



The Detective Novels Of Agatha Christie: A Reader's Guide

By James Zemboy

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The most popular mystery writer of all time concocted a rich recipe of intrigue, character, and setting. All of Agatha Christie's 66 detective novels are covered here in great detail. Each chapter begins with general comments on a novel's geographical and historical setting, identifying current events, fashions, fads and popular interests that relate to the story. A concise plot summary and comprehensive character listing follow, and each novel is discussed within Christie's overall body of work, with an emphasis on the development of themes, narrative technique, and characters over the course of her prolific career. An appendix translates Poirot's French and defines the British idiomatic words and phrases that give Christie's novels so much of their flavor.

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Editorial Review

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More than 30 years after Christie's death, libraries still have patrons reading or rereading her novels. Zemboy's guide provides support. The book begins with notes about Christie's life and career, her England, and its geography as it relates to the novels. The bulk of the guide is analysis, in chronological order, of Dame Agatha's 66 detective novels (stories, plays, and fiction written as Mary Westmacott are not treated). For each, Zemboy includes sections on settings of the novel, a story recap, a list and description of all characters, translations of foreign phrases, and critical comments on topics such as characterization, quality of the mystery, and reflection of Christie's life and beliefs in the content. Recaps of her output for each decade are also included. An appendix of English phrases unfamiliar to Americans and title, character, and subject indexes close the book. Zemboy keeps his book spoiler-free; there is no risk that readers will accidentally identify a murderer. Setting sections provide information on historical events, politics, geography, and trends needed to fully appreciate aging novels. Notes on Christie's views on such major issues as class or child rearing and such minor issues as nurses or gardening are both thoughtful and entertaining. Best of all is the evenhanded critique, noting which novels have the most depth, which are the most fun, and which should be left to completists. This information will be highly useful for advisors and readers wondering where to begin. A minor quibble is that some information in summaries, such as suggested reading orders for Poirot and Marple mysteries, would be easier to use if it were also separated into lists. Overall, this book achieves its goals with thoroughness and style and will be both used and enjoyed—only its price should give pause to libraries considering purchase.

Review

thoughtful and entertaining...highly useful...achieves its goal *Booklist*; may be the most thorough guide to the 60 novels published between 1920 and 1976...provides thoughtful and helpful commentary *ARBA*; a very worthwhile book for...a good encyclopedic introduction to the world of this most prolific and well loved crime author *Reference Reviews*; excellent *GA Detection*; the writing is lively, the author's enthusiasm infectious *Mystery Scene*."

About the Author

James Zemboy taught French and Spanish in community college for many years. He resides in Detroit.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

William Fuller:

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