

# Agatha Christie: An Elusive Woman

By: *Lucy Worsley*

**About the book:** Why did Agatha Christie spend her career pretending that she was “just” an ordinary housewife, when clearly she wasn’t? Her life is fascinating for its mysteries and its passions. Lucy Worsley’s biography is not just of a massively, internationally successful writer. It’s also the story of a person who, despite the obstacles of class and gender, became an astonishingly successful working woman. With access to personal letters and papers that have rarely been seen, Lucy Worsley’s biography is both authoritative and entertaining and makes us realize what an extraordinary pioneer Agatha Christie was—truly a woman who wrote the twentieth century.

**About the Author:** Worsley is Joint Chief Curator at Historic Royal Palaces but is best known as a presenter of BBC Television series on historical topics, including *Elegance and Decadence: The Age of the Regency* (2011), *Harlots*, *Housewives and Heroines: A 17th Century History for Girls* (2012), *The First Georgians: The German Kings Who Made Britain* (2014), *A Very British Romance* (2015), *Lucy Worsley: Mozart’s London Odyssey* (2016), and *Six Wives with Lucy Worsley* (2016).

## People:

Agatha Christie-Author

Frederick Miller-Agatha's Father

Clarissa "Clara" Margaret-Agatha's Mother

Margaret "Madge" Frary-Agatha's older sister

Louis Montant "Monty"-Agatha's older brother

Margaret Miller-Agatha's step-grandmother/great-aunt

Archibald Christie-Agatha's First Husband (1914-1928)

Rosalind Christie Hicks-Agatha and Archibald's daughter

Max Mallowan-Agatha's Second Husband (1930-1976)

Charlotte Fisher "Carlo"- Nanny, editor and friend of Agatha

## Discussion Questions:

1. In what ways does Christie remain unknowable even after this biography?
2. How did Christie’s childhood and upbringing shape her emotional world and later writing?
3. How did Christie’s first marriage to Archie Christie affect her sense of self and career?

6. How does Worsley reinterpret the infamous disappearance of 1926? Did this account change your perception of Christie?
7. What role did Christie's second marriage to Max Mallowan play in her personal growth and happiness?
8. How did travel—especially to the Middle East—contribute to Christie's independence and creativity?
9. How does Worsley connect Christie's emotional life to the themes and structures of her mysteries?
10. Why do you think Christie often downplayed her own literary skill, despite her enormous success?
11. How does Worsley challenge the idea that Christie was a "simple" or purely commercial writer?
12. How does this biography change (or reinforce) your understanding of Christie's novels?
13. What makes Lucy Worsley's approach to biography different from more traditional literary biographies?
15. Do you think Worsley succeeds in balancing empathy with critical distance?
16. How much should a biographer speculate about a subject's inner life? Did Worsley ever go too far—or not far enough?
17. How does Worsley's modern perspective influence how Christie's life and choices are interpreted?
18. What does Christie's life reveal about women's autonomy in the early 20th century?
19. Why do you think Agatha Christie's work has endured so strongly across generations and cultures?

**Read Alike:**

- The vanishing of Carolyn Wells By: Barry, Rebecca Rego
- Pure wit: the revolutionary life of Margaret Cavendish By: Peacock, Francesca
- The world according to Joan Didion By: McDonnell, Evelyn