



LitPlan

Novel Study

COMPLETE LESSON PLANS

Grades 9-12



Murder On The Orient Express

By Agatha Christie



Teacher's Pet Publications



TEACHER'S PET PUBLICATIONS

LITPLAN NOVEL STUDY

for

Murder on the Orient Express

based on the book by
Agatha Christie

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SAMPLE

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A FEW NOTES ABOUT THE AUTHOR

AGATHA CHRISTIE

Agatha Christie, born on September 15, 1890, in Torquay, Devon, was a renowned English mystery author. She penned 66 detective novels and 14 short story collections, introducing beloved characters like Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple. Her debut novel, "The Mysterious Affair at Styles" (1920), marked Poirot's first appearance. Christie's play "The Mousetrap" holds the record for the longest-running show in theater history. Writing under the pseudonym Mary Westmacott, Christie also authored six romance novels.

She was married twice, first to Archibald Christie, a military officer who served in the Royal Flying Corp, and later to archaeologist Max Mallowan. She had a daughter, Roslind Hicks with Archibald Christie.

During both World Wars, she worked in hospital dispensaries, gaining knowledge of poisons that she skillfully incorporated into her stories. Christie passed away on January 12, 1976, in Wallingford, Oxfordshire.

Hercule Poirot Novels by Agatha Christie:

1. *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* (1920)
2. *The Murder on the Links* (1923)
3. *Poirot Investigates* (1924, short stories)
4. *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926)
5. *The Big Four* (1927)
6. *The Mystery of the Blue Train* (1928)
7. *Black Coffee* (1930, novelization of a play)
8. *Peril at End House* (1932)
9. *Lord Edgware Dies* (1933)
10. *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934)
11. *Three Act Tragedy* (1934)
12. *Death in the Clouds* (1935)
13. *The A.B.C. Murders* (1936)
14. *Murder in Mesopotamia* (1936)
15. *Cards on the Table* (1936)
16. *Dumb Witness* (1937)
17. *Death on the Nile* (1937)
18. *Murder in the Mews* (1937, short stories)
19. *Appointment with Death* (1938)
20. *Hercule Poirot's Christmas* (1938)
21. *Sad Cypress* (1940)
22. *One, Two, Buckle My Shoe* (1940)
23. *Evil Under the Sun* (1941)
24. *Five Little Pigs* (1942)
25. *The Hollow* (1946)
26. *Taken at the Flood* (1948)
27. *Mrs. McGinty's Dead* (1952)

28. *After the Funeral* (1953)
29. *Hickory Dickory Dock* (1955)
30. *Dead Man's Folly* (1956)
31. *Cat Among the Pigeons* (1959)
32. *The Adventure of the Christmas Pudding* (1960, short stories)
33. *The Clocks* (1963)
34. *Third Girl* (1966)
35. *Hallowe'en Party* (1969)
36. *Elephants Can Remember* (1972)
37. *Curtain* (1975, Poirot's final case)
38. *Poirot's Early Cases* (1974, short stories)

SAMPLE

INTRODUCTION

This unit has been designed to develop students' reading, writing, thinking, and language skills through exercises and activities related to *Murder on the Orient Express* by Agatha Christie. It includes twenty lessons, supported by extra resource materials.

The **introductory lesson** familiarizes students with the essential components of the mystery genre, its historical development, and its literary importance. Additionally, students will explore the distinctive elements of Agatha Christie's writing style. Following the introductory activity, students are given an explanation of how the activity relates to the book they are about to read.

The **daily lessons** include reading assignments, activities, and writing assignments. **You may need to adjust the schedule to accommodate the activities in each lesson.** The length of time in classes varies and the speed at which students work varies, so it's difficult to say exactly how long it will take to complete each lesson. Each daily lesson may or may not fit into the amount of time you have each day, so you might need to think of the daily lessons as a series of things to do rather than each lesson as being one class period. It might work out that one lesson will equal one class period, but it may not.

The **reading assignments** are approximately thirty-five pages each; some are a little shorter while others are a little longer. Students have approximately 15 minutes of pre-reading work to do prior to each reading assignment. This pre-reading work involves reviewing the study questions for the assignment and doing some vocabulary work for selected vocabulary words they will encounter in their reading. This unit offers the option to evaluate students' reading skills by the oral reading of Assignment 3 - Part Two: 1-7 which is the longest reading assignment.

The **study guide questions** are fact-based questions; students can find the answers to these questions right in the text. These questions come in two formats: short answer or multiple choice. The best use of these materials is probably to use the short answer version of the questions as study guides for students (since answers will be more complete), and to use the multiple choice version for occasional quizzes.

The **vocabulary work** is intended to enrich students' vocabularies as well as to aid in the students' understanding of the book. Prior to each reading assignment, students will complete a two-part worksheet for vocabulary words in the upcoming reading assignment. Part I focuses on students' use of general knowledge and contextual clues by giving the sentence in which the word appears in the text. Students are then to write down what they think the words mean based on the words' usage. Part II nails down the definitions of the words by giving students dictionary definitions of the words and having students match the words to the correct definitions based on the words' contextual usage. Students should then have a thorough understanding of the words when they meet them in the text.

After each reading assignment, students will go back and formulate answers for the study guide questions. Discussion of these questions serves as a **review** of the most important events and ideas presented in the reading assignments.

Two lessons are devoted to the **critical thinking questions and quotations**. These questions focus on interpretation, critical analysis, and personal response, employing a variety of thinking skills and adding to the students' understanding of the novel.

Following the discussion of the novel, there is a **vocabulary review** lesson which pulls together all of the fragmented vocabulary lists for the reading assignments and gives students a review of all of the words they have studied.

There are three **writing assignments** in this unit, each with the purpose of informing, persuading, or having students express personal opinions. The first assignment is to **inform**: in conjunction with the Nonfiction Assignment, students will write an essay based on their topic and their research. The second is a **narrative writing** assignment: students will write an original mystery story. The third assignment is to give students a chance to **persuade**: students will write an essay in which they persuade the reader if the murder was morally right or wrong.

In addition, there is a **nonfiction reading assignment**. Students are required to read at least one article and view a least one video of nonfiction related to *Murder on the Orient Express*. After reading and viewing their nonfiction pieces, students will fill out a worksheet on which they answer questions regarding facts, interpretation, criticism, and personal opinions. They will complete the **Informational Writing Assignment** and during one class period, students make **oral presentations** about the nonfiction pieces. This not only exposes all students to a wealth of information, it also gives students the opportunity to practice **public speaking**.

There is a **group project** included in this unit. Working in groups of three, each group will take notes and discuss important clues, the passengers, and any insights to determine the identity of the murderer prior to the conclusion of the novel. Each group will present their solution to the class, offering valid reasons to support their conclusion.

The **review lesson** pulls together all of the aspects of the unit. The teacher is given four or five choices of activities or games to use which all serve the same basic function of reviewing all of the information presented in the unit.

The **unit test** comes in two formats: multiple choice or short answer. As a convenience, two different tests for each format have been included. There is also an advanced short answer unit test for advanced students.

There are additional **support materials** included with this unit. The **Unit Resource Materials** section includes suggestions for an in-class library, crossword and word search puzzles related to the novel, and extra worksheets. There is a list of **bulletin board ideas** which gives the teacher suggestions for bulletin boards to go along with this unit. In addition, there is a list of **extra class activities** the teacher could choose from to enhance the unit or as a substitution for an exercise the teacher might feel is inappropriate for his/her class. **Answer keys** are located directly after the **reproducible student materials** throughout the unit. The **Vocabulary Resource Materials** section includes similar worksheets and games to reinforce the vocabulary words.

The **level** of this unit can be varied depending upon the criteria on which the individual assignments are graded, the teacher's expectations of his/her students in class discussions, and the formats chosen for the study guides, quizzes, and test. If teachers have other ideas/activities they wish to use, they can usually easily be inserted prior to the review lesson.

As the **technology** varies from school to school, use the visual media available and best suited for your students to present worksheets, brainstorming note sessions, charts, or any of the resources included in the unit.

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SAMPLE

READING ASSIGNMENTS

Date Assigned	Reading Assignment	Completion Date
	Assignment #1 PART ONE: 1-4	
	Assignment #2 PART ONE: 5-8	
	Assignment #3 PART TWO: 1-7	
	Assignment #4 PART TWO: 8-12	
	Assignment #5 PART TWO: 13-15	
	Assignment #6 PART THREE: 1-5	
	Assignment #7 PART THREE: 6-9	

UNIT OUTLINE

1	2	3	4	5
Introduction Mystery Genre	Christie's Writing Style Oral Reading Assignments	Introduction Group Project PVR #1	Study ?s #1 Group Meeting PVR #2	Study ?s #2 Nonfiction Assignment Group Meeting PV #3
6	7	8	9	10
Oral Reading #3	Study ?s #3 Oral Reading #3 Group Meeting	Narrative Writing Assignment PVR #4	Study ?s #4 Group Meeting PVR #5	Study ?s #5 Group Meeting Group Presentations
11	12	13	14	15
Narrative Writing Assignment Work Session PVR #6	Study ?s #6 PVR #7	Study ?s #7 Nonfiction Presentations	Critical Thinking Questions	Critical Thinking Questions
16	17	18	19	20
Vocabulary Review	Unit Review	Unit Test	Movie	Movie Persuasive Writing Assignment

Key: P = Preview Study Questions V = Vocabulary Work R = Read

LESSON ONE

Objectives

To understand the key elements of the mystery genre, its history, and its significance in literature

Activity 1 (Introduction)

One fun way to begin this unit and to introduce the Mystery genre is to play the Hasbro board game of Clue with your students. If you don't have it already or know someone who would lend you theirs, you can pick one up on Amazon or at WalMart fairly inexpensively.

Divide your class into 6 teams, with each team being one of the characters. Place the board in the middle of the room or live stream it to a screen everyone can see. When it's a group's turn to play, a representative from the group can come forward to take the turn.

After the game is over and the mystery is solved, students should return to their usual classroom places.

Activity 2 (Elements of a Mystery)

Ask students what the main elements of the game were. [In the game of Clue, the main elements are: who committed the murder, in which room, and with which weapon.]

You can take a few minutes to ask students if they are aware of any famous murder cases and discuss student responses.

Transition by asking students what elements are always present in murder cases. Students' answers should give you the elements of the Mystery genre.

Key Elements of the Mystery Genre:

1. **Crime or Puzzle:** At the heart of every mystery is a crime or puzzle that needs to be solved.
2. **Detective:** The protagonist, often a detective or amateur sleuth, who works to solve the mystery.
3. **Suspects:** Characters who might have committed the crime, each with their own motives and opportunities.
4. **Clues:** Pieces of information that help the detective solve the mystery.
5. **Red Herrings:** False clues or distractions that mislead the detective and the reader.
6. **Resolution:** The mystery is solved, and the detective explains how they figured it out. (Though, in real life, sometimes the mystery is not solved. Discuss reasons why resolution would be impossible.)

Activity 3 (History of the Mystery Genre)

Ask students if they know of any famous detectives—either real or fictional. Whatever students' responses are, work these facts into your discussion:

- Early Beginnings: The mystery genre can be traced back to ancient literature, but it truly began to take shape in the 19th century.
- Edgar Allan Poe: Often credited with creating the first modern detective story with "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841).

- Arthur Conan Doyle: Introduced Sherlock Holmes, one of the most famous detectives in literature, in “A Study in Scarlet” (1887).
- Golden Age of Detective Fiction: The 1920s and 1930s saw the rise of authors like Agatha Christie and Dorothy L. Sayers, who created intricate plots and memorable detectives.

Activity 4 (Introduction to *Murder on the Orient Express*)

- Summarize the key points of the lesson. Emphasize the importance of the mystery genre in literature and its enduring popularity.
- Tell students they will be reading a murder mystery by Agatha Christie, *Murder on the Orient Express*. Give them a plot teaser or play the trailer for the movie from YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mq4m3yAoW8E>

SAMPLE

Graphic Organizer: *Murder on the Orient Express*



Victim Information

Name: M. Ratchett

Cause of Death: Multiple stab wounds

Time of Death: _____

Additional Details:



Medical Examination

Examiner: Dr. Constantine

Details of Wounds:

Estimated Time of Death: _____

Other Observations:

STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS

ASSIGNMENT 1 - Part One: 1-4

1. Describe the Taurus Express and tell from which city it is preparing to depart. (1)
2. Lieutenant Dubosc has the job of seeing off a Belgian stranger from England. What is the stranger's name and where does the Lieutenant say the stranger is going? (1)
3. Who looks out of a sleeping car window and thinks the little man talking to the French officer and the Wagon Lit conductor is the sort of man one could never take seriously? (1)
4. There are only three passengers on the Taurus Express. Who are they? (1)
5. The three passengers have breakfast and lunch in the dining car. Mary Debenham and the Colonel get acquainted but they do not bother to talk with M. Poirot. Later, in the corridor, Poirot hears a conversation between Arbuthnot and Debenham about Mary being a governess. What does Poirot say to himself? (1)
6. A small fire occurs under the dining car which causes the train to stop. Why is Mary Debenham so worried about a delay? (1)
7. At the Tokatlian Hotel, Poirot receives a telegram telling him to return to London immediately. He makes arrangements with the hotel concierge and proceeds to the dining car where he meets an old friend. Who is his old friend? (2)
8. When Poirot and M. Bouc are in the lounge, they see two Americans leaving the hotel. What is their opinion of the two men? (2)
9. There is no room for Poirot on the train. M. Bouc tells the Wagon Lit conductor that he must find a room for Poirot. Where does the conductor put Poirot? (2)
10. M. Poirot is late for lunch. He joins M. Bouc and they observe the thirteen people in the dining car. What observation does M. Bouc make about the passengers in the dining car?
11. M. Bouc and most others finish lunch and leave only Poirot and Ratchett, who introduces himself to Poirot. What does Ratchett want from Poirot? What is Poirot's answer? (3)
12. Why are M. Poirot's valises moved from Compartment 7 to M. Bouc's Compartment 1? (4)
13. Who has the compartment two doors down from Poirot? What is worrying that person? (4)
14. What awakens Poirot during the night? (4)
15. What time does Poirot switch off his light and return to bed? (4)

ASSIGNMENT 2 - Part One: 5-8

1. What is going on in the restaurant car on the morning after the train stopped in the snow? (5)
2. As Poirot talks to the passengers, a Wagon Lit conductor tells Poirot that M. Bouc would like to see him for a few minutes. What does M. Bouc tell Poirot? (5)
3. When M. Poirot meets M. Bouc, he sees that a big man who is the chef de train, his own Wagon Lit conductor and a small, dark man are also in the room. Who is the small, dark man? (5)
4. M. Bouc tells Poirot the name of the murdered person. Who is it? (5)

ASSIGNMENT 3 MULTIPLE CHOICE STUDY/ QUIZ QUESTIONS

Part Two: 1-7

- ___1. How does M. Bouc describe the Wagon Lit conductor's character? (1)
- A. Pierre Michel is a thoroughly respectable and honest man who has been employed by the company for over fifteen years. He is a Frenchman living near Calais. M. Bouc implies that his intellectual abilities are not especially noteworthy.
 - B. Pierre Michel is known for his short tenure with the company, having worked there for less than a year, and is recognized for his remarkable intellectual prowess.
 - C. Despite his brief employment history, Pierre Michel has made a significant impression on M. Bouc with his extraordinary intelligence and quick wit.
 - D. Pierre Michel, a recent recruit from Paris, has quickly become known for his sharp intellect, and attention to detail.
- ___2. According to the Wagon Lit conductor's testimony, who were the two people who entered M. Ratchett's room the night of the murder? (1)
- A. After M. Ratchett retired for the night, the Wagon Lit conductor observed that several passengers, including a lady in a red dress and a gentleman with a cane, entered his compartment.
 - B. The Wagon Lit conductor states that after M. Ratchett retired to his compartment, the only two people to enter his compartment were his valet, and his secretary.
 - C. The conductor mentions that after M. Ratchett went to his compartment, the only two people to enter his compartment were himself and a train attendant delivering extra blankets.
 - D. The Wagon Lit conductor states that M. Ratchett's compartment remained completely undisturbed throughout the night, with no one, including his valet or secretary, entering at any point.
- ___3. How did the Wagon Lit conductor respond when questioned about the woman he had seen in the hallway? (1)
- A. The conductor thinks he recognizes the kimono as belonging to a man who often travels on the train, which adds to his confusion.
 - B. The Wagon Lit conductor is unable to identify the woman because her back was to him, but she was wearing a teal kimono with dragons on it.
 - C. The Wagon Lit conductor is unable to identify the woman because her back was to him, but she was wearing a scarlet kimono with dragons on it.
 - D. He mentions that he had seen several women in scarlet kimonos that evening, making it impossible to determine which one it was.

- ___4. What surprises the Wagon Lit conductor following Poirot's inquiry into the methods of accessing the train and the sleeping car? What explanation does he give Poirot? (1)
- A. He is not surprised that the rear door of the sleeping car was left ajar. The door is often left unlocked by a passenger wanting to get some fresh air.
 - B. He was astonished to discover that the luggage compartment was unlocked. His explanation was that a passenger could have been searching for misplaced belongings.
 - C. The conductor is shocked to learn that the door to the sleeping compartment was unlocked. He assumes it is due to a faulty lock mechanism.
 - D. He is surprised to learn that the forward door, near the restaurant car, is unlocked. He tells Poirot that one of the passengers must have opened it to look out at the snow.
- ___5. What is M. MacQueen's reaction when he is informed of Ratchett's true identity and his involvement in the kidnapping of Daisy Armstrong? Why does he react this way? (2)
- A. M. MacQueen seems indifferent upon learning Ratchett's true identity, suggesting he had already suspected the truth.
 - B. His initial reaction is one of complete shock, which quickly turns to intense fury. His father, serving as the district attorney, had been involved in the case and Hector had encountered Mrs. Armstrong on several occasions.
 - C. He appears mildly amused, as if the revelation of Ratchett's past is an interesting twist to an otherwise dull journey.
 - D. MacQueen shows a sense of relief, which quickly turns to intense fury. His father, serving as the district attorney, had been involved in the case and Hector had encountered Mrs. Armstrong on several occasions.
- ___6. What does Poirot learn when he asks MacQueen if he had left the train? (2)
- A. He learns that both Arbuthnot and MacQueen had stepped off the train at Vincovci by way of the door near the restaurant car, and Arbuthnot failed to lock the door when they reboarded the train.
 - B. He learns that MacQueen and Mary Debedham had stepped off the train at Vincovci by way of the door near the restaurant car, and MacQueen failed to lock the door when they reboarded the train.
 - C. He learns that both Arbuthnot and MacQueen had stepped off the train at Vincovci by way of the door near the restaurant car which they unlocked, and MacQueen failed to lock the door when they reboarded the train.
 - D. He learns that both Arbuthnot and MacQueen wanted to step off the train at Vincovci by way of the door near the restaurant car, but it was locked so they exited by way of the rear door which was unlocked.

ASSIGNMENT 1 VOCABULARY WORKSHEET

PART ONE: 1-4

Part I: Using Prior Knowledge and Contextual Clues

Below are the sentences in which the vocabulary words appear in the text. Read the sentence. Use any clues you can find in the sentence combined with your prior knowledge, and write what you think the underlined words mean in the space provided.

1. It was freezingly cold, and this job of seeing off a distinguished stranger was not one to be envied, but Lieutenant Dubosc performed his part manfully.
2. Conversations on the platform, before the departure of a train, are apt to be somewhat repetitive in character.
3. Lieutenant Dubosc managed to cast a surreptitious glance at his watch.
4. When he awoke it was half-past nine, and he sallied forth to the restaurant car in search of hot coffee.
5. "He is susceptible, our Colonel," thought Hercule Poirot to himself with some amusement.
6. "*Bien, Monsieur.* I will get you a ticket to London and reserve your sleeping car accommodation in the Stamboul-Calais coach."
7. Then he stepped over to the concierge's desk and inquired for letters.
8. You travel on the Simplon-Orient, I presume?"
9. As the man, making some remark to his young companion, glanced across the room, his gaze stopped on Poirot for a moment, and just for that second there was a strange malevolence, and unnatural tensivity in the glance.
10. However, even the most munificent of tips lose their effect when a director of the company is on board and issues his orders.

11. "A phenomenon I have seldom seen," he said cheerfully. "A Wagon Lit conductor himself puts up the luggage! It is unheard of!"
12. Perhaps, Poirot thought, Mary Debenham had demurred.
13. "Oh, not the valet—the other—his master."
14. "My daughter always says I'm very intuitive."

Part II: Determining the Meaning -- Match the vocabulary words to their dictionary definitions.

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| ___ 1. DISTINGUISHED | A. Remarkable thing or event |
| ___ 2. APT | B. Suppose something is true based on probability |
| ___ 3. SURREPTITIOUS | C. Room in which someone may stay; overnight lodgings |
| ___ 4. SALLIED | D. Set out briskly or energetically |
| ___ 5. SUSCEPTIBLE | E. Hotel employee who assists guests |
| ___ 6. ACCOMMODATION | F. Having good instincts |
| ___ 7. CONCIERGE | G. Having a tendency to do something; likely |
| ___ 8. PRESUME | H. Commanding great respect; respected; important |
| ___ 9. MALEVOLENCE | I. Easily influenced or harmed |
| ___ 10. MUNIFICENT | J. Gentleman's personal assistant, tasked with the care of his wardrobe and grooming |
| ___ 11. PHENOMENON | K. Wish or desire to do evil to others |
| ___ 12. DEMURRED | L. Objected to |
| ___ 13. VALET | M. Kept secret; concealed because it is improper |
| ___ 14. INTUITIVE | N. Larger amount of money, or gift than is usual |

VOCABULARY JUGGLE LETTER 2

Change the order of the letters to find the original word.

- _____ = 1. CNORIECGE
Hotel employee who assists guests
- _____ = 2. ECNPIREAGDT
Expressing disappointment
- _____ = 3. UNACEN
Subtle difference in meaning
- _____ = 4. IEEEXGNICS
Things necessary in a particular situation
- _____ = 5. ETSSINIR
Wicked; evil; criminal
- _____ = 6. NTRUFPYOCER
Done without enthusiasm or only because it is expected
- _____ = 7. POXNSIIEOT
Explanation
- _____ = 8. IURPUOSS
Fake; false
- _____ = 9. STIGLUNI
Person who speaks several languages
- _____ = 10. RSESTUCIRT
Critical remarks; limits on a person or activity
- _____ = 11. SAOCDRIN
Sarcastic; mocking
- _____ = 12. DLABEIAVS
Recommended; sensible
- _____ = 13. ECIFOSTLRNE
Deep thoughts
- _____ = 14. PSCBSLTUEIE
Easily influenced or harmed
- _____ = 15. OLLEVMNECAE
Wish or desire to do evil to others

KEY: VOCABULARY JUGGLE LETTER 2
Change the order of the letters to find the original word.

CONCIERGE = 1. CNORIECGE
Hotel employee who assists guests

DEPRECATING = 2. ECNPIREAGDT
Expressing disappointment

NUANCE = 3. UNACEN
Subtle difference in meaning

EXIGENCIES = 4. IEEEXGNICS
Things necessary in a particular situation

SINISTER = 5. ETSSINIR
Wicked; evil; criminal

PERFUNCTORY = 6. NTRUFPYOCER
Done without enthusiasm or only because it is expected

EXPOSITION = 7. POXNSIIEOT
Explanation

SPURIOUS = 8. IURPUOSS
Fake; false

LINGUIST = 9. STIGLUNI
Person who speaks several languages

STRICTURES = 10. RSESTUCIRT
Critical remarks; limits on a person or activity

SARDONIC = 11. SAOCDRIN
Sarcastic; mocking

ADVISABLE = 12. DLABEIAVS
Recommended; sensible

REFLECTIONS = 13. ECIFOSTLRNE
Deep thoughts

SUSCEPTIBLE = 14. PSCBSLTUEIE
Easily influenced or harmed

MALEVOLENCE = 15. OLLEVMNECAE
Wish or desire to do evil to others