

BOOK REVIEW

of the month

Bhadra

BOOK REVIEW - AND THEN THERE WERE NONE

Author: Paulo Coelho

Publisher: Vintag, Penguin Books

Year of publication: 2016

Genre: Fiction, Historical

Reviewed by: Smriti Shrestha

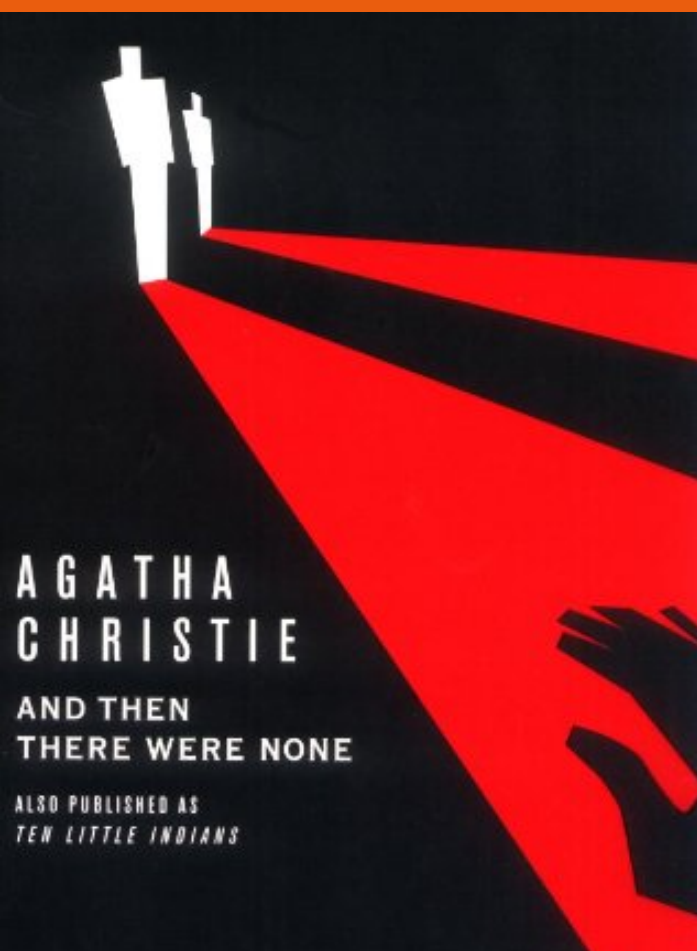
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Class: XI, 'Khumbutse'

Introduction

The novel, 'And Then There Were None' is a fictional thriller written by Agatha Christie. Agatha Christie is an author renowned for mystery and thriller novels, who has written about 66 detective novels. Among her many masterpieces such as 'The Murder of Roger Ackroyd' 'Crooked House' 'The A.B.C. Murders', and 33 novels in 'Hercule Poirot' the novel, 'And Then There Were None' was one of her finest works, labeled as The World's favorite Christie by her fans.

It is a novel she stated of being compelled to write as the idea seemed almost impossible to make it work. The novel was originally called 'Ten Little Niggers' but due to its sensitivity, it was later changed to 'Ten Little Indians'. Even with the changes, the novel involved some controversial phrases. As the plays performed on the novel seemed too contentious, it was again later changed in 2004 and published with a new title, 'And Then There Were None'. It is mystery, thriller and horror.



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The plot of the novel may seem typical by today's standard but it was an innovation for the interwar period. The novel is now the best selling crime novel with over a hundred million copies sold.

Plot

The story introduces ten individuals who are called to a secluded island called Soldier Island, a remote location off the coast of England by Mr. and Mrs. U.N. Owen. They had all either accepted a job or been invited for a lavish party with the rich Owens. Each accused of a crime that was either deemed an accident or framed.

The characters are introduced in the train. Eight who show up to the location. After assembling, they find their hosts missing with only two workers there to assist them, bringing the total ten characters in the story.

The characters bond with small talks along with a little interest and wrath between each other.

During their stay, a poem in every room didn't go unnoticed. 'Ten Little Soldiers' or originally 'Ten Little Niggers'. The poem, according to them, was one everyone used to scare young children into behaving. Ten little soldiers who died one by one, leaving none in the end.

The ten had been called out for the crimes during their stay, to which only one had admitted the accusation to be true. Then the first of the guests dies. It wasn't in any of their conscience of what was happening except for perhaps the two staffs. By the next morning, another of the nine dies. It was only then, one of the eight guests had noticed the similarities between the poem and the scene of the two dead guests. The others hadn't given it much attention, waiting for their chaperone so they could leave the island. It was when the third death had occurred that they realized the truth. They were being targeted.

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There, they all had two things in common. First, they were all accused of a crime. Second, none of them had been guilty of the murder they had committed. This is likely the most interesting part of the book. Even though they were invited to Soldier Island, none of them had ever met Mr. and Mrs. U.N. Owen or ever seen them. None of them knew each other, except the couple, to have been aware of the crimes they all were accused of. How had they been assembled?

It was concluded that one of them was responsible for the death of the three guests. Suspicion hung in the air but as the day passed the next victim was the person everyone had assumed to be the killer.

As the story progresses, the tension among the characters intensifies, with growing suspicion and other complex emotions affecting their interaction. As the poem foreshadows the story builds toward a dramatic climax, leaving the readers to grasp the thrill and suspense as the events unfold.

Analysis

The main plot of the story is centered around the idea of execution of justice. While the story is written in the third person, it is mostly still conveyed through the characters' perspective. They live isolated, cut off from the world, constantly fearing the death that awaits them. The story also explores the psychological turmoil of the characters. How far were they willing to go to survive? What lengths did they go to escape the accountability and the charges? Was it worth it? The guilt and fear drove them to either brink or denial of what they had done.

Now, while the theme was justice, the mastermind behind the arrangement wasn't solely driven by the sense of retribution. Rather it seemed more of a psychotic fascination and interest. There was no considerable reasoning. So, how different did it make him from the others? After all, the murder had no personal connection with the victims. It was a cold out murder. Which is also a speciality of the book, as it makes the reader reconsider their concept of justice.

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Recommendation

This novel was anything but comforting to read. I was introduced to a bunch of unlikable characters which supposedly worked out for the novel. It had an unsettling quality about it, which is precisely what a horror/thriller novel should be. The plot is patently genius but the spookiness of the novel adds a different thrill to it.

The writing in the story was very straightforward and easy to read, but there was a lack of information about the past of the characters. It may or may not have been with consideration, but it also didn't give me any empathy or sympathy towards the characters.

And again the plot was genius, but a few things didn't add up. For example, How did the murderer do it all alone in such short intervals of time while being among the other guests on the Island?

While I loved the idea of the poem and how Agatha used it for her title, getting to know how the next one's fate plays beforehand rather than finding it out later was not as exciting. But the story kept me guessing and to a certain extent, when I was confident of who the killer actually was, it surprised me, which made me feel as though I was with the other characters at that moment.

The great thing about the story is probably that we never get to know the murder (till the end) . And I would have preferred to keep it the same, because the revelation at the end felt criminally underrated.

But, certainly, it was a good mystery story. It has a very interesting and suspenseful plot. The book is suitable for the age group 15 and above. And I feel as though many would like to read it as it is easily comprehensible and contains a lot of mystery and suspense.