

Agatha Christie

The Murder of Roger Ackroyd

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contemporary



free Audiobook



Agatha Christie

The Murder of Roger Ackroyd

Illustrated by Paolo D'Altan
Adaptation and activities by Janet Cameron





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Content editor: Maria Grazia Donati
Editor: Francesca Pinagli
Design: Erika Barabino, Silvia Bassi, Daniele Pagliari
Page layout: Annalisa Possenti
Picture research: Alice Graziotin

Art Director: Carla Nadia Maestri

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First edition: February 2022

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concerning our material and receive your comments.

info@blackcat-cideb.com
blackcat-cideb.com

Printed in Genoa, Italy, by Litoprint srl

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THE STORY IS FULLY RECORDED.



Agatha Christie

Dame¹ Agatha Christie is known as ‘the Queen of Crime’ and she is the world’s best-selling novelist. She was born Agatha Miller on 15th September, 1890, in Torquay, Devon, in the south-west of England. Her father was American and her mother was English. Agatha was taught at home, and her brother and sister were over ten years older than her, so she spent most of her childhood alone with books. After her father died in 1901, Agatha was sent to several boarding schools.² She thought that she might choose music as a career, but she was too shy to play the piano in front of strangers. In 1910, Agatha was in Cairo with her mother when she met Archie Christie, who was an army officer and pilot. Agatha and Archie got married in 1914, as World War I was beginning. During the war, Agatha lived in Torquay and worked as a pharmacy assistant. This gave her the good knowledge of poisons³ that she used in her fiction later. In 1916, she began writing her first crime novel, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*. At the time, there were many Belgian refugees⁴ in Torquay, so Agatha decided to make her main character a Belgian detective named Hercule

-
1. **Dame** : a title given by the queen to a female British citizen who has done excellent work in her profession; the male form of this title is *knight*.
 2. **boarding school** : a school where students live away from home.
 3. **poison** : a thing that can kill you or make you very ill if you eat or drink it.
 4. **refugee** : a person who has to leave his or her country or home because he or she is in danger.

Poirot. In 1919, she gave birth to a daughter, Rosalind, and in 1920 her novel was published.

After the war ended, Archie and Agatha went on a trip around the world together. During that time, Agatha became the first British woman to try surfing while standing up. In 1926, Agatha published *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, a book that made her world-famous.

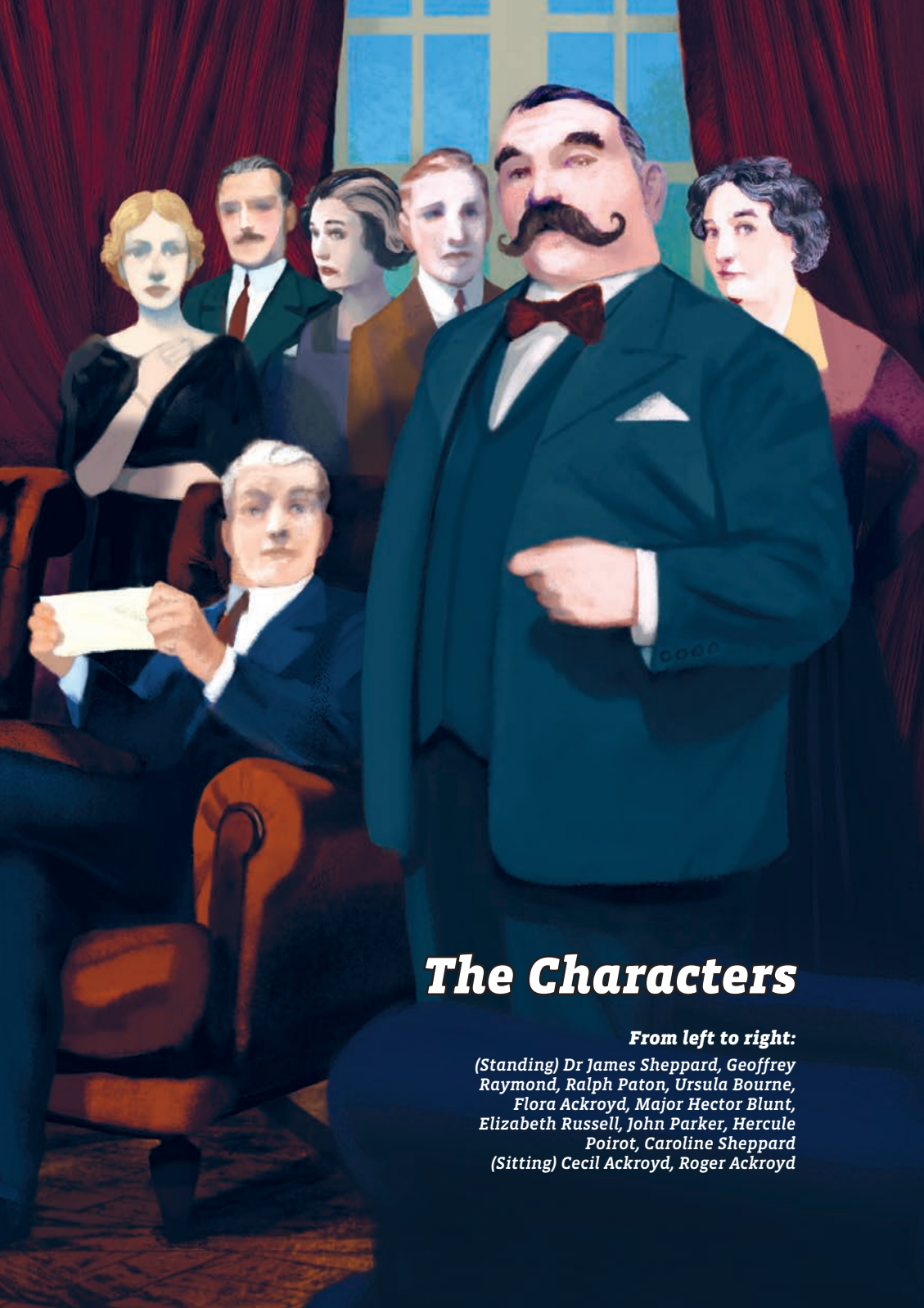
However, 1926 was also a difficult year for her. Agatha's mother died and, later, Archie fell in love with another woman. In December, Agatha left her house and was not seen for days. Over a week later, she was found in a hotel hundreds of miles away, with no memory of how she had arrived there. In 1928, Agatha and Archie were divorced. Two years later, Agatha married Sir Max Mallowan, who was a respected archaeologist. She often went with Max when his work took him to the Middle East. Agatha continued to write the world's favourite mysteries. In 1954, the Mystery Writers of America presented her with its Grand Master Award. In 1956, she was made a Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire. This is an award given by the queen to a British citizen whose work has significantly benefited the UK. She was made a Dame in 1971. Agatha Christie died on 12th January, 1976. The same year, the Crime Writers' Association chose *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* as the best crime novel of all time.

Comprehension check

1 Answer the questions.

- 1 Why was Agatha alone for most of her childhood?
- 2 Where did she meet her first husband?
- 3 What did she do during World War I?
- 4 What were some awards and honours that she received?
- 5 How old was she when she died?





The Characters

From left to right:

*(Standing) Dr James Sheppard, Geoffrey Raymond, Ralph Paton, Ursula Bourne, Flora Ackroyd, Major Hector Blunt, Elizabeth Russell, John Parker, Hercule Poirot, Caroline Sheppard
(Sitting) Cecil Ackroyd, Roger Ackroyd*

Before you read

Vocabulary

- 1 The words in the boxes are all used in Chapter 1. Use them to complete the sentences. Use a dictionary, if necessary.

butler maid housekeeper secretary
manufacturer stepfather widow

- 1 A person or company that produces a large amount of goods, usually in a factory, is called a
- 2 A woman whose husband has died is a
- 3 A man who marries a woman who already has children becomes their
- 4 A servant who organises and takes care of a house is a
- 5 A is the most important male servant of a house; one of his jobs is to greet guests.
- 6 A helps a businessperson with writing letters, organising appointments, and other daily jobs.
- 7 A is a female servant, usually someone who cleans, serves food or helps with the cooking.

drawing room billiard room workshop
summer house property inherit engaged

- 1 Some large houses might have a, used for playing a game in which two people hit balls on a table, using long sticks called cues.
- 2 A is a room for making or repairing things using tools.
- 3 Large, older houses often have a, where guests go to talk or relax, usually before or after a meal.
- 4 A is a small, simple building in a yard or garden where people can sit during the summer.
- 5 is something you own. The word can also mean 'a house with land'.
- 6 If two people are, they have promised to marry each other.
- 7 A son might his mother's house or money after she dies.



CHAPTER ONE

KING'S ABBOT



rs Ferrars died on the night of 16th September — a Thursday. I was sent for at eight o'clock in the morning on Friday. There was nothing that I could do. She had been dead for hours.



track 02

When I reached home again, I found my sister, Caroline, waiting for me in the dining room. My sister has a special talent — she can find out all the local gossip of our village without leaving the house. I kissed Caroline on the cheek and sat down to my bacon and eggs.

'Poor Mrs Ferrars,' Caroline said. 'What did she die of?'

I put down my knife and fork. 'How did you know she was dead? I haven't said a word to anyone.'

'The milkman told me. He heard it from Mrs Ferrars's cook.'

I decided to tell Caroline the truth. She was going to find out soon enough anyway.



CHAPTER ONE

‘Sleeping pills,’ I said. ‘She took too many. It was an accident.’

‘An accident? Nonsense, James,’ Caroline said immediately. ‘It was guilt¹ — because of what she did to her husband.’

Mrs Ferrars’s husband died just over a year ago, and Caroline has always insisted, with no evidence at all, that his wife poisoned him. But then Mrs Ferrars was a good-looking, stylish woman with money, and in our village such people are often the subject of wild rumours.²

‘Although I can see why she did it,’ my sister continued, ‘Ashley Ferrars certainly made her suffer. I’m sure she left a note explaining everything.’

‘There was no note, no letter of any kind,’ I said sharply.³

‘Oh!’ said Caroline. ‘So you asked about that? You agree with me, then. It was no accident.’

I did not answer, but got up from the table.

Our village of King’s Abbot is like any other English village. We have a railway station, a post office and two general stores. The nearest large town is Cranchester, nine miles away. As for our hobbies, I can say it in one word: *gossip*.

My friend Roger Ackroyd is the subject of much of this gossip. Ackroyd is one of the richest men in the area. He is a very successful manufacturer of nearly fifty who generously supports our sports teams with his money. You could say that he is the life of the village.

When Roger was young, he married a beautiful widow who died four years after their wedding. Her son from her first marriage, Ralph Paton, was only seven years old at the time. Now Ralph is twenty-five, an extraordinarily handsome young man with a bit of

-
1. **guilt** : a strong feeling of unhappiness that comes when you feel that you have done something bad or wrong.
 2. **wild rumour** : an unbelievable story about someone that people share through talking.
 3. **sharply** : quickly and with attention, sometimes with anger.



a wild side. His stepfather worries about him constantly.

Ackroyd didn't marry again, although for years we all thought that he might marry his housekeeper, Miss Russell, an attractive but severe woman in her forties. Then his sister-in-law, Mrs Ackroyd, the widow of his younger brother, came from Canada to live with him, along with her daughter, Flora. Soon there were rumours that he might marry his brother's widow. But after the death of Ashley Ferrars last year, Ackroyd and Mrs Ferrars began spending most of their time together, and we were all talking about their future wedding. Now we were in the middle of a tragedy.

I had seen Mrs Ferrars alive only yesterday, talking to Ralph Paton, their heads close together. I remember being surprised. I'd had no idea that Ralph was in King's Abbot. No one had seen him here in six months, not since his last argument with his stepfather.

I was still thinking about this as I walked the streets of our village, when suddenly I came face to face with Roger Ackroyd himself. The news of Mrs Ferrars's death had changed him: the poor man looked nothing like his usual cheerful, healthy self. Roger invited me to dinner that night at seven-thirty. He said that he had something important to discuss.

That morning, there were several patients waiting to see me. The last was Ackroyd's housekeeper, Miss Russell — still a very good-looking woman, I thought. She had come to me about her knee, but I couldn't find anything wrong.

Miss Russell looked at the bottles of medicine in my office. 'I don't believe in all these drugs,' she said. 'Drugs can destroy people's lives. Tell me, Dr Sheppard, is there any cure? If someone becomes addicted?'⁴

4. **addicted** : unable to stop doing something, e.g. taking drugs.



CHAPTER ONE

I gave her a short lecture on the subject and she listened carefully. Then she began asking me about different types of poison.

‘So that’s the reason for these questions,’ I said. ‘Detective stories! You’re reading too many of them.’

After lunch, I decided to work in the garden. I was on my hands and knees when something heavy flew past my ear and fell at my feet with a squelch.⁵ It was a vegetable marrow!⁶

I looked up angrily. Over the wall, a face appeared. I saw an egg-shaped head, an enormous moustache and a pair of eyes. It was our mysterious new neighbour, Mr Porrott. Caroline and I knew nothing about him, although my sister had tried very hard to find out.

At once⁷ the little man began to apologise.⁸ ‘A thousand pardons, Monsieur. I retired⁹ here to live quietly and grow vegetable marrows. But now I am so angry with these vegetables that I picked up the biggest and I threw it!’ His accent sounded French, or possibly Belgian. ‘I worked hard for years so that I could have enough money to enjoy a quiet life,’ he continued sadly. ‘But now I miss the work.’

My anger was gone. I told him that I understood, and that my dream had been to travel the world. A year ago, I had inherited enough money to make my dream come true, but I’d been greedy and foolish. I’d invested¹⁰ it all in a gold mine in Australia and had lost everything.

Mr Porrott and I began talking about the village, and I was surprised to learn that he was also a friend of Roger Ackroyd’s.

5. **squelch** : a sound made when something that is wet bursts or explodes.

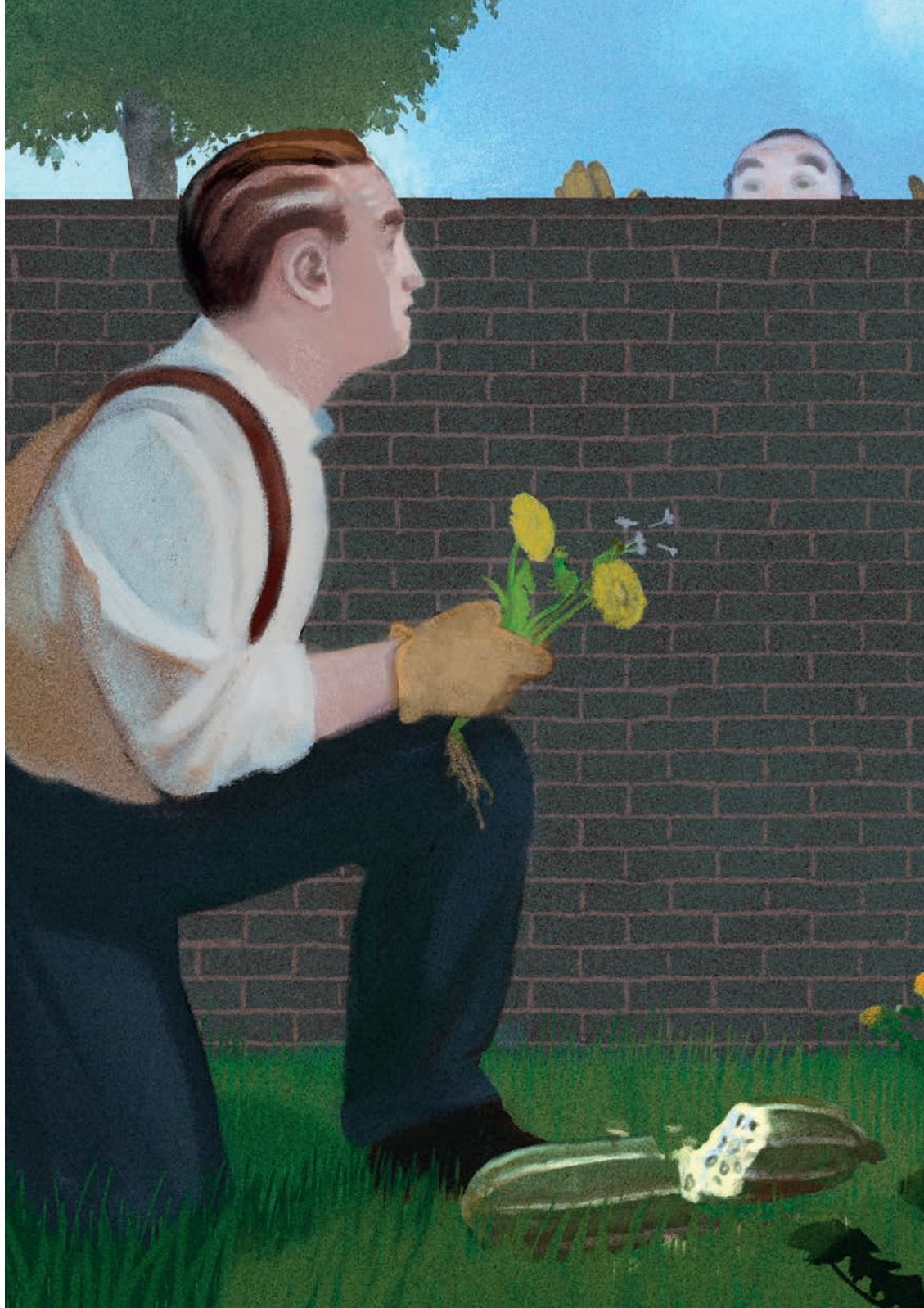
6. **vegetable marrow** : a green or yellow vegetable which grows above the ground.

7. **At once** : Immediately.

8. **apologise** : say that you are sorry because of something you have done.

9. **retire** : stop working, usually because someone is over a certain age.

10. **invest** : put money into something, e.g. a company, and hoping to receive profits if it is successful.





CHAPTER ONE

‘Monsieur Ackroyd knew me in London,’ Porrott said. ‘I asked him to say nothing of my career here. I will live quietly, without fame. I do not even correct the local pronunciation of my name.’ He changed the subject and asked about the tall and handsome young man who was walking around the village yesterday. ‘Is he Monsieur Ackroyd’s stepson?’

‘Yes, that sounds like Ralph Paton.’

The little man nodded. ‘He is engaged to Mr Ackroyd’s niece, the charming Miss Flora. I believe that their marriage was Monsieur Ackroyd’s own idea.’

Just then, Caroline called me from the house. She had returned from the village and had gossip to share.

‘I saw Ralph Paton,’ she said. ‘Or I *heard* him ...’ Caroline told me that she had come through the wood near Roger Ackroyd’s property. There, she had heard Ralph. He was talking to a girl and he’d been very upset and angry — Caroline had heard something about his stepfather and money. ‘I didn’t see the girl,’ she said, ‘but I’m sure that it was Flora Ackroyd!’

I made some excuse about a patient and left. I wanted to talk to Ralph myself.

I found Ralph at the Three Boars Inn, where he was staying. He met me with a sunny smile lighting up his handsome face. Ralph is tall, dark-haired and athletic. Everyone who meets him likes him, but I believe that I understand him the best. I’ve known the young man since he was a child, and he often says that I’m his best friend in the village.

‘Sheppard! Have a drink with me,’ he said. ‘Things aren’t going well, doctor. It’s my stepfather.’

‘If I could help — ’

‘Good of you. But I shouldn’t tell you anything more. I’ve got to do this alone. Yes, I’ve got to do this alone ...’

The text and *beyond*

Comprehension check

1 Read the sentences and answer (T) True or (F) False.

	T	F
1 Caroline first hears about Mrs Ferrars's death from her brother.	☐	☐
2 Ashley Ferrars was a kind and loving husband.	☐	☐
3 Ralph Paton's father and mother are dead.	☐	☐
4 Roger Ackroyd and Mrs Ferrars were romantically involved.	☐	☐
5 Ralph Paton had argued with Roger Ackroyd six months before.	☐	☐
6 Miss Russell's hobby is writing mystery novels.	☐	☐
7 Dr Sheppard's neighbour is enjoying a quiet life without work.	☐	☐
8 Dr Sheppard invested badly and lost a lot of money.	☐	☐
9 Caroline saw Flora talking to Ralph Paton in the woods.	☐	☐
10 Dr Sheppard meets Ralph at his stepfather's house for dinner.	☐	☐

Discussion

2 Read the questions and discuss the answers with a partner. Be prepared to share your answers with the rest of the class.

- How old do you think Dr Sheppard and his sister are? Why do you think they are living together?
- Dr Sheppard says that the favourite hobby of the village is gossip. Do you think that this is still true of small towns and villages today? Do you think that Dr Sheppard secretly likes gossip? Why?/ Why not?
- Would you like to live in an English village like King's Abbot? Why?/ Why not?
- When Ralph says 'I've got to do this alone', what do you think he might be talking about?

Detective work: character files

- 3 Copy the table on another sheet of paper and fill in the information. Under *Facts*, choose from the list in the box and add anything else that might be important. You can use the same fact for more than one character. Be sure to leave space for more facts that may come later.

has a bit of a wild side came to England from Canada
 lives with his sister seems curious about drugs and poisons
 died at the beginning of the story had a career in London
 lost money recently is engaged to Ralph a doctor
 is violent with vegetables

Name	He/She is Roger Ackroyd's ...	Does he/she live with Roger Ackroyd? Yes./No.	Facts
Dr Sheppard	friend	No.	lives with his sister; lost money recently; a doctor
Mrs Ferrars			
Miss Russell			
Flora Ackroyd			
Mrs Ackroyd			
Mr Porrott			
Ralph Paton			

I've known the young man since he was a child ...

We often use the **present perfect** with *for* and *since*, especially to answer questions with **How long ...?**

We use *for* when we mention the length of a period of time.

We use *since* when we mention the beginning of a period in the past.

We've been friends for over ten years. We've been friends since 2012.

I've lived in London for a long time. I've lived here since I was a baby.

Grammar: the present perfect with *for* and *since*

4 Answer the following questions about your own life. Write two answers for each question. Use *for* in the first answer and *since* in the second.

1 How long has your family lived in this town or city?

.....

2 How long have you been a fan of your favourite band?

.....

3 How long have you and your best friend known each other?

.....

4 How long have you been in this room?

.....

5 How long have you been a student at this school?

.....

T: GRADE 6

Speaking: travel

5 Dr Sheppard's dream was to travel the world. What are your ideas about travelling? Ask a partner the following questions.

1 Are you or your family planning to travel to another country this year? If your answer is yes, where are you going?

2 What are some things that you feel you must take with you when travelling? What are some things that you don't need to take?

3 Has something strange ever happened to you on the way to a destination? If your answer is yes, where were you going and what happened?

4 Do you like to travel to other countries? If your answer is yes, why? What is your usual reason for travelling?

Before you read

Vocabulary: crime

- 1 Complete the paragraph with the words in the box.

make enquiries alibi footprints blackmail burglary stab
dagger whereabouts suspect (noun) suspect (verb)

When you are investigating a crime, you should (1) , that is, you should ask people questions in order to find out information. If you (2) someone of a crime, you think it is possible that he or she has committed that crime. That person then becomes one of your (3)s. You may have to find information about your suspects' (4) at the time of the crime — in other words, the place where they were when it happened. Suspects have (5) if they can prove that they were not at the place where the crime happened at the time that it happened. You should consider the evidence, for example there may be (6) , which are marks left by someone's shoes or feet. And, of course, there are many types of crimes. For example, a (7) happens when a thief comes into a house and steals money or possessions. (8) is the crime of forcing someone to pay you money so that you will not tell anyone about their secrets. Then there is murder, which can happen in different ways. Killers could use guns or they might (9) someone with a knife, or more rarely, they might use a (10) , which is a short knife with a pointed end, used in historic times.

Vocabulary: emotions

- 2 Complete the sentences with the words in the box.

mood unemotional astonished devastated blush

- Someone who is very surprised is
- A person who doesn't seem to feel strong emotions is
- If someone's face turns red, usually because of shyness or embarrassment, he or she ising.
- A is the way someone is feeling at a particular time.
- If you are , you feel as if something has destroyed you.