tell the students that a murder took place yesterday afternoon between 7 p.m. and 9 p.m. Tell two of the students that they are suspects and ask them to leave the room to talk about their joint alibi. Tell them they must discuss all the details about what they were doing together at that time. Now tell the rest of the class that they are police officers and have them write questions in pairs that they would like to ask the suspects. Get the suspects to come back into the class one at a time to be questioned. The 'police officers' have to see if there is any difference in what they say. If there is, they are guilty.

#### After reading

- 15 Game:** Divide the class into teams and ask each team to write five questions about any part of the book. When they have finished, each team reads out their questions and the others write their answers on a piece of paper. The team with the most correct answers in the end wins.