

Reflections:

A Student Response Journal for...

And Then There Were None

by Agatha Christie

written by Kathryn Mitchell

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Pre-Reading

1. You've just been assigned *And Then There Were None* to read for class. Write a discussion between yourself and a classmate about what you think the book might be about. You may choose to begin like this:

You: I have to read this book for English class. It's called *And Then There Were None*. Have you read it?

Classmate: No. What's it about?

You: I'm not sure, but I think...

2. Written in the 1920s, this novel contains vocabulary and phrases used by characters that might be unfamiliar to you. People of that era simply spoke differently from how people speak today.

As you read *And Then There Were None*, keep a list of all the words you don't know. As you finish each chapter, look up their definitions and write them in your reading journal, along with a sentence of your own for each word.

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I

3. Mr. Justice Wargrave and Vera Claythorne are the first two characters we meet in the first chapter. Both are on a train, but Wargrave travels in first class and Vera travels in third.

What other differences do you notice between the two characters? Write a paragraph or two in which you contrast Vera and Mr. Wargrave.

4. In part three of the first chapter, Philip Lombard reveals his racist views when he thinks to himself, “that was the damnable part about Jews, you couldn’t deceive them about money—they knew!”

Write a response to this sentiment, in which you explain your opinion of Lombard’s thoughts and give other examples of racial stereotypes you’ve encountered.

5. By the end of the fourth part of Chapter I, you’ve met four characters; all of them seem to be en route to the same place—Indian Island.

Given the nature of these four characters and the title of the novel, write your prediction of upcoming events in the novel. What do you think is in store for these characters? What will happen to them on the island? How will they interact with one another?

6. After reading the seventh part of Chapter I, it’s clear that for some of the characters, the only thing they have in common is their destination. Agatha Christie makes a deliberate effort to create characters who have opposing perspectives. Why might that be?

Write a paragraph or two in which you identify those characters which seem to be natural adversaries. What problems might the characters face when they reach the island?

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7. Agatha Christie was a master of the murder mystery, carefully constructing a puzzle for the reader, right from the first page. In addition to introducing the characters in the novel, the first chapter contains many hints about future events.

Get out a single sheet of paper for some note taking. Down the left side of your paper, make a list of what you think are examples of events that will occur in the rest of the book. Then, to the right of each example, predict what each statement you chose is foreshadowing.

8. Although Christie introduces us to the main characters in Chapter I, she does not provide much physical description. When you read the chapter, how do you picture each character in your mind?

Think about how the words and actions of the characters influence your vision of them. Write two or three sentences about each character to describe his or her physical appearance.

9. First impressions are powerful, and Chapter I gives the reader a first impression of each character. Based only on what you have read so far, how would you characterize each of these people?

List each of the characters introduced in Chapter I on your paper; next to each one, write **one** word you think best describes him or her. Save your list; you will go back to it later.

10. Over the years, many popular novels have been adapted for the big screen. You may have seen a movie based on a novel whose actors and actresses were perfect for their parts. Sometimes, however, an actor or actress does not fit the role very well. What if this novel were made into a movie?

Pretend that you are the casting director for *And Then There Were None*, the movie. List all the major characters and list which actors and actresses would play their parts. Be sure to explain why you chose that particular person; after all, to make a movie, generally there must be recognizable actors in it, or you won't get the money.

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II

11. In part five of this chapter the characters finally arrive at the house on Indian Island. While the house is described as “exciting” and “really most attractive,” there are few specific details about the house’s appearance. How do you picture the house in your mind? Based upon the reactions of the characters, Indian Island and the house are both quite impressive. In fact, the island and the house are both described earlier in the novel as luxurious

Assume that the owner wants to sell it. Write a description of the house, including its exterior features that could be used as selling points when it is to go on sale. Make sure to highlight its many impressive features. Include all necessary details, such as price when built, etc. Obviously, you’ll have to make up some details.

12. At the end of part six, Vera sits at the window and looks out at the ocean. She begins to remember a drowning but tells herself not to think of it. If Vera were to continue thinking of it, what would she reveal? What traumatic event do you think happened to her at the sea?

Write a continuation of this scene. You might want to start like this:

She would *not* think of it! Except that her mind seemed unable to let go of that horrid memory when...

13. Authors often use a motif to unify the characters or events of their novels. A motif is an object, design, or color that is repeated over the course of the work. One motif Agatha Christie employs is the animal. Throughout *And Then There Were None*, you will notice that the characters are compared to a variety of animals.

Choose five of your friends or family members and, assign an animal to each. Use the side-by side arrangement of a sheet of paper, as you did in number 9. Be sure to explain why each person reminds you of a certain animal. Consider both physical traits and personality traits.

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14. Early in this chapter, Emily and Vera are engaged in a conversation when they discover a discrepancy regarding the name of their host—Vera says “Owen” and Emily says she’s never known anyone named Owen. Before their conversation can go any further, however, Wargrave, and Armstrong join the ladies. What if Emily and Vera had had more time to discuss the mystery surrounding the names? What might they have figured out?

On your paper, continue the conversation. You might start something like this:

Vera: But surely we were invited by the same person—a person named Owen!

Emily: As I said already, I don’t know

15. Part one ends with the Voice pronouncing serious indictments against the characters. All of the characters, it seems, has killed someone, but the Voice does not expound upon these murders.

You have all heard of, read about, or seen “murders” on TV or in the movies. Most of these have been solved, but others have not. Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper about the crime situation in your city. Make sure to express your opinion and offer some solutions.