

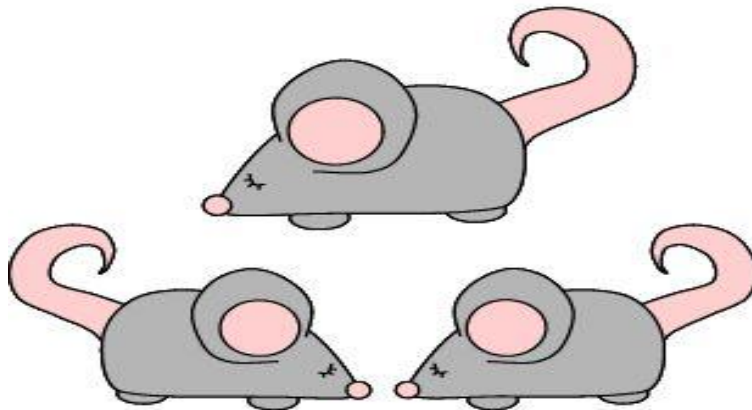
*Agatha Christie*  
**The Mousetrap**



### Three Blind Mice

*by Beatrix Potter*

Three blind mice, three blind mice,  
See how they run!  
They all run after the farmer's wife,  
And she cut off their tails with a carving knife,  
Did you ever see such a thing in your life  
As three blind mice!



STUDENT'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

## THE MOUSETRAP: A GREAT HIT

The Mousetrap was initially performed as a radio play in 1952 and was broadcast by the BBC with the title *Three Blind Mice*. The radio play had been commissioned in 1947 by Queen Mary, who was a Christie fan. The forty-five minute play was based on a short story on which Christie had been working; however, audience reaction was so positive that Christie went back to work on the script, elaborating on it, and with its first performance on October 6, 1952, The Mousetrap became a stage play. After a seven-week tour, the play opened in London at The Ambassadors Theatre on November 25, 1952. The play later transferred to St. Martin's Theatre in London on March 23, 1974 and has been running there ever since. The Mousetrap has broken several records for its continuous theatrical run since its opening, and it is estimated that more than four million people had seen the play by the time its twenty-five year anniversary was celebrated in 1977. After another twenty years of performances it is safe to speculate that an additional three to four million people have probably sat in the dark and tried to puzzle out the identity of the murderer. Performances of The Mousetrap continue to benefit from tourists who seek out the play both for its artistic merits and for the joy of being part of a theatrical tradition. Christie signed over the royalties from the play to her grandson at its opening in 1952. It is thought that he has become a multimillionaire from the royalties of this one property alone.

## THE MOUSETRAP: BRIEF INTRODUCTION

The play began life as a short radio play broadcast on 30 May 1947 called *Three Blind Mice* in honour of Queen Mary, the consort of King George V. The play had its origins in the real-life case of the death of a boy, Dennis O'Neill, who died while in the foster care of a Shropshire farmer and his wife in 1945.

The play is based on a short story, itself based on the radio play, but Christie asked that the story not be published as long as it ran as a play in the West End of London. The short story has still not been published within the United Kingdom but it has appeared in the United States in the 1950 collection *Three Blind Mice and Other Stories*.

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 .....

## THE MOUSETRAP: CHARACTERS

**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 Monkswell 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.



## THE MOUSETRAP: SELF-STUDY QUESTIONS

### *The Mousetrap: Glossary*

SCOTLAND YARD: \_\_\_\_\_

MUG: \_\_\_\_\_

GUINEA: \_\_\_\_\_

DOGSBODY: \_\_\_\_\_

BOORISH: \_\_\_\_\_

CHILBLAINS: \_\_\_\_\_

COKE: \_\_\_\_\_

MEMSAHIB: \_\_\_\_\_

MAGISTRATE: \_\_\_\_\_

SPIV: \_\_\_\_\_

MUFFLER: \_\_\_\_\_

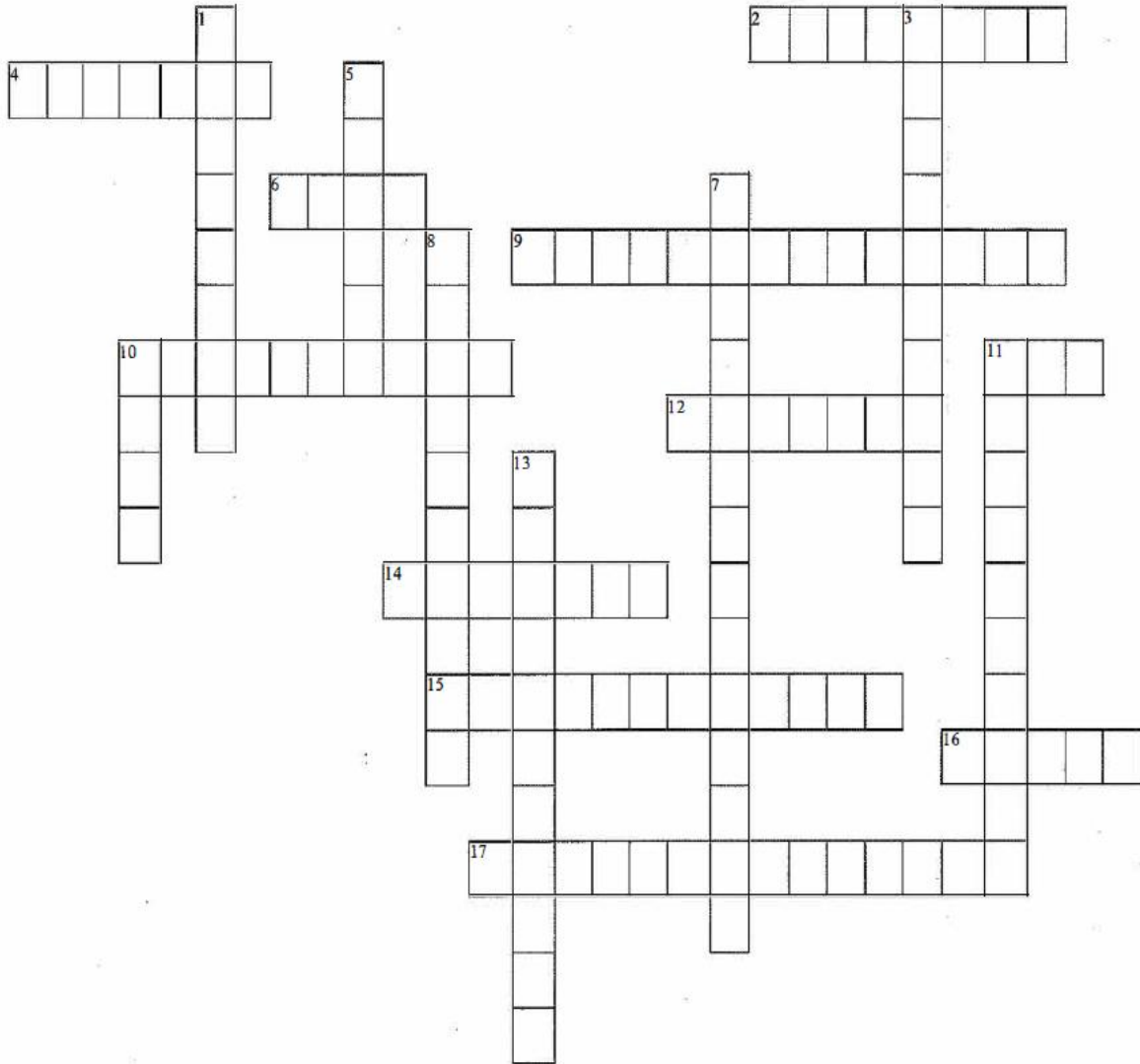
BLUE MURDER: \_\_\_\_\_

PARLOUR GAME: \_\_\_\_\_

HUNT THE THIMBLE: \_\_\_\_\_

BARMY: \_\_\_\_\_

MANOR HOUSE: \_\_\_\_\_



**Across**

- 2. someone who does grunt work or menial tasks
- 4. another term for scarf
- 6. a petty criminal
- 9. a party game in which a thimble is hidden
- 10. an inflammation of the hands and feet caused by exposure to the cold
- 11. British slang for fool, sucker, or chump
- 12. London theatre district where *The Mousetrap* has been running since 1952
- 14. unmannered, crude
- 15. London police
- 16. slang for eccentric or crazy
- 17. Playwright of *The Mousetrap*

**Down**

- 1. a term used in Colonial India to respectfully address a European woman
- 3. She screamed \_\_\_\_\_.
- 5. a type of British currency worth about 21 shillings
- 7. nursery rhyme title of the original radio play of *The Mousetrap*
- 8. a large country home; the setting of *The Mousetrap*
- 10. coal for a fire
- 11. a judicial officer
- 13. a group game appropriate to be played inside

**ACT ONE. SCENE I**

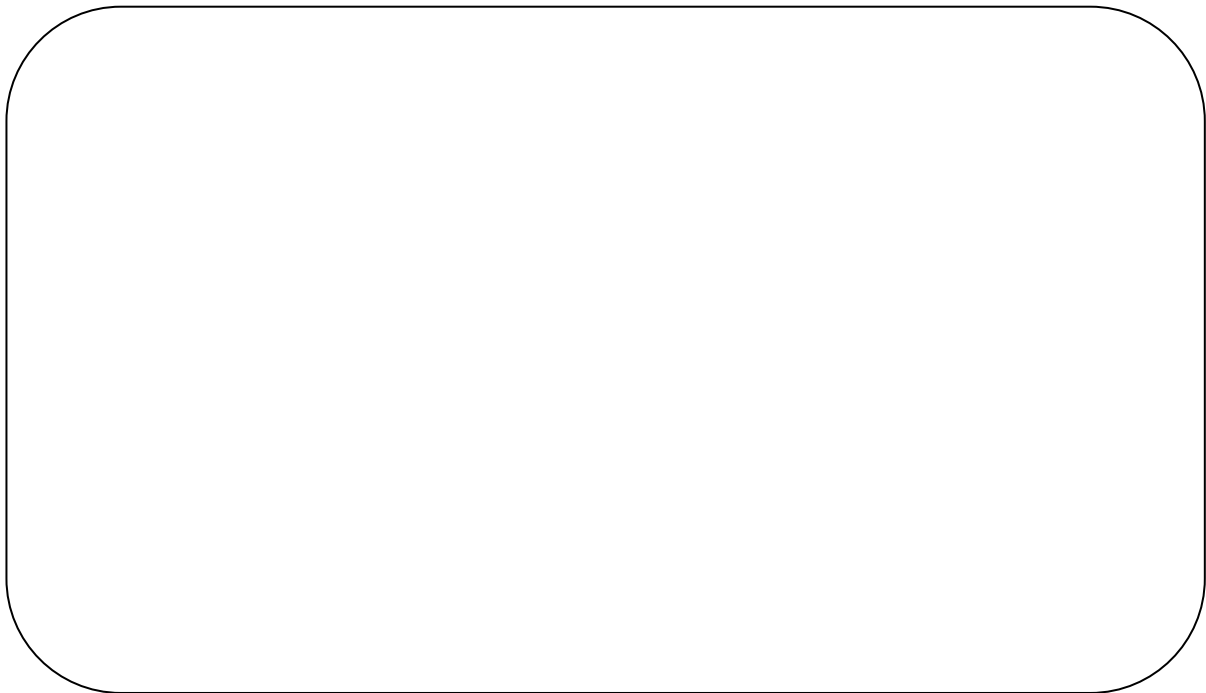
1. In your own words and according to what you have studied previously, describe what **STAGE DIRECTIONS** are:

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.....

2. What kind of setting is depicted in the opening stage directions?

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.....

3. Draw the room which is described in these stage directions:



4. In the stage directions, the word **blackout** is mentioned. What is a *blackout* in a theatre play?

.....

5. Who has been killed? How do you know about it? What is the suspect like?

.....  
.....  
.....



6. Who are Mollie and Giles? Why are they nervous?

.....  
.....

7. What does Giles regret about?

.....

8. There is a moment in this scene in which Mollie interacts with the voice on the radio. **Describe it.** What came up to your mind when you read it?

.....  
.....

9. Who is the first guest to arrive? What kind of first impression do we get about him by reading the stage directions?

.....  
.....

10. What does Christopher Wren mean when he says : ***"I thought you'd be terrifically grim and Memsahibish"*** to refer to his idea about Mollie?

.....  
.....

11. By reading the questions he asks to Mollie, what kind of interests does he seem to have?

.....

12. There is a literary reference in this scene. Which one is it? What book is it from? Why is the reference made?

.....  
.....  
.....

13. Why do you think Giles doesn't like Christopher Wren?

.....  
.....

14. What does Christopher find fascinating about getting to know people?

.....

15. Who is Christopher named after? What's the personal connection with him?

.....  
.....

16. What does Christopher Wren think of English women?

.....

17. What is Mrs. Boyle's attitude when she arrives to Monkswell Manor?

.....

18. Who is Major Metcalf? Who does he arrive to Monkswell Manor with? Why do they go together?

.....  
.....

19. What's Mrs.Boyle's complaint about Monkswell Manor's staff?

.....

20. The characters speak about a **blizzard**. What is it? Why do you think the blizzard may be important in the plot's development?

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.....

21. What does Giles suggest Mrs Boyle to do after her complaints? What excuse does she give to avoid doing what Giles proposes?

.....  
.....

22. A new female guest, Ms Casewell, arrives to the Manor. What is she like?

.....

23. What joke does Ms Casewell play on Giles?

.....

24. Why doesn't Giles like Wren?

.....

25. What do Mollie and Giles think about their guests so far?

.....

26. Why is Paravicini so excited on his arrival to Monkswell Manor?

.....

27. As you will remember, a **climax** is a particular point in a narrative at which the tensión hits the highest point. Why do you think Paravicini's arrival at the end of Scene I might be considered a climax?

.....

.....

## ACT I. SCENE II

1. What does Miss Casewell do in order to get rid of Mrs Boyle?

.....

2. Who calls Monkswell Manor Guest House and why?

.....

3. Why are Mollie and Giles worried about the police officer's visit?

.....

.....

4. How does Sergeant Trotter arrive to the Manor? Why?

.....

5. What is Sergeant Trotter actually doing at Monkswell Manor? Narrate what the police have found out at the London murder scene and its connection with the guesthouse.

.....  
.....  
.....

6. Search on the internet *The Three Blind Mice* nursery rhyme and explain what it says. What's the connection of this children's rhyme with the story?

.....  
.....  
.....

7. Who was Maureen Lyon? What had happened to the Corrigan children? What is the bond of Mrs Boyle with this case?

.....  
.....  
.....

8. What is Sergeant Trotter concerned about?

.....  
.....

9. In one of the stage directions of this scene, Agatha Christie writes: "***There is the sound of a piano, being played from the drawing room- the tune of Three Blind Mice picked out with one finger***". What is the effect of this direction on the audience/reader?

.....  
.....

10. In this scene, Miss Casewell and Mollie keep a conversation about the past. What's each character's attitude to it? What does it make you think of them?

.....  
.....  
.....

11. Mention two climatic moments in this scene that may help to increase the tension in the audience/reader. **Note:** one has to do with Detective Trotter’s last appearance on the scene and the other with Mrs. Boyle.

.....  
.....  
.....

12. One of the topics of *The Mousetrap* is mistrust and confusion of identities. How are these two ideas reflected in this scene?

MISTRUST	CONFUSION

**ACT II (ONLY ONE SCENE)**

1. How may the murderer have escaped from the scene?

.....

2. Who is the main suspect for Giles? Why?

.....  
.....

3. Who might be possible suspects for Mollie? Why?

.....  
.....

4. What other suspects does Sergeant Trotter suggest? Why does he think so?

.....  
.....

5. Why does Mollie state: "I hate him, I hate him, I hate him....." when she speaks about Sergeant Trotter?

.....

.....

6. Why could be say that Mollie and Giles are going through a difficult time in their marriage at this point of the act?

.....

.....

7. What does Trotter do with all the guests at Monskwell Manor?

.....

8. Complete the following chart with the information each of the characters has told Sergeant Trotter in the questionings. Use your own words and summarize your ideas.



CHARACTER	ALIBIS AND PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS
PARAVICINI	
MOLLIE	
GILES	
WREN	

<b>MAJOR METCALF</b>	
<b>MISS CASEWELL</b>	

9. How does Sergeant Trotter intend to discover the murderer? What role is he going to perform?  
Where are the other characters told to do?

.....  
.....  
.....

10. Who does Trotter call when everybody has gone away? What does this character confess?

.....  
.....  
.....

11. What does Trotter want to do to her? What's his real identity?

.....  
.....

12. Who is Major Metcalf? Why was he at Monkswell Manor?

.....  
.....

13. What were Mollie and Giles doing in London?

.....  
.....

14. How does the play finish? Explain briefly.

.....  
.....  
.....

**SUMMARIZING.....**

Bearing in mind all the elements of the Detective Fiction that you have learnt about, complete the chart below with the information about Agatha Christie's *The Mousetrap*.

<b>DETECTIVE</b>		
<b>TYPE OF MYSTERY</b>		
<b>SUSPECTS</b>		
<b>SHADY PEOPLE</b>		
<b>PLOT DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>PUZZLING SITUATION</b>	
	<b>CRIME</b>	
	<b>SECRET</b>	
	<b>UNEXPLAINED EVENT</b>	
<b>RED HERRINGS</b>		



## FINAL TASK: YOUR OWN MYSTERY PLAY!



In groups of five people maximum, prepare a short theatre play (10 minutes long). The play opens with a newspaper headline like this:

**Murder at the Thames**

*Scotland Yard has found a 48 year-old man murdered in the Thames.*

*The following clues have been found:*

- *An American Passport*
- *Two tickets for the opera*
- *A love letter*
- *Some postcards from Paris*
- *A threatening note inside the victim's pocket.*

Create your sketches using the information above. Invent the characters you want (one must be a detective!) and solve the crime.

**Enjoy the show!**