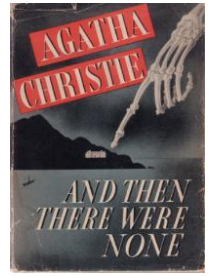


## And Then There Were None (1939) Step-by-Step Breakdown (v.1)

(possible access points into the deeper layers of the text)



*For exam purposes, you will need to grasp the basic information from each category or section. However, if you are aiming for a higher grade or wish to pursue further research, you should consider delving deeper into these topics on your own.*

AGATHA CHRISTIE explained: "I had written the book Ten Little Niggers because it was so difficult to do that the idea had fascinated me. Ten people had to die without it becoming ridiculous or the murderer being obvious. I wrote the book after a tremendous amount of planning, and I was pleased with what I had made of it. It was clear, straightforward, baffling, and yet had a perfectly reasonable explanation; in fact, it had to have an epilogue in order to explain it. It was well received and reviewed, but the person who was really pleased with it was myself, for I knew better than any critic how difficult it had been... I don't say it is the play or book of mine that I like best, or even that I think it is my best, but I do think in some ways that it is a better piece of craftsmanship than anything else I have written.

See the excellent WIKIPEDIA entry on the novel, which lists editorial issues and adaptations for theatre, radio, cinema, Tv and videogames.

### A TRUE BESTSELLER:

*And Then There Were None* is the best-selling crime novel of all time, and made Agatha Christie the best-selling novelist, according to the Agatha Christie Estate.

It is Christie's best-selling novel, with more than 100 million copies sold; it is also the world's best-selling mystery and one of the best-selling books of all time. Publications International lists the novel as the sixth best-selling title.

### PARTS and NARRATORS

### Multiple Focus MULTIPLE NARRATORS POINTS OF VIEW

the story here presented will be told by more than one pen, as the story of an offence against the laws is told in Court by more than one witness

### SETTING

**Soldier Island**  
(Indian Island)  
(Nigger Island)

Inside a modern house

The house was there facing south—low and square and modern looking with rounded windows letting in all the light. An exciting house—a house that lived up to expectation! (chapter 2)

If this had been an old house, with creaking wood, and dark shadows, and heavily panelled walls, there might have been an eerie feeling. But this house was the essence of modernity. There were no dark corners—no possible sliding panels—it was flooded with electric light—everything was new and bright and shining. There was nothing hidden in this house, nothing concealed. It had no atmosphere about it.

Somehow, that was the most frightening thing of all...  
(chapter 5)

Along the cliffs

The three men started on their tour of the island.

It proved unexpectedly simple. On the northwest side, towards the coast, the cliffs fell sheer to the sea below, their surface unbroken.

On the rest of the island there were no trees and very little cover. The three men worked carefully and methodically, beating up and down from the highest point to the water's edge, narrowly scanning the least irregularity in the rock which might point to the entrance to a cave. But

there were no caves. (chapter 8)

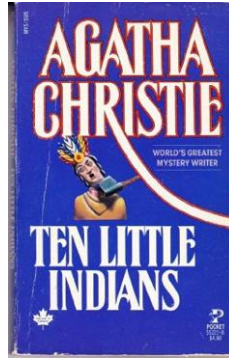
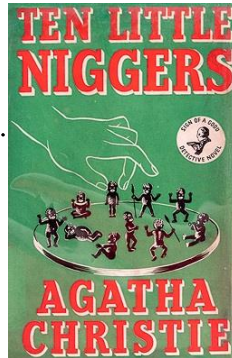
## CHARACTERS

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Justice Wargrave</b>             | A recently retired Judge who quickly re- assumes this role on the island, holding impromptu "court cases" after nearly every murder. He is obsessed with justice, and also with death, as he reveals at the end of the novel through a letter placed in a bottle and put in the ocean. Since he was a child he has taken great pleasure from the idea of death, and even killed animals, but he was also pained by the idea of killing anyone who was innocent. When he realized that he was going to die he decided to finally commit the perfect murder – by killing people who had murdered themselves yet were beyond the reach of the law.   |
| <b>Emily Brent</b>                  | Emily Brent – A religious woman certain of her own righteousness, she is convinced also of everyone else's sinfulness. Long before coming to the island, Emily Brent fired and kicked out of her house a woman named Beatrice Taylor because Beatrice had gotten pregnant out of wedlock. Beatrice, in despair, subsequently killed herself. Brent never consciously feels any remorse (though there are hints that subconsciously she may) and she therefore feels confident that she will not be killed even after the recording plays.   |
| <b>Vera Claythorne</b>              | A schoolteacher who is invited to Soldier Island as a secretary. She is very practical and careful, but she is also a romantic. She fell in love with a man named Hugo while she was employed as a nanny for a young boy, Cyril Hamilton. Cyril's birth took away Hugo's chance at an inheritance and Hugo told Vera at one point that he would marry her if he still had money. Vera therefore allowed Cyril to swim out into the ocean too far and drown. She was not convicted because she swam out after him as if she were trying to save him. Yet Hugo knew the truth, so he went away and never spoke to Vera again. Vera is plagued with this <b>guilt</b> for the rest of her life until, after surviving to the very end of Soldier Island, she hangs herself |
| <b>Philip Lombard</b>               | Lombard was hired by Mr. Isaac Morris to come to Soldier Island and watch out for any trouble. He is a very resourceful and creative man who used to be a soldier in Africa. While in Africa he left a group of natives to die in order to save his own life. He is very clever and is able to escape <b>death</b> until the very end of the novel, when he trusts Vera too much because she is a woman.  |
| <b>Dr. Edward Armstrong</b>         | A successful doctor who comes to Soldier Island because he is told that Ms. Owen is sick. He used to drink too much and once accidentally killed an old woman because he was drunk while operating on her. He is very preoccupied with maintaining his reputation, and hence his success. At the same time, he is a very gullible man. He trusts Wargrave and helps the judge fake his own <b>death</b> . Once the other surviving characters think that the judge is dead, Wargrave has free reign of the <b>island</b> . Wargrave eventually kills  |
| <b>William Henry Blore</b>          | An ex-police inspector who is tricked into coming to the island when he is told that he is supposed to protect Mrs. Owen's jewels from a thief. In his past Blore, in order to gain a promotion for himself, sent an innocent man named Landor to a penal colony, where he died. Blore is practical and careful, but he has very little imagination, which is possibly a reason why he was not able to get promoted on his own merit. In spite of his careful observance of the guests, he is always guessing the wrong person as the murderer and he is not careful enough to avoid his own <b>death</b> .   |
| <b>Thomas Rogers</b>                | The butler on Soldier Island, Mr. Rogers is a dedicated and professional servant. He always brings the drinks and food on time and is always polite and deferential. Yet he killed an old woman he used to work for, Jennifer Brady, by not administering her medicine so he could receive the money that Mrs. Brady had left to him and in his wife in her will.   |
| <b>General John Gordon McArthur</b> | A general in World War I, he is the oldest guest on the island and is suspected of intentionally sending a lieutenant, Arthur Richmond, to his death. MacArthur did this when he learned that Richmond was having an affair with his wife. MacArthur's guilty conscience has always left him with the feeling that his fellow veterans know about his dark past and he separated himself from his Army friends after the war ended. His wife also died soon after the war and he has been lonely and weary since then. Once he gets to Soldier  |

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
|                 | Island, he realizes that he is tired of life and the effort that it takes to live with his secret, and is ready to die.  |
| Ethel Rogers    | Mr. Rogers's wife, Ethel cooks all the meals on the island and does the housekeeping. Vera notices from the very beginning that Ethel looks constantly frightened and this seems to relate to her sense of <b>guilt</b> . Ms. Rogers dies in her sleep from poison during the first night on the island.   |
| Isaac Morris    | Morris is never actually present in the novel but he is hired by Wargrave to purchase the island under the name of Mr. Owen, and find plausible ways to invite all the guests. Owen is a shady businessman who has been involved in the drug trade and convinced a daughter of one of Wargrave's friends to start taking drugs, after which she committed suicide. Wargrave is able to kill Morris with poison even though Morris never comes to Soldier Island, and Morris leaves no trace of Wargrave's presence in the business dealings that enabled the multiple murders on Soldier Island. |
| Anthony Marston | This wealthy, daredevil of a young man is first seen zipping down the road in his fancy car. He once hit two children and killed them, but he feels no remorse for the act because he believes it was an accident. Marston is a man with basically no morals.  |
| THEMES          | Justice, Guilt, Death, Crime, the Other, Race?<br>"Christie's location [the island] is both more domesticated and privatised, taking for granted the construction of racial fears woven into psychic life as early as the nursery." (Alison Light)   |
| SYMBOLS         | Island, The Storm, Mark of Cain  |

## THE ISSUE OF RACE and the ORIENT

In the original UK novel, and in succeeding publications until 1985, all references to "Indians" or "Soldiers" were originally "Nigger", including the island's name, the pivotal rhyme found by the visitors, and the ten figurines. UK editions continued to use the original title until the current definitive title appeared with a reprint of the 1963 Fontana Paperback in 1985. In general, "Christie's work is not known for its racial sensitivity, and by modern standards her oeuvre is rife with casual **Orientalism**." The original title was based on a rhyme from **minstrel shows** and children's games.



See: Alison Light's *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism Between the Wars*. (Routledge: 2013)

The original name of the island in the novel, Nigger Island, would "conjure up a thrilling 'otherness', a place where revelations about the 'dark side' of the English would be appropriate". We are merely faced with fantastic amounts of violence, and a rhyme so macabre and distressing one doesn't hear it now outside of the Agatha Christie context. She felt that the original title of the novel in the UK, seen now, "jars, viscerally".

On the thorny issue of racism and orientalism, see:

Blake Allmendiger. "The Erasure of Race in Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None*" *ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes, and Reviews*, 2019; 32(1): 60-64. Freely downloadable via UniBg resources (EBSCO).

Roberta Mullini "How much I have loved that part of the World": Agatha Christie and the Orient. (Linguae, Università degli Studi di Urbino, 2006): <https://www.ledonline.it/index.php/linguae/article/view/202/177>

<https://medium.com/writing-for-your-life/revisiting-the-horrific-racism-that-inspired-the-worlds-best-selling-crime-novel-7c7fca5647b7>

On Agatha Christie's passion for the Orient, see:  
<https://arabiconline.eu/agatha-christie-in-the-middle-east/>

<https://www.masress.com/en/ahramweekly/23251>

**A grim, existentialist novel**

*And Then There Were None* differs from the rest of her work. It is a stand-alone novel without a detective and a cast of suspects, each of whom is innocent, except for the murderer. Like noir, *And Then There Were None* reflects a pessimistic view of human nature, demonstrating how every character is guilty of committing the most heinous crimes. More suspenseful than Christie's other novels, *And Then There Were None* creates a feeling of fatalistic despair as the island's inhabitants begin to die, one by one. While traveling on a train to the coast, where Mr. Blore will take a boat to the island, a drunk warns him: "The day of judgment is at hand" (14). Later, Miss Brent quotes from the Bible: "The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made... The wicked shall be turned into hell"

In most of Christie's novels, crime is an anomaly. But in *And Then There Were None*, the island becomes an existential prison for representative members of the corrupt human race, a Darwinian environment containing an animalistic predator and its prey. Wargrave has a "tortoise-like neck," a "hunched-up attitude," and "pale, shrewd little eyes" (26). Lombard refers to the murderer as a "playful beast" who likes to stick to "his damned nursery jingle as closely as possible" (129). Vera becomes frightened like a bird, while Blore behaves like "a slow padding animal" (134). He dies after being struck by a block of white marble "shaped like a bear" (24, 163). As the killings continue, Christie describes the island's remaining inhabitants as "enemies linked together by an instinct of self-preservation" (134).

In addition to changing the novel's title to *And Then There Were None*, Christie's publishers revised the text to eradicate any remaining traces of racism. Originally, Christie wrote that the island "had got its name from its resemblance to a man's head—a man with negroid lips." (14) Subsequent editions referred to the guests' destination as Soldier Island, omitting references to its Negroid features (Christie, *And Then* 13)

Despite these changes, the specter of race continues to haunt Christie's novel.<sup>3</sup> Wargrave is a racial snob who distastefully recalls an acquaintance who moved to the Far East and became involved with a Bedouin (6). In addition to being a racist, Wargrave is eventually revealed as the murderer. Before retiring from the bench, the judge had discovered nine killers who had been acquitted by the legal system. Taking the law into his own hands, he executes these individuals, then discloses—in a confession that the police discover after he commits suicide—that the tenth "n—" was a "shady little creature" named Isaac Morris, a man with "thick Semitic lips" (184) whom Wargrave murdered before coming to the island.

(Allmendiger 2019)

**ISSUES THEMES MOTIFS**

**DETECTIVE thrill (chapter 4)**

There was a chorus of agreement with only one dissentient voice. It was Anthony Marston who disagreed with the majority.

"A bit unsporting, what?" he said. "Ought to ferret out the mystery before we go. Whole thing's like a detective story. Positively thrilling."

The judge said acidly:

"At my time of life, I have no desire for 'thrills' as you call them."

Anthony said with a grin:

"The legal life's narrowing! I'm all for crime! Here's to it."

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|------------------------------|---|
|                              | <p>He picked up his drink and drank it off at a gulp.</p> <p>Too quickly, perhaps. He choked–choked badly. His face contorted, turned purple. He gasped for breath–then slid down off his chair, the glass falling from his hand.</p>   |
| Manuscript                   | <p>Crime and its punishment has always fascinated me. I enjoy reading every kind of detective story and thriller. I have devised for my own private amusement the most ingenious ways of carrying out a murder.</p>   |
| The modern style (chapter 2) | <p>A perfect bedroom decorated throughout in the modern style. Off-white rugs on the gleaming parquet floor–faintly tinted walls–a long mirror surrounded by lights. A mantelpiece bare of ornaments save for an enormous block of white marble shaped like a bear, a piece of modern sculpture in which was inset a clock. Over it, in a gleaming chromium frame, was a big square of parchment–a poem.</p> <p>She stood in front of the fireplace and read it. It was the <b>old nursery rhyme</b> that she remembered from her childhood days.</p> <p><i>Ten little soldier boys went out to dine;<br/>One choked his little self and then there were Nine.<br/>Nine little soldier boys sat up very late;<br/>One overslept himself and then there were Eight.<br/>Eight little soldier boys travelling in Devon;<br/>One said he'd stay there and then there were Seven.<br/>Seven little soldier boys chopping up sticks;<br/>One chopped himself in halves and then there were Six.<br/>Six little soldier boys playing with a hive;<br/>A bumble bee stung one and then there were Five.<br/>Five little soldier boys going in for law;<br/>One got in Chancery and then there were Four.<br/>Four little soldier boys going out to sea;<br/>A red herring swallowed one and then there were Three.<br/>Three little soldier boys walking in the Zoo;<br/>A big bear hugged one and then there were Two.<br/>Two little soldier boys sitting in the sun;<br/>One got frizzled up and then there was One.<br/>One little soldier boy left all alone;<br/>He went and hanged himself and then there were None.</i></p> <p>Vera smiled. Of course! This was Soldier Island!</p> <p>She went and sat again by the window looking out to sea.</p> <p>How big the sea was! From here there was no land to be seen anywhere–just a vast expanse of blue water rippling in the evening sun.</p> |

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|---|---|
| <p>Nightmare of Superstition?<br/>(chapter 9)</p> | <p>“So we’ve been wrong–wrong all along! Built up a nightmare of superstition and fantasy all because of the coincidence of two deaths!”</p> <p>Armstrong said gravely:</p> <p>“And yet, you know, the argument holds. Hang it all, I’m a doctor, I know something about suicides. Anthony Marston wasn’t a suicidal type.”</p>   |
| <p>Madness and Lunacy<br/>(chapter 3)</p>         | <p>“Your conclusions are, I think, justified,” he said. “Ulick Norman Owen! In Miss Brent’s letter, though the signature of the surname is a mere scrawl the Christian names are reasonably clear–Una Nancy–in either case you notice, the same initials. Ulick Norman Owen–Una Nancy Owen–each time, that is to say, U. N. Owen. Or by a slight stretch of fancy, UNKNOWN!”</p> <p>Vera cried:</p> <p>“But this is fantastic–mad!”</p> <p>The judge nodded gently.</p> <p>He said:</p> <p>“Oh, yes. I’ve no doubt in my own mind that we have been invited here by a madman–probably a dangerous homicidal lunatic.”</p> |
| <p>Rain and wind<br/>(chapter X)</p>              | <p>Do you believe it?” Vera asked.</p> <p>She and Philip Lombard sat on the windowsill of the living room. Outside the rain poured down and the wind howled in great shuddering gusts against the windowpanes.</p> <p>Philip Lombard cocked his head slightly on one side before answering. Then he said:</p> <p>“You mean, do I believe that old Wargrave is right when he says it’s one of us?”</p> <p>“Yes.”</p> <p>Philip Lombard said slowly:</p> <p>“It’s difficult to say. Logically, you know, he’s right, and yet–”</p> <p>Vera took the words out of his mouth.</p> <p>“And yet it seems so incredible!”</p>    |
| <p>Wind howling<br/>(chapter X)</p>               | <p>The storm increased. The wind howled against the side of the house.</p> <p>Everyone was in the living room. They sat listlessly huddled together. And, surreptitiously, they watched each other.</p> <p>When Rogers brought in the tea tray, they all jumped. He said:</p> <p>“Shall I draw the curtains? It would make it more cheerful like.”</p> <p>Receiving an assent to this, the curtains were drawn and the lamps turned on. The room grew more cheerful. A little of the shadow lifted. Surely, by tomorrow, the storm would be over and</p>  |

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <p>someone would come—a boat would arrive....</p>  |
| <p><b>Stormy weather<br/>(chapter X)</b></p> | <p>The storm broke just as the old man's body was borne in through the door.</p> <p>The others were standing in the hall.</p> <p>There was a sudden hiss and roar as the rain came down.</p> <p>As Blore and Armstrong passed up the stairs with their burden, Vera Claythorne turned suddenly and went into the deserted dining room.</p> <p>It was as they had left it. The sweet course stood ready on the sideboard untasted.</p> <p>Vera went up to the table. She was there a minute or two later when Rogers came softly into the room.</p> <p>He started when he saw her. Then his eyes asked a question.</p> <p>He said:</p> <p>“Oh, Miss, I-I just came to see....”</p> <p>In a loud harsh voice that surprised herself Vera said:</p> <p>“You're quite right, Rogers. Look for yourself. There are only seven....”</p>  |
| <p><b>Candles<br/>(Chapter 13)</b></p>       | <p>At twenty past six, Vera felt that to sit there longer was unbearable. She would go to her room and bathe her aching head and temples in cold water.</p> <p>She got up and went towards the door. Then she remembered and came back and got a candle out of the box. She lighted it, let a little wax pour into a saucer and stuck the candle firmly to it. Then she went out of the room, shutting the door behind her and leaving the four men inside. She went up the stairs and along the passage to her room.</p> <p>As she opened her door, she suddenly halted and stood stock still.</p> <p>Her nostrils quivered.</p> <p>The sea ... The smell of the sea at St. Tredennick.</p> <p>That was it. She could not be mistaken. Of course, one smelt the sea on an island anyway, but this was different. It was the smell there had been on the beach that day—with the tide out and the rocks covered with seaweed drying in the sun.</p> <p>“Can I swim out to the island, Miss Claythorne?”</p> <p>“Why can't I swim out to the island? ...”</p> <p>Horrid whiney spoilt little brat! If it weren't for him, Hugo would be rich ... able to marry the girl he loved...</p> <p>Hugo....</p> <p>Surely—surely—Hugo was beside her? No, waiting for her in the room....</p> |

|                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
|                                       | <p>She made a step forward. <b>The draught from the window caught the flame of the candle. It flickered and went out...</b></p> <p>In the dark she was suddenly afraid...</p> <p>“Don’t be a fool,” Vera Claythorne urged herself. “It’s all right. The others are downstairs. All four of them. There’s no one in the room. There can’t be. You’re imagining things, my girl.”</p> <p>But that smell—that smell of the beach at St. Tredennick ... That wasn’t imagined. It was true.</p> <p>And there was someone in the room ... She had heard something—surely she had heard something...</p> <p>And then, as she stood there, listening—a cold, clammy hand touched her throat—a wet hand, smelling of the sea....</p>   |
| <p>Feverish thoughts (chapter 13)</p> | <p>The midday meal had been duly eaten—but there had been no conventional formality about it. All five of them had gone to the kitchen. In the larder they had found a great store of tinned foods. They had opened a tin of tongue and two tins of fruit. They had eaten standing round the kitchen table. Then, herding close together, they had returned to the drawing room—to sit there—sit, watching each other.</p> <p>And by now the thoughts that ran through their brains were abnormal, feverish, diseased...</p> <p>“It’s Armstrong ... I saw him looking at me sideways just then ... his eyes are mad ... quite mad ... Perhaps he isn’t a doctor at all ... That’s it, of course!... He’s a lunatic, escaped from some doctor’s house—pretending to be a doctor ... It’s true ... shall I tell them? ... Shall I scream out? ... No, it won’t do to put him on his guard ... Besides he can seem so sane ... What time is it? ... Only a quarter past three!... Oh, God, I shall go mad myself ...Yes, it’s Armstrong... He’s watching me now....”</p> <p>“They won’t get me! I can take care of myself ... I’ve been in tight places before ... Where the hell is that revolver Who took it? ... Who’s got it? ... Nobody’s got it—we know that. We were all searched ... Nobody can have it ...But someone knows where it is...”</p> <p>“They’re going mad ... They’ll all go mad ... Afraid of death ... we’re all afraid of death ...I’m afraid of death ... Yes, but that doesn’t stop death coming ...‘The hearse is at the door, sir.’ Where did I read that? The girl ... I’ll watch the girl. Yes, I’ll watch the girl....”</p> |