

Agatha Christie

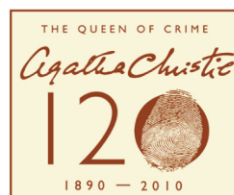
120 Christie Facts

1. Christie's parents took their time naming their daughter, only deciding on 'Agatha' minutes before arriving at her christening.
2. It was never Christie's intention to become a writer, but she was determined to rise to the challenge set by her sister Madge who had dared her to write a detective story.
3. When [Spider's Web](#) opened at London's Savoy Theatre in 1954 nobody imagined it would run for two years, making it one of the Savoy Theatre's greatest successes.
4. Creating not one but two hugely successful world famous sleuths is a feat that's never been matched by any other crime writer.
5. After reading [The Murder of Roger Ackroyd](#) critics were so outwitted that they accused Christie of misleading them and not playing fair.
6. After [Sad Cypress](#) was published, Christie changed her mind and felt it would have been a much better read without her little Belgium detective, Poirot.
7. Poirot often found himself dropped in plays by Christie, she wasn't entirely fond of him and felt especially when it came to stage adaptations that his presence would overwhelm the action. This happened in four such stage adaptations where Poirot had featured in the original novels.
8. In 1922 Christie travelled the world accompanying her husband Archie who had been invited to work for the Empire Expedition by a Major Belcher. Belcher proved difficult to work for, though they could never have afforded such a trip otherwise.
9. Christie suffered rejection by six publishers. She'd forgotten all about her manuscript for [The Mysterious Affair at Styles](#) and was busy getting to grips with motherhood when out of the blue, five years later, Bodley Head got in touch and she signed there and then.
10. The Queen of Crime also wrote about crimes of the heart in a series of six bittersweet novels using the pseudonym [Mary Westmacott](#).
11. Christie's travelling experience greatly enriched her works; in [Cards on the Table](#) Christie drew on her knowledge of Syria when naming the story's victim, Shaitan, which is Syrian for Satan.



Agatha Christie

12. At the Bouchercon World Mystery Convention in May 2000, Christie was named 'Mystery Writer of the Twentieth Century'. Her Poirot novels were also named 'Mystery Series of the Twentieth Century'.
13. Miss Marple has been played by a number of actresses, though Margaret Rutherford was the first big-screen Marple of them all. While Christie wasn't pleased with her portrayal, she dedicated [The Mirror Crack'd from Side to Side](#) to the actress.
14. Christie loved dogs and owned one her whole life, not the same one of course!
15. In [Mrs McGinty's Dead](#), Christie's character Ariadne Oliver, a mystery writer and friend to Poirot, berates herself for wrongly describing the length of a blowpipe, used as a murder weapon in one of her stories. This was in fact Christie berating herself for making that same mistake previously in [Death in the Clouds](#).
16. When Hercule Poirot died in 1975, The New York Times gave him a full-page obituary, the only fictional character ever to receive such treatment.
17. Christie's favourite colour was green.
18. Christie has sold over two billion books worldwide.
19. Christie has only been outsold by Shakespeare and the Bible.
20. The U.S. Navy requisitioned Christie's home Greenway House, located on the River Dart in Devon, during the Second World War. The house is now a National Trust property and open to visitors.
21. During Christie's centenary year in 1990, a rose was named 'Agatha'.
22. Christie was as successful a playwright as she was a novelist, a feat that no other crime writer has achieved.
23. Christie was the President of the local amateur dramatic society for Wallingford.
24. Christie didn't smoke, or drink alcohol.
25. Christie's original title for [The Seven Dials Mystery](#) was *The Secret Six*.
26. All the theatres in London's West End dimmed their lights for an hour on the day Christie died.
27. A huge influence for the character of Miss Marple was Christie's own grandmother.



Agatha Christie

28. Christie's pet hates included marmalade pudding and cockroaches.
29. Two of Christie's favourite writers were Elizabeth Bowen and Graham Greene.
30. Christie wrote the part of Clarissa in [Spider's Web](#) especially for the daughter of world famous English actress Margaret Lockwood.
31. The character of Poirot was first performed on stage by Charles Laughton.
32. Christie worked in a hospital dispensary during World War One where she learnt the chemical make-up of a number of medicines, and poisons. The perfect training for a crime writer!
33. Christie claimed that she 'saw' Hercule Poirot twice, lunching in the Savoy and then sailing in the Canary Islands.
34. Christie mentioned herself by name in [The Body in the Library](#), the 1942 Miss Marple novel.
35. Christie was shy of the media and kept a low profile. Her last ever public appearance was in 1974 at the premiere of the film [Murder on the Orient Express](#), an adaptation she very much approved of.
36. Joan Hickson was a cast member of the play *Murder on the Nile* in 1946, which Christie had adapted from [Death on the Nile](#). Hickson also had a minor part in the Margaret Rutherford Miss Marple film *Murder, She Said*. Christie was impressed with Hickson and wrote to her, saying that she hoped "one day you will play my Miss Marple". And of course, she did.
37. Christie had originally planned to have Miss Marple as the detective in [Death on the Nile](#) instead of Poirot.
38. The BBC persuaded Christie to narrate one of her own stories for radio in 1931.
39. The longest running play in the world, [The Mousetrap](#) was originally written as a twenty minute radio play.
40. Two of Christie's radio plays - *Butter in a Lordly Dish* (1948) and *Personal Call* (1960) have never been published.
41. In 1948 Penguin honoured Christie by publishing 100,000 copies of ten of her titles, an event to be known as 'A Penguin Million'.



Agatha Christie

42. Christie spent many years assisting her second husband Max Mallowan, a prominent British Archaeologist who specialised in Middle Eastern history. She became an expert photographer during this time.
43. The Pera Palace Hotel in Istanbul, built to accommodate the wealthy elite who travelled aboard the luxurious Orient Express, is believed to have been an inspiration for one of the locations in Christie's [Murder on the Orient Express](#).
44. Christie's haste to sign with the first publisher that offered her a contract made for rather unfavourable terms. The advance for her first novel [The Mysterious Affair at Styles](#) was only £25.
45. In the early 1960s a musical adaptation of [Hickory Dickory Dock](#) was planned, titled *Death Beat* – however it never came to fruition.
46. Christie wrote a screenplay for Charles Dickens' *Bleak House* in 1962.
47. In 1935 Penguin created the 'quality paperback' and launched their new format by republishing [The Mysterious Affair at Styles](#).
48. The first television Miss Marple was played by Gracie Fields in 1956 in [A Murder is Announced](#).
49. Christie was a passionate music lover, Wagner, Elgar and Sibelius were her favourite composers.
50. Christie took up Presidency of the Detection Club in 1958 on the strict understanding that she would never have to make a speech.
51. [The Big Four](#), published in 1927, was actually a series of short stories brought together to form a novel.
52. Collins' famous Crime Club series launched with [The Murder at the Vicarage](#).
53. *Die Abenteuer G.M.B.H.* was a 1928 German adaptation of [The Secret Adversary](#) and is famous for being the first Christie novel to make it to the screen.
54. If you collected every copy of [Peril at End House](#) sold in the US, then piled them one on top of the other, you'd reach the moon - weather conditions and gravitational pull aside!
55. The author behind Mary Westmacott wasn't revealed as Christie for nearly twenty years.



Agatha Christie

56. The original theatre programme for [The Mousetrap](#) did not feature a title on its cover, only a picture of a mousetrap on a splash of red.
57. Agatha Christie's name has appeared in every newspaper with a West End theatre listing for the last fifty-three years.
58. Christie's own experiences travelling were used to colour those of her characters. In [The Man in the Brown Suit](#) the heroine Anne suffers crippling seasickness, just as Agatha had on her trip to South Africa in 1922.
59. Christie refused to give permission for any likeness of Poirot to appear on her book covers.
60. Christie received an honorary degree from the University of Exeter in 1961.
61. Christie wrote the majority of [Lord Edgware Dies](#) while on holiday on the Greek island of Rhodes in 1931.
62. When Christie was a child it was common for families like hers, to move to fashionable areas of Italy and France and rent their UK homes for a profit, this was known as 'economising'.
63. Christie never travelled in the Middle East without her portable Corona typewriter.
64. Of all her plays, [Witness for the Prosecution](#) was Christie's personal favourite.
65. Agatha Christie and her novels have featured as a subject on the UK's specialist knowledge quiz show 'Mastermind' on at least three occasions.
66. Lily of the Valley was Christie's favourite flower.
67. In her 1933 Mary Westmacott novel [Unfinished Portrait](#), Christie based the two central characters Celia and Dermot, on herself and her first husband Archie.
68. There is a bronze bust of Christie located outside the Torquay Tourist Office.
69. [Death on the Nile](#) is the title of one of Christie's Parker Pyne short stories, as well as the title of the better known Poirot novel.
70. In 1972 Madame Tussauds created a waxwork model of Agatha Christie.
71. Christie had originally planned for twelve characters in [And Then There Were None](#) but dropped a couple before it was published.



Agatha Christie

72. Christie scored a personal best in 1935 when [Three Act Tragedy](#) sold 10,000 copies in its first year.
73. Of the four films starring Margaret Rutherford as Miss Marple, two are based on Poirot books. *Murder, She Said* is the only real Miss Marple story and the other film has no connection with Agatha Christie at all!
74. Nothing stopped the prolific Christie from writing. While helping her husband Max Mallowan on archaeological digs in Nimrud, Iraq, Christie wrote many novels in a house specially named 'Beit Agatha'.
75. The Malice Domestic Convention for mystery fans in the US presents an annual award called 'The Agatha'.
76. [At Bertram's Hotel](#) was serialised in Woman's Own Magazine in five abridged installments from 20th November 1965.
77. Christie's sister Madge also found some success writing, her play *The Claimant*, was performed at the St Martin's Theatre in 1924.
78. Christie used Major Belcher, head of the Empire Expedition she and Archie had travelled the world with, as the basis for Sir Eustace Pedlar, the villain in [The Man in the Brown Suit](#). Belcher had requested he be written into one of Christie's stories as a murderer, though she was sorely tempted to make him the victim!
79. Christie loved modern transport. With the money earned from selling the serial rights to [The Man in the Brown Suit](#), Christie bought herself a car. No driving test was required in those days, just an ability to steer!
80. Christie was a surfer! Bathing was her first love, an activity she'd spent many months perfecting as a teenager in Torquay. 'Bathing with planks' was how she referred to surfing and indulged in it during the Empire Expedition through South Africa, New Zealand and Australia.
81. Christie holds three world records, including having published the world's thickest book, its spine measures over a foot long.
82. In 1947 the BBC asked Queen Mary what she'd like to celebrate her 80th birthday. She specifically asked for an Agatha Christie radio play, which later became [The Mousetrap](#).
83. Christie and her first husband Archie named their house at Sunningdale 'Styles' in honour of her first novel [The Mysterious Affair at Styles](#).



Agatha Christie

84. A local Torquay school named one of their classrooms after Christie, though she never saw a classroom as a child, her Victorian mother thought a young girl would be better-off served a lighter education from home.
85. Despite her mother's ideas about education, a determined young Agatha taught herself to read and write.
86. Christie never saw her play [Akhnaton](#) performed.
87. Christie followed traditional Victorian paths towards courtship. Meeting suitable gentlemen at a series of dances was known as 'doing the season' and Christie spent one such season in Egypt, during which time she received several marriage proposals.
88. [The Coming of Mr Quin](#) was adapted for the screen in 1928 as *The Passing of Mr Quinn*. It was intended to be a series but was not well received; only fueling Christie's distrust of adaptations.
89. Christie borrowed a number of traits from her character Caroline Sheppard in [The Murder of Roger Ackroyd](#) for her more famous creation Miss Marple.
90. Christie's love of music extended to light-hearted popular musicals.
91. [Witness for the Prosecution](#)'s first night in 1953 was the only first night performance that Christie enjoyed, usually she'd be too nervous at a premiere.
92. Christie's daughter Rosalind told her mother that it would be impossible to adapt [The Hollow](#) for the stage, in this situation however mother certainly knew best!
93. Another bench mark for Christie came in 1951, when sales of [They Came to Baghdad](#) in the US outstripped sales of all her previous novels.
94. When Christie wrote [Murder on the Orient Express](#) in 1933, the murderer in the true story on which it was based, had still to be found.
95. Christie was a huge admirer of other authors, especially P.G. Wodehouse to whom she dedicated [Hallowe'en Party](#).
96. 'Agatha Christie and Archaeology' was a special exhibition held in 2001 by the British Museum. On display were a number of photographs and home movies Christie had shot while on expeditions with Max Mallowan. Famously camera shy she appeared in very few of them.



Agatha Christie

97. Marple Hall, an old haunted mansion in Cheshire, near to where Christie's sister Madge lived is believed to be the inspiration for Miss Marple's name.
98. Not content with teaching herself to read, by her early teens Agatha was able to read *The Three Musketeers*, in French!
99. Mrs Boynton in [Appointment with Death](#) came to life in 1933 after Christie had observed a real-life version during a cruise along the river Nile.
100. Christie's [An Autobiography](#) was published a year after her death, but was written over a period of fifteen years from 1950 to 1965.
101. Christie's first novel *Snow upon the Desert* was never published. It was written in 1908, the same year that Henry Ford launched the world's first mass-produced car, the Model-T Ford.
102. There has always been speculation that Christie, subconsciously or otherwise, named Hercule Poirot after the retired police detective Hercules Popeau, created years earlier by Mrs Belloc Lowndes.
103. Christie won numerous awards during her illustrious career. In 1954 the Mystery Writers of America bestowed upon her their first ever Grandmaster Award.
104. *Chimneys*, the play, an adaptation by Christie of her novel [The Secret of Chimneys](#) was first performed over 70 years after it was written, receiving its premiere in Calgary in 2003 with Christie's grandson Mathew Prichard in the audience.
105. Christie thought [The Mystery of the Blue Train](#) was a terrible book.
106. No other female playwright has matched Christie's record of having three plays running simultaneously in London's West End.
107. Christie took pleasure at being invited to judge an essay competition at the school local to her home, Greenway. She even corrected a few entries.
108. Christie AKA Mary Westmacott wrote [Absent in the Spring](#), over just one weekend!
109. Christie wrote many of her novels in the 'voice' of her characters. One incredible example of her writing skill can be observed in [Endless Night](#), narrated by a young working-class male, written by Christie at the age of 76.



Agatha Christie

110. A flurry of media interest accompanied the publication of [Curtain](#), the story in which Poirot dies. In the UK the Daily Telegraph reported that the exact cause of death would be issued by “his friend and inspirer, Agatha Christie”.
111. Christie’s daughter Rosalind was an accomplished artist and like her mother accompanied Max Mallowan on archeological digs. She spent a season in 1937 in Syria sketching drawings of all the artifacts Max had found.
112. Agatha dedicated her novel [Dumb Witness](#) to Peter, the dog. He was a wire-haired terrier and one of her favourite dogs, she described him as “a dog in a thousand”.
113. Agatha Christie Ltd was formed in 1955, their star employee at that time was, well, Agatha Christie.
114. Christie’s knowledge of spiritualism and the occult was extremely well informed and she often used it to good effect in her stories - [The Pale Horse](#) and [Towards Zero](#) are excellent examples.
115. Christie was an excellent pianist but stage fright prevented her pursuing it as a career.
116. Christie’s novel [And Then There Were None](#) has sold over one hundred million copies.
117. Christie changed the time in the title [4.50 from Paddington](#) several times before deciding on 4.50, as she didn’t want it to coincide with a real train time.
118. Christie selected a symbol of three interlinked fish to be used in Collins’ 1966 collection of her works called ‘The Greenway Edition’. It’s a symbol she also used in the short story [The House of Lurking Death](#) from [Partners in Crime](#).
119. Tiglath Pileser is the rather exotic name of an Assyrian warrior king whose artifacts were discovered by Max Mallowan at Nimrud. It is also the name of the vicarage cat in [A Murder is Announced](#).
120. On Agatha’s death her husband Max Mallowan wrote “Few men know what it is to live in harmony beside an imaginative, creative mind which inspires life with zest.”

