



Murder at the Vicarage

Agatha Christie

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Murder at the Vicarage marks the debut of Agatha Christie's unflappable and much beloved female detective, Miss Jane Marple. With her gift for sniffing out the malevolent side of human nature, Miss Marple is led on her first case to a crime scene at the local vicarage. Colonel Protheroe, the magistrate whom everyone in town hates, has been shot through the head. No one heard the shot. There are no leads. Yet, everyone surrounding the vicarage seems to have a reason to want the Colonel dead. It is a race against the clock as Miss Marple sets out on the twisted trail of the mysterious killer without so much as a bit of help from the local police.

Murder at the Vicarage Details

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From Reader Review *Murder at the Vicarage* for online ebook

Jason Koivu says

Murder most proper.

Agatha Christie's *Murder at the Vicarage* was my first Miss Marple. Now that I've had her I can say with the experience of knowledge, she ain't half bad! Still, I'm not sure I'd want to be caught by my more macho, football playing friends reading a tea cozy mystery. The characters are dapper dandies and old teetotaler biddies. The high manners and speech abound, aside from that of the occasional parlor maid, flatfoot, or old age pensioner. Beyond primal embarrassment, this sort of thing is just a little too quaint, even for me...and I've read all of James Herriot.

I always say I'm not into the mystery genre, but whenever I read one I'm riveted. *Murder at the Vicarage* has some clever misdirection. The murder is plausible, the details creditable and the solving of it all rewardingly confounding. I found the writing style reminiscent of PG Wodehouse. A quick bit of research showed that they were contemporaries, living through and writing within the same era. I tally this as a positive as I am a big Wodehouse fan. His work is light-handed, making for airy reading. The same can be said of the few Christies I've read. Mostly stress-free, highly enjoyable stuff that won't tax one's emotions too deeply.

Wilma says

I love British detectives!! Alhoewel gedateerd...ik heb genoten van de typische Engelse sfeer in deze detective van Agatha Christie met natuurlijk Miss Marple...lekker kneuterig, ongecompliceerd!!

Susan says

This first Miss Marple mystery is deceptively gentle, with much of the story narrated by the mild mannered vicar. When he returns to the vicarage to find the body of Colonel Protheroe shot in his study, the vicar becomes involved in the murder investigation, aided by his neighbour Miss Marple. There is a wonderful list of suspects, motives and false trails along the way, until Jane Marple untangles the threads and makes everything clear.

Not only is this a masterfully plotted story, but it introduces us to St Mary Mead and a cast of characters who will become familiar friends in later books. There are surly housemaids, ne'er do well poachers, gossipy old ladies and crotchety old men in abundance. As Miss Marple is keen to point out, you can see all of life quite well in a small village and nobody understands the undercurrents of life quite like she does. Wonderful fun, well written and utterly delightful, if you have never tried this series, this first book is a great place to start.

Adrian says

What a marvellous book, I had forgotten how enjoyable it is to read Agatha Christie's books. I read this many years ago but only remembered the Joan Hickson TV adaptation, and even then I didn't guess who did it prior to the denouement. Every time Miss Marple is mentioned I just see Joan Hickson (not Geraldine McEwan, nor Angela Lansbury, nor Margaret Rutherford, nor Julia McKenzie), always Joan Hickson, I can see her hesitating and saying "oh well" in a self deprecating manner as she does in the book. Anyway enough on actresses, the book, was excellent and has spurred me on to read more Marples.

Councillor says

Who doesn't know the famous Miss Marple and her investigation talents? When it comes to well-known detectives in classic literature, along with Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot she will belong to those who are mentioned first. I can almost imagine the gossipy, annoying and very inquisitive lady snooping around the village, and it's easy to understand why a smart character like her earned such a recognition beneath crime and mystery novels. "Murder at the Vicarage" is called the first book in the Miss Marple series, yet she only appears in a handful of scenes, irregularly interspersed in the course of this novel.

In the first place, Agatha Christie writes about a colonel's death and the small town's vicar who tries to discover the murderer's identity. Most of the characters will at some point of the novel be suspected of being the wanted murderer, but the reader should expect the final reveal to be somehow unpredictable. I thought I had figured out who the killer was halfway through the novel, but the outcome was ... I could not have been more wrong. And it would indeed be surprising if anyone else was as smart as Miss Marple in the quest of figuring out the identity of the culprit. However, this also caused another one of this book's weak spots: Although it is only 270 pages long, it dragged on for the second half, as nearly no new information were added and the investigators were more or less left groping in the dark.

Agatha Christie writes about very different characters trying to live in a small town where nothing ever happens - until this highly disliked man is murdered at the vicarage. As the novel is written from the first-person-perspective of the vicar, Leonard Clement, the reader has to rely on his observations, which made it even harder to guess the outcome of the murder mystery. After all, the author managed to write complicated and confusing murder mysteries with nearly no loose ends, however, something else fell by the wayside: the characters. With nearly no character development or interesting relationships present, it is hardly possible to get invested into the plot itself, and with Miss Marple being only a side character, the most interesting part of the novel was ignored for most of the time.

My first Miss Marple novel, my second Agatha Christie novel, and still no fan of her works. I guess I'll be staying faithful to Sherlock Holmes!

Iryna (Book and Sword) says

Turned out that this was a re-read. Like with many of Agatha's books, as I read tons of them a few years back and can't remember which ones I did read.

Also, for such a short book it took me ages to read it. Mostly, because I was very busy. But also because I was so bored.

It seems that last time I read it, I've enjoyed it more. But this time around there was just too much "going around the bush" and "useless plot twists" for my liking.

I still enjoyed it, but not as much as I enjoy some of her other works.

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Rachel says

Yet again Christie manages to craft a mystery so intricate it's all you can do to keep up, never mind get ahead of her. 4 stars instead of 5 as it took me ages to get invested in these characters for whatever reason, and because I got tired of Clement remarking upon how clever Miss Marple is (we get it). But the resolution was fantastic and I thought the humor in this one in particular was great.

James says

A solid 4.5 stars for *Murder at the Vicarage*, the first novel in the Miss Marple cozy mystery series, written by Agatha Christie in 1930. I've read ~ten novels by Christie and this one is near the top of the list for me. From the characters to the setting and the plot to the tone, it's an intriguing and immersive read. It started out a bit slow for me as the scene was being set, but once the murder happened, it took off in quick force. I can happily say that I had 2 potential guesses as the culprit(s), and I was correct (which doesn't always happen). I also knew there was way too much reference to 'time on clocks' for it not to be important; someone messed with the spinning needles to change the appearance of when the murder happened. But only by minutes... and you'll never guess how important it was!

For many, this will be too on-the-nose or over-simplified when it comes to the layout at approach of Miss Marple's investigation. Though she's responsible for solving it, she's not the main character. The vicar tells us the story of what happened to the deceased, and he interacts with the detectives investigating the crime. Another priest is murdered, but he's not very well liked, so it's okay, right? Some think so... but not all the 'little old biddies' (how the book refers to them) are in agreement. The gossip is out of control in this book, but I adored it for what it was -- a clever plot technique to reveal clues and keep us guessing. Add in the very peculiar marriages between the different priests and their wives, and it's baffling what life was like a century ago. But I'd give nearly anything to be part of it.

What appeals to me most in these Marple novels is how she drops a few thoughts, then scatters around. She leaves mysterious notes for someone to come see her, then won't reveal everything she's thinking. She teases us. But it's as much fun as it is frustrating. She knows, but she's not 100% certain how... so she won't say it all at once until she's got every nasty little detail ferreted out.

The poor vicar suffers in this one as the murder happens in his house -- everyone is up in his business. We know it can't be him or his wife, but wow do they look suspicious. Add in the side-stories and you've got one easy read. It just makes me smile to absorb these quaint settings and stories. I think even though this is the last in my April Agatha Christie Readathon, I am going to keep reading one a month this year.

this-over-with Inspector Slack, the pretending-to-be-an-idiot-beautiful-but-soulless Lettice, Christie paints a vivid portrait of country life.

Simona Bartolotta says

“My dear young man, you underestimate the detective instinct of village life. In St. Mary Mead every one knows your most intimate affairs. There is no detective in England equal to a spinster lady of uncertain age with plenty of time on her hands.”

It's no mystery that I am no aficionado of Miss Marple's, but with *Murder at the Vicarage*, her very first adventure, **I found myself gradually warming toward her** in a way I didn't expect. This happened, I believe, because in this novel Miss Marple is no different from the multitude of gossip old ladies inhabiting the peaceful country village of St Mar Mead, except that she is, uncannily, way more brilliant than sharp than any of them. **She is a busybody through and through**, the kind of woman who constantly keeps an eye on the window to see who comes and who goes, the neighbour everyone would hate and dream of killing. **She is a complete and utter pain in the neck—unless you need her to solve some homicide.**

What else can I say? Just another regular, plain day in regular, plain St. Mary Mead.

Gary says

The 1st book in the Miss Marple series by Agatha Christie.

A great quick read with lots of twists and turns keeping you guessing until the very end.

Ms. Smartarse says

All appearances point to St. Mary Mead being the usual English small town. It has its share of colorful inhabitants, but for the most part it's a rather peaceful place.

There's the vicar, whose day job of local sounding board is an excellent starting point for his newly discovered amateur sleuthing hobby. He is frequently accosted by several of the *old cats*, as the local busybodies are lovingly dubbed by the younger generation. And of course, we cannot forget Colonel Protheroe: most respected magistrate, as well as most despised person in town.

It is in fact the latter's murder, that rouses the town from its peaceful slumber, setting loose a sudden and unexpected chain of events.

Even though I was a big fan of Dame Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot series in high school, I have somehow never got around to reading any of her books featuring Miss Marple. So what better time to tackle them, than a lengthy Christmas break? I mean, who doesn't like a dash of crime with their afternoon tea?

Unlike the Hercule Poirot series, where the famous detective is generally sought out to help investigating the murder, Miss Marple is hardly ever requested for a consult. As a matter of fact, she is generally lumped together with the 'old cats', although the vicar does admit that she at least has a sense of humor.

I loved getting reacquainted with the author's typical mysteries, where I never guess the perpetrator, although I love to ponder the problem. I was also pleasantly surprised to discover an excellent sense of humor to go with her numerous memorable one liners.

There is no detective in England equal to a spinster lady of uncertain age with plenty of time on her hands.

“Was bad language used?” asked Colonel Melchett.

“It depends on what you call bad language.”

“Could you understand it?” I asked.

“Of course I could understand it.”

“Then it couldn't have been bad language,” I said.

Mrs. Price Ridley looked at me suspiciously.

“A refined lady,” I explained, “is naturally unacquainted with bad language.”

“What are you doing this afternoon, Griselda?”

“My duty,” said Griselda. “My duty as the Vicaress. Tea and scandal at four thirty.”

Score: 3.4/5

Objectively speaking, there was nothing special in the story, but it was incredibly entertaining. I can't wait to read the following books in the series.

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book 2: The Thirteen Problems
book 3: The Body in the Library

Carol ?? says

I pondered (and pondered!) my rating but have decided to go enjoyment and how good this was for the first in a series - The Divine Christie had me completely fooled!

There are faults - too many characters (some very similar) and the characterisation of Miss M is very uneven - she is a right old bat at the start, but by the halfway point she is the amateur sleuth I love. The trademark fluffiness hides great powers of observation and deduction.

Like there is a lot more humour in this novel than most of her later ones. And an awareness of social issues. Ms Christie puts these words in one of her character's mouths;

better place to start than *Murder at the Vicarage*, the book that introduced Miss Marple to the world.

Leonard Clement along with his wife Griselda run the vicarage in sleepy village St Mary Mead. A hamlet that barely classifies as a town, all people know everyone else's business, and the vicar is looked to for guidance on all matters, religious or not. The case begins as Colonel Lucius Protheroe meets with Clement to discuss a pressing matter. Yet, before Clement can join Protheroe in his study, he finds the Colonel murdered there.

As in Christie's cases featuring Poirot, the police assigned to this case appear to be inept at best. All of the old women in St Mary Mead believe that they can solve the crime better than the inspectors can. No meddling spinster has much to offer Clement on this case except for his neighbor, the witty Jane Marple. Miss Marple immediately declares that she has seven suspects, but she is pretty sure she knows whodunit. As in many modern cases featuring private eyes, the police do not appreciate Marple getting in their way, and beg her off the case. Yet, she has eyes and ears everywhere, and early on it is obvious that Miss Marple will solve the case while the police are slugging through basic evidence.

Unlike the sophisticated Poirot, Miss Marple appears as anyone's neighbor. She is a sweet older woman yet feisty and would be interesting to get to know. Whereas Poirot exercises his little gray cells, Miss Marple snoops around, her main objective to provide safety to the village that she lives in. A forerunner to today's cozy mysteries, Miss Marple appears to provide an easy reading contrast to Poirot's cases which have me thinking throughout.

A voracious mystery reader, I did enjoy Miss Marple as a change because she could be any citizen who desires to solve a mystery. As expected she does reach the case's conclusion before the police, who are at a collective wit's end. Dame Christie is still the standard bearer for all modern mystery writers, and while I prefer Hercule Poirot, I have a feeling I will be revisiting Miss Marple as well. 3.75 stars.

Jadranka says

"Ubistvo u parohijskom dvoru" je prva knjiga još jednog veoma popularnog serijala Agate Kristi o detektivu amateru - gospođici Marpl. Lično, više mi prijaju dogodovštine gospođice Marpl od avantura mesje Poaroa. Daleko od toga da mi se ne sviđa šarmantni Poaro, ali gospođica Marpl me je kupila nekako "na prvu loptu". Gospođica Marpl je jedna sredovećna, radoznala dama koja me u mnogo čemu podseća na jednu moju komšinicu, a pre svega po tome što uvek zna šta se dešava "u tuđem dvorištu". Međutim, ta moja komšinicica za razliku od glavne Agatine junakinje, nije ni približno toliko pametna, a nedostaje joj i poprilično njenog šarma :)

Sve u svemu, lako štivo koje se brzo čita, sa povremenim neočekivanim obrtima i zanimljivom atmosferom.

Rachel Hall says

It is thanks to my Goodreads friend, Roman Clodia, that I am belatedly coming to read Agatha Christie and what an utter joy she is! The debut appearance of Miss Marple in 1930 is a plotting masterpiece and full of wit and tongue-in-cheek observations which prove a delight for readers. More interesting still is the proliferation of suspects and with all and sundry in the sleepy village of St Mary Mead having expressed

their antipathy to the deceased churchwarden, Colonel Lucius Protheroe, often very vocally, suspicion looms large...

Opening with the vicar recounting his frustrations at the “pompous old brute” - in the words of his sixteen-year-old nephew Dennis, and Protheroe’s insistence that there be an investigation into a suspected defalcation from church funds he makes a remark most unbecoming for a man of the cloth. The vicar mentions that he is expecting the “trying” Protheroe the very next evening to go through the accounts. An off the cuff riposte about the man’s demise sets the tone for the sentiments of many within the village of St Mary Mead. Distractingly pretty, not in the least bit meek and incapable of taking anything seriously, the vicar’s twenty years younger wife, Griselda, then does her duty and hosts afternoon tea for the elderly spinsters of the village. Scurrilous gossip, supposition and a few choice remarks from Miss Jane Marple manages to convey the notable events and arguments that are consuming the villagers occupations. This airing of dirty linen serves as a brief introduction to the local citizens and the multitude of potential motives. And with everyone in St Mary Mead seemingly having their own differences with the Colonel and ulterior motives for implicating another party, the red herrings are plentiful as Christie shines the light of suspicion on each and everyone, making the majority of the villagers ‘fair game’ suspects.

Narrated by the mild-mannered vicar, Len Clement, the amateur investigations which go on amongst the villagers are full of dry wit and loaded with suggestive incidents, and his unassuming manner allows Agatha Christie to make mischief and entertain her readers with some scathing remarks, all made in the disguise of being the very converse. As the village goes into amateur sleuthing mode, with no definitive record of whether shots were heard, a surly housekeeper who is loathe to be drawn into the matter and a deliberately fast clock, confusion reigns supreme. Specifying the exact dynamics of how each individual has come a cropper at the hands of Colonel Protheroe would do a disservice to what is an absolute pleasure to observe first-hand and it is Miss Marple who soon after the discovery says she can think of at least seven potential viable candidates. Unwilling to share her unproven suspicions, the all seeing and unobtrusive Miss Marple’s deductive powers prove a match for anyone, and all under the guise of her many smoke screens as a demure spinster. Early candidates range from the seemingly intentionally dreamy, Lettice Protheroe, daughter of the Colonel, through to second wife Anne and the young portrait artist charming the ladies of the village, Lawrence Redding. With Colonel Protheroe having a reputation for being firm on the bench in his capacity as local magistrate and taking a rather overbearing interest in the work of the archaeologist engaged on his land, it proves extraordinary difficult to discount the many suspects.

A singularly deficient in humour but very zealous Inspector Slack is determined to get to the bottom of things and all under the watchful eye of the Chief Constable of the County, Colonel Melchett. Whether it is gardening, birdwatching or simply passing the time of day, Miss Marple misses nothing and her unflappable manner and habit of letting the conversation unfold naturally frequently proving revealing. As the vicar muses to himself, “for all her fragile appearance, Miss Marple is capable of holding her own with any policeman or Chief Constable in existence”. Indeed, as the vicar informs Inspector Slack:

“My dear young man, you underestimate the detective instinct of village life. In St Mary Mead everyone knows your intimate affairs. There is no detective in England equal to a spinster lady of uncertain age with plenty of time on her hands.”

Miss Marple herself has a rather simpler theory on her eagle-eyed skills:

“I’m afraid that observing human nature for as long as I have done, one gets not to expect very much from it. I dare say the idle tittle-tattle is very wrong and unkind, but it is so often true, isn’t it?”

As careless comments and deliberate attempts at implicating others unravel, just as I thought I was getting the measure of events and forming my own theories, Agatha Christie blindsided me with some cracking diversional tactics. Even more satisfying was that Christie took the time to address all of the puzzles which made for headaches along the way and hence tied up all loose ends and the solution is undoubtedly highly plausible. Not only does Miss Marple beat the Inspector to the solution, this first mystery sees her devising a little trap to ascertain proof of guilt and force the murderer into the open. Bravo! Outrageously good entertainment and my journey into the work of Christie is only just beginning..
