

## Crooked House

By: Agatha Christie

**About the Book:** Three generations of the Leonides family live together under wealthy patriarch Aristide. His first wife Marcia died; her sister Edith has cared for the household since then. His second wife is the indolent Brenda, decades his junior, suspected of having a clandestine love affair with Laurence, the grandchildren's tutor. After Aristide is poisoned by his own eye medicine, his granddaughter Sophia tells narrator and fiancé Charles Hayward that they cannot marry until the killer is apprehended. Charles's father, "The Old Man", is Assistant Commissioner of Scotland Yard, so Charles investigates from the inside along with assigned detective Chief Inspector Taverner.

**About the Author:** Agatha Christie was an English author who wrote 66 detective novels and 14 short story collections, many featuring the iconic detectives Miss Marple and Hercule Poirot.

### People:

- **Charles Hayward:** fiancé to Sophia Leonides, narrator
- **Sophia Leonides:** daughter of Magda and Philip Leonides, granddaughter of Aristide, engaged to Charles Hayward
- **Brenda Leonides,** spoiled much younger widow of Aristide Leonides.
- **Magda West:** a flamboyant stage actress, Married to Philip. Mother to Sophia, Laurence and Josephine
- **Edith de Haviland,** Sophia's elderly spinster great-aunt, sister of Aristide Leonides' first wife, Marcia de Haviland
- **Roger Leonides,** son of Aristide Leonides
- **Clemency Leonides:** Roger's wife, a scientist
- **Philip Leonides,** Magda's husband and Roger's brother, Son of Aristide. Father to Sophia, Laurence and Josephine
- **Laurence Brown,** tutor to Josephine and Eustace; in love with Brenda.
- **Josephine Leonides,** Magda and Philips's 12-year-old daughter sister to Eustace and Sophia
- **Eustace Leonides,** Magda and Philips's 16-year-old son; brother of Sophia and Josephine
- **Janet Rowe,** nanny to the Leonides children (Josephine, Eustace and Sophia)
- **Chief Inspector Taverner,** Scotland Yard inspector assigned
- **Sir Arthur Hayward,** Assistant Commissioner of Scotland Yard, father of Charles Hayward
- **Aristide Leonides,** the man who was murdered; born in Smyrna, Turkey, Moved to London
- Mr Gaitskill:

### Questions:

1. What were your initial theories about the murderer? Did they change as the story progressed?
2. Were there any clues you noticed early on that hinted at the ending?
3. The Leonides family is full of strong personalities—who stood out to you the most, and why?
4. How does the structure of the family contribute to the tension in the story?
5. The title *Crooked House* suggests more than just the physical setting—what do you think it symbolizes?
6. How does Christie explore the idea of morality within families?
7. Do you think the “crookedness” is inherent in the family, or shaped by their environment?

8. How did you feel about the motive behind the crime? Did it evoke sympathy, shock, or something else?
9. Is justice truly served at the end of the novel?
10. Does the story challenge the idea that evil is obvious or easily identifiable?
11. How did you find the pacing of the novel? Did it keep you engaged throughout?
12. What role does Charles (the narrator) play in shaping your understanding of events?
13. How does Christie build suspense differently here compared to other mysteries? What was your emotional reaction to the ending?
14. Would you recommend this book to others? Why or why not?
15. If you could change one aspect of the story, what would it be?
16. Did the book leave you thinking differently about family dynamics or human nature?
17. Christie herself reportedly considered *Crooked House* one of her best novels—do you agree? How does it rank among her works for you?
18. How does the structure of this mystery differ from Poirot stories?
19. Christie often explores the idea that evil can exist in ordinary settings—how does *Crooked House* reinforce or challenge this?
20. The theme of inherited traits (nature vs. nurture) is strong here—how does this compare to similar themes in her other novels?
21. Christie's villains are often psychologically complex—how does this one compare?
22. Christie frequently uses enclosed settings—how does the Leonides household compare to settings like the train in *Murder on the Orient Express*?
23. In what ways does the house itself function almost like a character?
24. How does the absence of a traditional detective figure shift the reader's role in solving the mystery?
25. Do you think *Crooked House* represents a turning point or evolution in Christie's writing style?
26. If this had featured Poirot, how might the story have changed?
27. Why do you think Christie herself favored this novel so highly?

**Read a Likes:**

- Death of an author / E.C.R. Lorac
  - Vivian Lestrage—celebrated author of the popular mystery novel *The Charterhouse Case* and total recluse—has apparently dropped off the face of the Earth. After he was reported missing by his secretary Eleanor, whom Inspector Bond suspects to be the author herself, crime and murder are afoot when Lestrage's housekeeper is also found to have disappeared. Bond and Warner of Scotland Yard set to work to investigate a murder with no body and a potentially fictional victim.
- In at the death / Francis Duncan.
  - Amateur sleuth Mordecai Tremaine returns in a Golden Age mystery where every suspect has a secret...and murder is just one.
- The boy at the keyhole : a novel / Stephen Giles.
  - A British boy begins to suspect in the aftermath of his mother's urgent visit to America that she has actually been murdered by the housekeeper who cares for him on his family's isolated country estate.