

# WU?<sup>@</sup>therep

## THE MOUSETRAP

by **Agatha Christie**

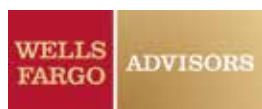
Directed by **Paul Mason Barnes**

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# the 411

At The Rep, we know that life moves fast—okay, really fast. But we also know that some things are worth

slowing down for. We believe that live theatre is one of those pit stops worth making and are excited that you are going to stop by for a show. To help you get the most bang for your buck, we have put together **WU? @ THE REP**—an IM guide that will give you everything you need to know to get at the top of your theatergoing game—fast. You'll find character descriptions (**A/S/L**), a plot summary (**FYI**), biographical information (**F2F**), historical context (**B4U**), and other bits and pieces (**HTH**). Most importantly, we'll have some ideas about what this all means **IRL**, anyway.

## CU@therep!



### The Teacher's Lounge

In an effort to make our educational materials accessible to students and easy for educators to incorporate into the classroom, our study guide is written in a student-oriented format. We hope that you will circulate this guide among your students in the weeks preceding your visit to The Rep, encouraging them to browse it before and after class and as time allows, using it as a launch point for both pre- and post-performance discussions. You may also want to visit our website, [www.repstl.org](http://www.repstl.org), for additional information including activity suggestions and behind-the-scenes information. Any materials, either from this guide or from our website may be reproduced for use in the classroom. As always, we appreciate your making live theatre a part of your classroom experience and welcome your feedback and questions.

**NEATO!**

## WELCOME!

The desire to learn, insatiable when awakened, can sometimes lie dormant until touched by the right teacher or the right experience. We at The Rep are grateful to have the opportunity to play a role supporting you as you awaken the desire for learning in your students.

Who doesn't like a good puzzle with clues, oddities and plenty of red herrings? Agatha Christie's classic whodunit shows your students the danger in making judgments about people based on their looks and behavior as revealed secrets make everyone question their assumptions. Your students will use observation and inferential reasoning while having a good time identifying the murderer at Monkswell Manor.

It would be a good idea to take a minute on the bus to give your students these quick theatre etiquette reminders:

- This show has one intermission; there will be time for bathroom breaks before the show and halfway through.
- The actors can hear the audience and appreciate the laughter, gasps and quiet attention to action. However, talking, moving around and eating is very distracting to others and can dampen the energy of what is happening on stage.
- Pictures, phone calls and texting are not allowed at any time during the performance.

Live theatre won't allow your students to take a passive role—they must work with us to create the experience which takes the learning deeper. Our unique ability to fuse words and images onstage allows your students to explore new ideas as well as excites their imaginations. We will do our part so your students will be stirred to understandings and self-awareness while delving into new and familiar worlds. You are doing your part by using The Rep to extend your intellectual and aesthetic curriculum. Thank you!

Marsha Coplon, Director of Education

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# A/S/L

**MOLLIE RALSTON:** the well-mannered owner of Monkswell Manor, and wife of Giles

**GILES RALSTON:** Mollie's husband who runs Monkswell Manor with her

**DETECTIVE SERGEANT TROTTER:** a detective who shows up at the Manor to investigate a murder suspect on the run

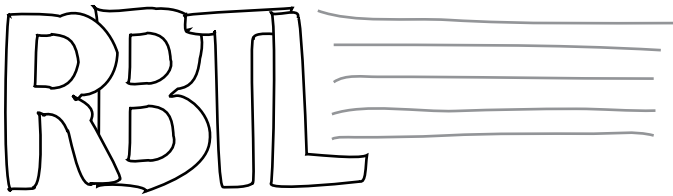
**CHRISTOPHER WREN:** an excitable young man who acts a bit peculiar

**MRS. BOYLE:** a haughty older woman who criticizes everything about the Manor

**MAJOR METCALF:** a middle-aged Army retiree

**MISS CASEWELL:** a masculine, young woman who is a bit standoffish

**MR. PARAVICINI:** an eccentric man who turns up at the Manor without a reservation when his car runs into a snow bank



## ISOLATION

Agatha Christie often set her murder mysteries in a confined space. Not only does it simplify plot development by narrowing down the list of potential suspects, but it also raises the tension amongst the characters because they know the murderer is one of them. The isolation is usually a result of bad weather (as in *The Mousetrap*), being on a remote island or on a train. Knowing that a murderer is lurking among them with a fake identity, characters in *The Mousetrap* begin to wonder whom they can trust.

## INTRIGUE

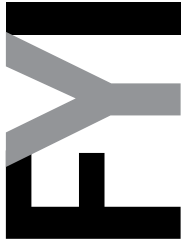
It seems Christie deliberately put explicit references to the appeal of a thriller within *The Mousetrap*. Examples include the radio voice talking about the mechanics of fear; Mr. Paravicini stating how it's important to know about the people sleeping under one's roof because someone could be a madman or even a murderer; and Wren commenting on the events: "Quite a thrill, this whole business." It appears some of these lines act together as an omniscient (a.k.a. all-knowing) narrator. Why do you think Christie chose to include these references?

## RETRIBUTION

The past comes back to haunt multiple characters in *The Mousetrap*, all reflecting the murder's main motive of revenge on a past crime. Think of all the characters who have lied about their pasts; what happens to each of them? Defined as a person's actions bringing upon inevitable results to their future selves, "karma" plays a strong role in this play.

## PARANOIA AND DOUBT

When it becomes obvious that the murderer is one of them, the people at Monkswell Manor begin to suspect one another. This is to be expected among the guests who are strangers, but even Giles and Mollie, who are married, begin to doubt each other's innocence. They each find out they've deceived the other about something small, which leads them to eventually believe their spouse is capable of murder. What specific events lead them each to be so paranoid?



## SPOILER ALERT!

IT'S LATE AFTERNOON at Monkswell Manor and a strong snowstorm is in full swing. A voice on the radio is heard describing the recent murder of a Mrs. Maureen Lyon, and the police are looking to interview a man seen near the crime scene. Mollie and Giles Ralston, the owners of the Manor, each enter from a day of separate errands in preparation for their soon-to-be arriving guests, who will be the first to stay at the recently converted guesthouse. Mollie and Giles discuss their nerves about their new business venture. Giles worries about the fact they're allowing strangers to stay at their home, but Mollie assures him that they all wrote "from very good addresses."

ONE BY ONE, the guests arrive. There's Christopher Wren, an architect who is a bit neurotic and childlike in nature, but friendly; Mrs. Boyle, an older snobbish woman who is very disappointed in the Manor's amenities and the Ralstons' amateur hosting skills; Major Metcalf, a middle-aged former military man whose demeanor is still very much that of a soldier; and Miss Casewell, a sharp-witted young woman who is rather masculine in nature. They all get to know each other in individual exchanges. Major Metcalf seems likeable enough, while Miss Casewell appears a bit peculiar. No one likes Mrs. Boyle's imposing nature, and the reviews on Wren are mixed; Mollie thinks he's sweet, but Giles find him a bit odd and unsettling. Soon after, Mollie and Giles receive an unexpected guest in the older Mr. Paravicini who says his car ran into a snow bank. Flamboyant and chatty, he tells Mollie and Giles he feels lucky to have broken down near a guesthouse. Giles and Mollie tell him he's welcome to a small room they have left, and the three chat about how they're likely snowed in for the time being.



THE NEXT AFTERNOON, Mrs. Boyle and Miss Casewell are in the sitting room, and Mrs. Boyle inquires about Miss Casewell's background. However, Miss Casewell is reserved, only revealing that she "lives abroad." Later, Mollie picks up a phone call where she is told by a police officer that a sergeant is being sent up to the Manor. She and Giles are worried and can't imagine what it would be about.

EVENTUALLY DETECTIVE Sergeant Trotter arrives on snow skis, and says he's there regarding the murder of Maureen Lyon the day before. He tells them the woman used to go by the name Maureen Stanning and was involved in the Longridge Farm case years ago, in which three Corrigan children, a girl and two boys, were placed under the foster care of Maureen and her husband. The younger boy died as a result of neglect and ill treatment, and the Stannings were sent to prison where the husband eventually died; Maureen was released after serving her sentence. Trotter tells them that the police found a notebook at Maureen's murder scene, which contained two addresses: that of Maureen Stanning and Monkswell Manor. Below the addresses was the nursery rhyme "Three Blind Mice" and on the dead woman's body was a piece of paper with the written words "This is the first." Trotter came to the Manor to discover any connections between the Longridge Farm case and the Ralstons or their guests, and to ensure the safety of the household. Trotter informs them that the Corrigan girl was adopted by a family and her whereabouts are unknown; the older boy was known to have joined the Army for a bit and was described by the Army psychologist as schizophrenic. Trotter tells him that the oldest Corrigan boy is their prime suspect.

THE RALSTONS AND guests all deny any connection with the Longridge Farm case, though Mrs. Boyle is eventually called out by Major Metcalf who states she was one of the magistrates who sent the children to live at the farm. Mrs. Boyle admits it but denies any wrongdoing—she was only doing her job and the farm seemed like a fit place for the children to live. Trotter sees he's not going to get any more helpful information from the group and goes to investigate the house. Everyone else goes about their business unnerved by the possibility of a murderer in their midst. Mrs. Boyle is eventually the only one left in the sitting room trying to find a radio program. Someone enters, and Mrs. Boyle is startled, but then says: "Oh it's you." The lights then go out and a scuffle is heard. After a bit, Mollie enters and turns on the lights to find Mrs. Boyle's dead body.

TEN MINUTES LATER, everyone is in the sitting room and Mrs. Boyle's body has been removed. Trotter is interrogating everyone about their whereabouts during the time of Mrs. Boyle's murder. They all deny being involved, but no one has a strong alibi as they were all alone at the time. Trotter warns them that Mrs. Boyle was the last to lie to him, and she's now dead. There are supposed to be three blind mice, which means the killer has one more murder to check off his or her list. Giles openly states that Wren seems to match the physical description of the killer and the age of the eldest Corrigan boy, but Wren fiercely denies any connection. But that's not the only accusation thrown. Trotter mentions to Mollie in private how Giles is about the same age as Wren and could be the oldest Corrigan boy. Mollie admits they have only been married a year and knew each other for

three weeks before their wedding, but she tells Trotter his suspicion is absurd—yet it's obvious the seed of doubt has been planted.

TROTTER LEAVES MOLLIE to ponder, and Wren eventually enters. The two discuss Wren's painful youth, but he still denies being one of the Corrigan children and having anything to do with the murders. Mollie is sympathetic and tells him that he must bear the pain of the past and go on as usual. Wren asks if she's speaking from experience, and she admits that she is, but the incident is too horrible to talk about.

GILES THEN WALKS in on their intimate conversation and becomes angry. Christopher leaves and the couple discusses their present situation. It appears that just as Mollie has begun to doubt Giles, he feels the same way about her. Convinced Wren is the murderer, he asks Mollie if she's known him for a long time and only pretended to meet him the day before. Mollie tells Giles he's crazy.

LATER, TROTTER CALLS everyone into the sitting room. He intends to recreate the circumstances of Mrs. Boyle's murder. He tells everyone to reenact another person's placement during the strangling. Playing the part of Mrs. Boyle, Trotter is alone in the room until he calls in Mollie who was pretending to be Mr. Paravicini playing the piano in another room. Trotter tells Mollie he knows who the killer is and confronts her about being the youngest Corrigan boy's teacher, whom he wrote a letter to begging for help before he died. Mollie admits she was his teacher, but she didn't receive his letter until he was already dead—the guilt has haunted her ever since.







SCOTLAND YARD: metropolitan London police

MUG: British slang for fool

GUINEA: a type of British currency

DOGSBODY: someone who does grunt work

BOORISH: unmannered or crude

BYGONE: in the past

IMPERTINENCE: unmannered intrusiveness

MACABRE: gruesome or horrifying because of involvement with death or dying

SOCIALIST: someone who politically believes in a social system where ownership of capital, land, etc. belongs to the community as a whole; "red" is a slang description term for a socialist

CHILBLAINS: an inflammation of the hands and feet caused by exposure to cold and moisture

IMPLICITLY: implied without being expressly stated

KINDLING: a material used to ignite a fire

COKE: coal

MEMSAHIB: used formerly in colonial India as a form of respectful address for a European woman

MAGISTRATE: a judicial officer

RUDDY: red or reddish

SCHIZOPHRENIC: a severe mental disorder that can have various symptoms depending on the severity, including intellectual deterioration, social isolation, paranoia, delusions and hallucinations

SPIV: a petty criminal

SUPERINTENDENT: supervisor

MUFFLER: scarf worn around one's neck for warmth

BLUE MURDER: a phrase meaning a loud or impassioned outcry

ANTIQUARIAN: having to do with antiques; valuable because of being rare or old

SURMISE: to think or infer without certain or strong evidence

BARRISTER: a lawyer in England

ABSCONDING: departing in a sudden and secret manner, especially to avoid capture and legal prosecution

BARMY: British slang for eccentric or crazy

JEUNESSE: French for "young"

HUNT THE THIMBLE: a party game in which a thimble is hidden and players must find it to win

SADISTIC: deriving pleasure from extreme cruelty

REPROACH: to place blame

SOLICITOR: someone who makes requests for trade or business

THIRD DEGREE: intense questioning

SHREWD: astute or sharp in practical manners

PARLOUR GAME: a group game played indoors



# BU

## THE DARK ORIGINS OF NURSERY RHYMES

"I adore nursery rhymes, don't you? Always so tragic and macabre. That's why children like them."—Christopher Wren, *The Mousetrap*

Although learning nursery rhymes is a young childhood memory for most people, it turns out many of them have gloomy, considerably more adult meanings. No wonder Agatha Christie used them as themes in many of her works! Read on to learn more about the melancholy origins of some of your favorite nursery rhymes.

***Three blind mice, three blind mice  
See how they run, see how they run  
They all ran after the farmer's wife  
Who cut off their tails with a carving knife  
Did you ever see such a sight in your life  
As three blind mice?***

Christie's eponymous nursery rhyme for *The Mousetrap* is about English Queen Mary I (the farmer's wife), the first daughter of Henry VIII, who persecuted Protestants during the 16th century. The three blind mice refer to three Protestant bishops who plotted a plan against her; however, Queen Mary found out and had the three burned at the stake.

***Baa Baa Black Sheep  
Have you any wool?  
Yes, sir, yes, sir  
Three bags full  
One for the master  
One for the dame  
And one for the little boy  
who lives down the lane.***

This rhyme's beginning goes back to the 12th century when wealth in England was very much based on wool. "Baa, Baa Black Sheep" was a lament from the farmers of England who in the rhyme are represented by the little boy. The other two figures in the rhyme, the master and the dame, are the king and church who would collect a high tax on the farmers' profits. Therefore, a third goes to royalty, a third goes to the church, and only a third is left for the poor farmer.

***Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall  
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall  
All the king's horses and all the king's men  
Couldn't put Humpty together again***

The real Humpty Dumpty was not a person but a powerful cannon used by the Royalist forces during the English Civil War of (1642-1651). The Parliamentarians had besieged a town, and the Royalists/King's men blasted Humpty Dumpty—which sat on top of a church tower—at them for 11 weeks. Eventually the top of the church tower was blown away sending Humpty Dumpty to the ground. The king's cavalry (the horses) and the infantry (the men) hurried to retrieve the cannon, but they couldn't put Humpty together again, and without their weapon, they were soon defeated.

***Ring around the rosie  
A pocketful of posies  
"Ashes, ashes"  
We all fall down!***

This rhyme is actually about a rosy-red ring-shaped rash, a symptom of the Bubonic Plague, which wiped out much of the European population in the 14th century. The posies refer to the herbs the sick carried inside their pockets to cover up their bad smell. And when they died, they were often cremated, hence the "ashes, ashes."



KNOWN WORLDWIDE as the “Queen of Crime,” Agatha Christie is probably the most successful and famous mystery writer of all time. Her books have sold more two billion copies in over 45 languages—in fact, she is only outsold by the Bible and Shakespeare.

BORN AGATHA MILLER in Torquay, England, in 1890, Christie was raised in a wealthy upper middle-class family. Her father died when she was just a child, but her mother proved a strong and stable influence and encouraged Christie to write from an early age. At 16, Christie was sent to Paris where she studied singing and piano. In 1914 she married Colonel Archibald Christie of the Royal Flying Corps and worked as a nurse during World War I where she learned about prescriptions and poisons—something that came in handy in her future writing career. After the war, the couple had a daughter, Rosalind, and Christie continued writing, mostly novels. She became a hit with her first detective story published in 1920 called *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, which introduced one of Christie’s most famous characters, Hercule Poirot, an eccentric Belgian detective who subsequently appeared in 33 of her novels and dozens of short stories. Christie continued successfully publishing novels at a consistent rate over the next few years, which included a genre classic and one of Christie’s all-time favorites, *Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, in 1926.

HOWEVER, THAT YEAR ended up being a tragic one for Christie in more ways than one; her mother passed away, and the Colonel was caught cheating. These two events sparked a peculiar episode in Christie’s life that’s become somewhat of a legend in that it was like one of her mystery novels. She “disappeared” for a time and her car was found on a random corner with some of her clothing and identification scattered around. There was a large public outcry, and the media speculated murder or suicide. However, less than two weeks later, Christie

was found by authorities living in a hotel registered under “Mrs. Neele”—the name of her husband’s mistress. Although, she never spoke about it publicly, it is believed the event was triggered by a nervous breakdown and/or an attempt to embarrass her husband. She and the Colonel later divorced.

CHRISTIE REMARRIED in 1930 to archaeology professor Max Mallowan, with whom she travelled on many expeditions and wrote about in her 1946 memoir *Come, Tell Me How You Live*. That same year, Christie introduced another one of her infamous sleuths, the elderly spinster Miss Jane Marple, in *Murder At The Vicarage*. In contrast to Poirot who used logic and rational methods, Marple relied on her female instinct and empathy to solve crimes. Miss Marple would go on to star in 12 of Christie’s novels.

DURING HER MORE than 50-year writing career, Christie wrote a total of 80 novels and short story collections, some of her most famous works being *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934), *Death on the Nile* (1937), and *And Then There Were None* (1939), the former two having been successfully made into popular films during the 1970s. Christie also wrote over a dozen plays including *The Mousetrap*, which opened in London in 1952, and holds the title of being the longest continuously running play in theatrical history. In 1971, Christie received her country’s highest honor when she received the Order of Dame Commander of the British Empire. Dame Agatha Christie died in 1976, having made her last public appearance at the opening night of the play version of *Murder on the Orient Express*. Once when asked about what made her take up writing, Christie’s answer seems to be a mix of creativity, imagination—and typical British self-deprecating humor: “I found myself making up stories and acting the different parts. There’s nothing like boredom to make you write.”







## WHY SHE STILL RESONATES TODAY

Although most of her stories take place the better half of a century ago, Agatha Christie is still a household name synonymous with intrigue and mystery. How does her prolific amount of work still resonate today? It appears that when someone is credited with defining a genre—as Christie is by many with the detective novel—that credit doesn't always fade with time.

"Readers still like the world she created, one with recognizable characters in a recognizable setting, one that is momentarily invaded by murder but has order restored by the intervention of *The Great Detective*," said John Curran, a Christie historian who has written two books on the author, *Secret Notebooks* and *Agatha Christie: Murder in the Making*.

Barry Forshaw, editor of *British Crime Writing: An Encyclopedia*, felt similarly and in a 2009 interview with *The Independent* he discussed Christie's ability to create a strong sense of nostalgia—even for those who never lived in the settings or during the time of when

her stories take place. "She writes about an England that people nurture in their minds even if it never really existed, and that is something that appeals to both British readers and worldwide fans."

That isn't to say Christie didn't have her critics. She's been criticized for having one-dimensional characters and stories that lacked substance. However, Christie considered herself more an entertainer than a literary groundbreaker. In fact, Forshaw sees Christie's straightforward writing as much of the reason for her lasting popularity. Her simple language, methodical plots and colorful descriptions of a bygone era give her stories a universal appeal.

"The first thing that makes Christie so accessible is the way she writes," he says. "There is no single author out there who manages to translate so well into so many different languages. She keeps the language fairly straightforward and simple, but the plots are constructed incredibly well, like a finely tuned machine."

## SIGNATURE PLOT DEVICES

Many of the motifs you're used to seeing in mystery stories were first made popular by Agatha Christie.

- **Red Herrings:** Christie loved to mislead the reader. She would make certain connections that seem like clues, but were actually meant as distractions, while the real clues were underplayed. The reader could solve the murder if she or he could determine what is a real clue and what is a red herring.
- **Least Likely Suspect:** The best murder mystery is usually when the reader is as surprised by the killer's identity as the characters. Quite often, it is the least likely individual whom Christie has as her murderer. Usually the reader is led to believe the killer is completely innocent by their sympathetic demeanor or airtight alibi—only to have their true colors show or alibi disproved at the very end.
- **Disguises:** The disguise is frequent in Agatha Christie's stories as her characters often adopt fake identities or even alter their physical one to gain the trust of everyone around them. In some cases, a character will disappear and then come back in a different disguise.
- **Isolated Environments:** Christie often limits the number of suspects possible by having them confined, usually as a result of bad weather, being on a remote island, or traveling on a train. This adds an extra dose of anxiety as it soon becomes obvious to the characters that the killer is one of them.

## SCAREDY CAT

“. . .to understand the mechanics of fear, you have to study the precise effect produced on the human mind. Imagine, for instance, that you are alone in room. It is late in the afternoon. A door opens softly behind you. . .”

A murder mystery like *The Mousetrap* can be very scary—but also very entertaining. It might seem strange and counterintuitive that we would willingly choose to be scared, whether it's deciding to see a scary play or movie, reading a spooky book or going on a roller coaster. Many people avoid those activities, but others enjoy the excitement fear can give, and folks like Agatha Christie, Alfred Hitchcock, amusement park owners and Halloween vendors capitalize on that thrill-seeking. So why is it that we like being scared? There's actually a variety of reasons:

### CHEMISTRY LESSON

It seems our desire to be scared is physically ingrained in us; when we're frightened, the cerebral cortex of our brain—responsible for our memory, perception and consciousness—is aroused. The idea that we know something's about to happen produces a unique sense of suspense. Recall a time you were watching a film and intensifying music prepared your body for something frightening, i.e. the infamous Jaws theme score, in which two notes alone can cause a great amount of anxiety. Our pulse quickens, our hearts pound, our muscles tense. Our physical chemistry is producing adrenaline and heightening our senses so that we can quickly engage in a fight or flight response. But if we get that sensation from reading a book or watching a play, and we know there's no actual risk of getting hurt, we get to enjoy that adrenaline rush without the risk of being harmed.

### CHILD'S PLAY

Although usually we want to protect children from fear, they're often naturally drawn to it. Much of the most popular children's fiction,

such as the Harry Potter books and films, R.L. Stine's *Goosebumps* series, or most fairy tales deal directly with evil and things that go bump in the night. Psychologists believe watching a somewhat scary movie allows kids to process and deal with fear on their own terms and confront what might scare them, such as a monster or wicked witch.

### EVOLUTION THEORY

Fear has its benefits. Even though there's risk involved, we appreciate deviating from our normal routines. According to psychologists, our fear of the unknown encourages us to explore new possibilities. It has helped the human race's evolutionary process by encouraging us to seek out new sources of food, shelter and companionship.

### ADVENTUROUS SPIRIT

Immersing ourselves into a scary story allows us to experience the thrill of adventure and can even provide a form of catharsis for facing some of our greatest fears. "We like to prove to ourselves that we can handle it," said famed horror writer Stephen King in his essay *Why We Crave Horror Movies*. "This invitation to lapse into simplicity, irrationality and even outright madness is extended so rarely. We are told we may allow our emotions a free rein. . .or no rein at all."

### GOING TOO FAR?

However, scary stories aren't cathartic for everyone. Have you ever said the phrase: "That book/movie scarred me?" It turns out you might not be being over-dramatic. In a 2012 interview, JoAnn Cantor, founder of Your Mind on Media consulting firm and outreach director for the Center for Communication Research at the University

- 1) "The maid is the killer. Frost forms on the inside of the window, not the outside.
- 2) If the man shot himself while he was recording, how did he rewind the cassette tape?
- 3) The police didn't tell the husband where the crime scene was, but he knew where to drive.
- 4) Mark Kascale—the note essentially said "Question Mark (?)" Kascale—he broke your window."
- 5) The Butler: there's no mail on Sundays.

of Wisconsin-Madison, says experiencing a frightening tale can sometimes have lasting negative effects for certain people. For example, some folks had long-term Mrs. Bates-induced anxiety when taking a shower after seeing the famous Janet Leigh scene in Alfred Hitchcock's 1960 film *Psycho*. "Even though they know they're being irrational, they're just freaked out," said Cantor. "If you look at how the body handles

fear, if you're really, really, really freaked out and frightened, your body stores that memory."

It's smart to choose stories with themes that can thrill but not disturb. For example, if you've always been creeped out by old hotels, then you probably shouldn't check Stephen King's 1977 book *The Shining* out of the library any time soon.



## MURDER MYSTERY RIDDLES

1. One cold winter day, a rich man was found dead in his study by his maid. The maid told Detective Misteree that after she completed her work and was leaving the house, she noticed her boss' study light was on. "There was frost all over the window, so I had to wipe it away to see inside. That is when I saw his body. I called the police right away." Who is the killer and how does Detective Misteree know?
2. The owner of an oil empire was found dead with a cassette recorder in one hand and a gun in the other. When the police came in, they picked up the recorder and pressed "play"; they heard the magnate say: "I have nothing else to live for. I can't go on." And then the sound of a gunshot. After listening to the cassette tape, the police chief knows the death was not a suicide, but a murder, but how?
3. One night, a man receives a call from the police. The police tell the man that his wife, an heiress, was murdered, and that he should come to the crime scene as soon as possible. The man drops the phone and drives right away to the scene of the crime. As soon as he reaches the crime scene, the couples' yacht, the police arrest him for murder. How did the police know that the husband committed the crime?
4. Retired detective Ms. Gumshoo was sitting at home reading when a soccer ball came crashing through her window. She came to the broken window just in time to see three neighborhood boys who were brothers running around the corner. Their names were Mark, George and Keith Rascale. The next day, Ms. Gumshoo received a note that said "? Rascale—he broke your window." Which of the three brothers should Ms. Gumshoo question about the incident?
5. A former actress and famous elderly recluse was found murdered one Sunday morning. When the police arrived, they questioned her staff who gave the following alibis: The Cook was cooking breakfast The Gardener was picking vegetables. The Nurse was still sleeping. The Butler was getting the mail. The Maid was cleaning the closet. The police instantly arrested the murderer. Who did it and how did they know?

*Answers found on previous page*

# SWDY?

**Wren:** "You never really know what anyone is like—what they are really thinking. For instance, you don't know what I'm thinking about now, do you?"

- \* This line of Wren's is explicit foreshadowing; it soon becomes obvious in the story that nothing is as it seems, and with the help of disguise and fake backstories, some characters are different from what they choose to present to others. Although this idea is used as a chilling theme in a murder mystery, it can also be applied to more subtle everyday life occurrences. Have you ever pretended to be someone you're not? Why did you want to hide your true self? Have you ever found out someone was not who they pretended to be? How did it feel when you discovered the truth? Usually lies are used to cover up an insecurity. What insecurity do you think that person had?

**Miss Casewell:** "Life's what you make of it. Go straight ahead—don't look back."

**Mollie:** "One can't always help looking back"

- \* Many people in this play are trying to escape from or cover up their pasts. Something traumatic happened to each of them that they feel the need to start a new life. However, Mollie points out the past is always going to be present since it has formed who you are and can't be easily ignored. Think of a moment or incident in life you wish didn't happen, and you try over and over to forget about it. What makes it so difficult to forget? Is there a way you can confront the issue head on and get some closure? How does this usually help someone better move on than if they simply ignored the past? Why does it

feel like it's so much easier to just try to forget about it? What are some examples of the past coming into your present even though you tried hard to prevent it from happening?

**Mollie:** "I don't know what the Sergeant thinks. And he can make you think things about people. You ask yourself questions and you begin to doubt. You feel that somebody you love and know well might be—a stranger. That's what happens in a nightmare. You're somewhere in the middle of friends and then you suddenly look at their faces, and they're not your friends any longer—they're different people—just pretending. Perhaps you can't trust anybody—perhaps everybody's a stranger."

- \* This is a fairly dark observation of Mollie's. She seemed to completely trust her husband Giles until Trotter brought up a few seemingly incriminating facts about him. Don't you think if someone chose to marry someone they would implicitly have full trust in their character? Why does just a small bit of doubt affect Mollie's thinking so easily? Is it solely fear mixed with the confined, snowed-in atmosphere? Or perhaps Mollie knows deception is easier than some people might think considering she herself hasn't been entirely forthcoming with Giles. Have you ever trusted someone and then a small bit of doubt, whether it be a rumor or remark, made your mind run wild about whether you can trust them or anyone for that matter? How did the situation end up working out? Do you feel you ignored significant red flags or did you overreact, and if so, what do you think made you overreact?