

Agatha Christie

AGATHA CHRISTIE'S GREAT DETECTIVES

THE BIRTH OF A LEGEND - POIROT

Agatha Christie had taken up her sister's challenge to write a detective story. Now she needed inspiration for her detective. At the time Torquay was full of World War One's refugees from Belgium and Agatha thought that a former Belgian Chief of Police would make the perfect model for her detective. Hercule Poirot was born and Agatha began to write her novel, using a battered old typewriter once owned by her sister.

Agatha Christie alternated between affection and exasperation for her eccentric and egotistic creation. As she wrote in an article for the British newspaper, The Daily Mail, in 1938:

“Why, why, why did I ever invent this detestable, bombastic, tiresome little creature?”

Poirot's popularity grew beyond her wildest expectations and although she tried to force him into permanent retirement at various times, his readers demands ensured that he stayed with her throughout her career. Always the perfect detective, he was fully aware of his own genius:

“I admit freely and without hypocrisy that I am a great man.”

It would be 18 months before she found a publisher for Poirot in John Lane of The Bodley Head. In 1926 after averaging a book a year, Agatha Christie wrote her first masterpiece *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* to huge public acclaim. It was the first book to be published by Collins and marked the beginning of an author-publisher relationship that would last until her death.

Over the next decade Agatha Christie created several different detectives including the popular duo 'Tommy and Tuppence' and the stalwart Superintendent Battle and secret service operative, Colonel Race. She also revealed a more romantic side with her charming detective Parker Pyne and his enigmatic friend Mr Harley Quin.

A MATCH FOR POIROT? – MISS MARPLE

It wasn't until 1930 that Agatha Christie created a detective who rivalled Hercule Poirot in the public's affections. Agatha Christie said that the character of Miss Marple was inspired by Dr Sheppard's shrewd and shrewish sister in *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* and certain friends of her grandmother – and indeed her own grandmother – of whom Agatha Christie once said

“[she] expected the worst of everyone and everything and was with almost frightening accuracy, usually proved right.”

When she created Miss Marple, Agatha said that she did not expect that she would continue writing about her for the rest of her life but from the moment that this *“typical old maid of fiction”* (Dolly Bantry: *The Thirteen Problems*) made her first appearance, Christie’s readers were hooked. Marple appeared in a total of twelve novels and 20 short stories. In Agatha Christie’s own words, spoken by Henry Clithering:

“She’s just the finest detective God ever made. Natural genius.”

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