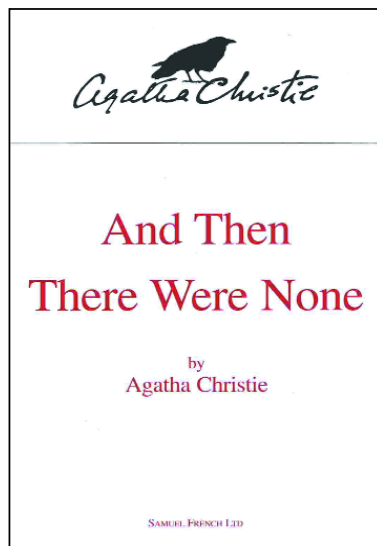


Agatha Christie™

And Then There Were None



Acting Notes

By Ndidi Okezie

To order your reading copy of the And Then There Were None playscript please visit <http://www.samuelfrench-london.co.uk/sf/Pages/howtoorder.html> or call Samuel French play publishers on 020 7255 4300. For a limited period from September to December 2005 schools can buy the playscript with a 25% discount on RRP of £6.95.

And Then There Were None

One of the most famous and widely praised mysteries ever written, Agatha Christie herself believed this to be one of her greatest achievements and it was the first novel that she decided to adapt for the stage. Since its initial publication this classic murder mystery has been adapted several times for stage and screen and a new adaptation has recently been written by the renowned playwright, Kevin Elyot. This play continues to perplex, frighten and captivate each new generation, the ultimate whodunit - a timeless tale of suspense and suspicion that will appeal even to those who do not usually read mysteries.

Introduction

The story concerns a group of ten strangers who have all been invited by a Mr U. N. Owen to spend a brief vacation on a secluded island off the coast of Devon. When the guests meet each other they realise that none of them have met their mysterious host and it slowly dawns on them that his motives for assembling them on the island are not as they first appeared. A record is played, accusing each of the visitors of murder. From that moment all of their lives are in danger. As the plot unfolds, an unknown assassin exacts the ultimate revenge on the island's guests for their past crimes. One by one they begin to die...

Reviews of And Then There Were None

"The whole thing is utterly impossible and utterly fascinating. It is the most baffling mystery that Agatha Christie has ever written" *The New York Times*

"The most colossal achievement of a colossal career" *The New Statesman and Nation*

"Christie's masterpiece" *The Spectator*

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Teachers Notes

This play can be taught taking each scene at a time and using the teaching formula of:

1. Pre-reading:
2. Intermission: (half way through)
3. Post-reading analysis.

After each scene students should discuss their impressions, feelings and predictions.

The characters are quite diverse and there is a great deal of room for personal interpretation. It would be a good exercise to see the different ways that the same character can be portrayed. Short dramatisations and role-playing that allow students to explore the play in a modern day context are also advisable.

The following notes are divided into three categories of focus.

Character Analysis,
Dramatic Techniques and
Understanding and Interpreting the Play

Each section is designed to ultimately aid students in gaining a better understanding of the different elements involved in becoming familiar with a play.

Each section can be worked through in any order, either as the play is read or afterwards.

Understanding and Interpreting the Play

- Act 1 starts with a detailed description of the setting of the stage. As you visualise the stage, what effect does it have on your expectation and consequent experience of the play?
- The first three characters open the play with an air of comic banter. How does Christie achieve this?
 - What impact does this have on the audience's expectation of the play?
 - Is that expectation met as the play continues?
- Write down the order that the characters are introduced. Are there any suspicious actions or reactions that could be perceived as clues to help identify the murderer?
- As the other guests arrive Vera Claythorne immediately acts as surrogate hostess, introducing them and explaining the unusual predicament they find themselves in. Subsequently as they arrive and settle in, each character seems to immediately take on a 'role' in the group. Discuss what those individual roles are and suggest reasons for their choices.
- There is a consistent thread of romance that runs throughout the play culminating in a romantic embrace between Lombard and Vera. How does Christie portray the growth and progression of their feelings for each other? Give examples.
- The play almost begins and ends with the "sound of a motor-boat hooter in the distance". Does this circular effect imply that the play has come full circle? Discuss how this might be so.

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- Agatha Christie is one of the most renowned playwrights in the world. People of all ages and backgrounds have come to love her work. Who do you think this play is aimed at? Give your reasons.
 - Design a poster for the play. Focus on the three things that you find most intriguing about the play. The poster is aimed at your age group, so you need to make it relevant.
 - Write a critical newspaper review on "And Then There Were None". What are its strong points, weak points, best and worst moments etc.
 - What do you think of the play as a murder mystery? Were you satisfied with the unveiling of the murderer?
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Dramatic Techniques

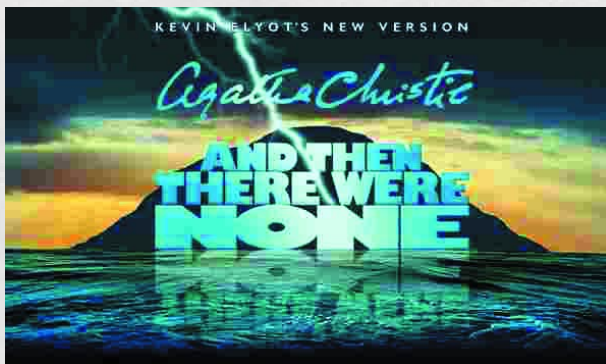
- In groups, take turns assuming the role of one of the ten characters. The remaining members in each group should proceed to ask that 'character' a series of questions. The aim is to get into the mind of the characters and see whether you can articulate their motivations and thought processes.
 - There are a variety of reactions to the different murders that occur. Which of the murders is the most realistic? Which murder is the most unrealistic or far-fetched?
 - In groups re enact the scene taking the elements of realism you've identified in the former and adding them to the latter.
 - Act 3 Scene 2 is arguably the fastest paced scene in the play, full of high drama and emotive dialogue. In pairs, pick a particularly intense part and re-enact it, showing two opposite moods for the characters involved.
 - e.g. On page 76 Lombard and Vera are quizzing each other, both highly suspicious. On one hand Lombard could be delivering his lines in his typical light-hearted manner. On the other hand he could be showing a rare moment of vulnerability.
 - Is the murderer simply evil, or could there be something that has happened to them that has made them so judgemental?
 - Create a monologue where you reveal an emotional reason for why the murderer has ended up where they are in their lives.
 - Consider what key questions you would ask Agatha Christie about the play or any of the characters specifically?
 - Create and act out a short 'trailer' to advertise the opening of "And Then There Were None" at your school. Consider which characters you would use to promote the play and what you would focus on as the most attractive parts of the play.
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Character Analysis:

For each character in the play discuss and brainstorm the following:

- Your first impressions
 - Their interactions with other characters
 - Any suspicious actions, or comments they made
 - The facts surrounding their death?
 - Any distinguishing behaviour they had.
- It is the first night at the 'island', write a diary entry for two of the characters. Express what they are feeling, what their expectations are etc.
 - At the end of Act 3 Scene 1, who would you have guessed was the murderer? Use evidence from the play to substantiate your answer.
 - The ending of the play sees the killer revealed as we hear what their motives were for the gruesome killings. What do you think has made the murderer so malicious and bitter?
 - Although there is one killer, all 10 characters could be grouped into Villains and Victims. Based on what we know about their past, and on their behaviour and attitude during the play, which characters would you put into which group and why?
 - Which character was your favourite and why?



Agatha Christie is back in the West End!

Kevin Elyot's new adaptation of *And Then There Were None* premieres in the West end in Autumn 2005. Previews from October 14th 2005

For more information or to book your tickets visit <http://www.andthentherewerenone.co.uk>

To explore the world of Agatha Christie visit
www.agathachristie.com

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