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PENGUIN ACTIVE READING

LEVEL 4

Evil Under the Sun

Agatha Christie



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it's the book about?

- 1 Have you read other books by Agatha Christie, or seen any films of her stories? Who were the main characters? What happened in the stories? Discuss the kind of books that she wrote.
- 2 Read the descriptions of six characters in the story. Then guess who the people in the pictures are. Write their names under the pictures.



a



b



c



d



e



f

- 1 Patrick Redfern is a tall, sporty young man who is very attractive to women.
- 2 Kenneth Marshall is a quiet, shy, loyal man.
- 3 Horace Blatt is a loud, red-faced man who other people find boring.
- 4 Arlena Marshall is a beautiful young woman who enjoys the company of men.
- 5 Hercule Poirot is a clever middle-aged Belgian detective.
- 6 Linda Marshall is a shy, embarrassed teenager.

1.2 What happens first?

Look at the titles and pictures in the first two chapters. Do you think these sentences are true (T) or false (F)?

- 1 Hercule Poirot is on holiday at the hotel.
- 2 The hotel is usually full of noisy holiday-makers.
- 3 The main characters in the story work at the hotel.
- 4 One female character is disliked by all the other women.
- 5 Many of the characters have secrets.

A Quiet Hotel

*'The sun shines. The sea is blue. But, Miss Brewster,
there is evil everywhere under the sun.'*



Hercule Poirot was on holiday. Dressed in a white suit with a wide hat protecting his eyes, his handsome moustache carefully styled, he looked down at the beach. He was staying at the Jolly Roger Hotel on **Smugglers'** Island, on the south-west coast of England. It was a very comfortable hotel and very quiet. Not many day visitors made their way to the island, which was completely separated from the **mainland** at every high tide.

On the beach, some people were in the sea, while others were lying in the sun. Next to Poirot, hotel guests were discussing all kinds of subjects. On his left Mrs Gardener was **knitting** while she talked. Her husband Odell spoke

smuggler /'smʌgələ/ (n) someone who takes things illegally from one country to another
mainland /'meɪnlænd, -lənd/ (n) the main area of land that forms a country; not the islands near it

tide /taɪd/ (n) the regular movement of the sea, towards the land (*high tide*) and away from the land (*low tide*)

knit /nɪt/ (v) to make clothes with wool, using special long needles

... when a reply seemed to be expected. On Poirot's right was Miss Brewster, a strong, fit woman whose pleasant face had been aged by time spent outdoors.

'Odell and I have seen England now,' said Mrs Gardener, 'and we just wanted to relax somewhere by the sea. Isn't that right, dear?' Her husband, from behind his sun hat, agreed. 'We were looking for somewhere away from the crowds, and, well, special. We were very pleased when we found this place. It's full of such interesting people. You, for example, Monsieur* Poirot. I was so excited when I discovered who you were – wasn't I, Odell?'

'Yes, dear.'

'I've always wanted to meet you. Cornelia Robson told us all about that business in Egypt when Linnet Ridgeway was killed. And there's Miss Darnley too. I get a lot of my clothes from Rose Mond's, and of course she *is* Rose Mond, isn't she? I was wearing one of her dresses last night. There's just one thing I'm worried about, Monsieur Poirot. I hope you're not here for *professional* reasons? I'd hate to be anywhere near a crime ...'

Hercule Poirot threw his hands up into the air. 'I promise you, Madame, that I am here, like you, to enjoy myself. I am not even going to think about crime.'

'There are no bodies on *this* island!' Miss Brewster laughed.

'Ah,' replied Poirot, 'but that is not quite true. Look at those people, down there on the beach. They are not men and women. They are just – bodies!'

'And some very attractive ones too!' added **Major** Barry.

'Perhaps, but where is the mystery?' asked Poirot. 'When I was young, one saw almost nothing of a woman's body. The romance has gone. In fact, they remind me of dead bodies – or pieces of meat.'

'Oh, Monsieur Poirot!' cried Mrs Gardener, shocked. 'But I agree that the girls shouldn't lie in the sun like that. They'll grow hair all over their bodies, and then what will they look like? I told my daughter that, didn't I, Odell?'

'Yes, dear,' Mr Gardener replied.

Everyone was silent, perhaps imagining the Gardeners' daughter when the worst had happened. Mrs Gardener put away her knitting, and she and her husband made their way towards the hotel. The others watched them.

'American husbands are wonderful!' said Miss Brewster.

Mrs Gardener's place was taken by **Reverend** Stephen Lane. He was a tall man in his fifties, wearing informal holiday clothes.

'A wonderful area!' he said. 'I've been for a walk along the **cliffs**.'

* Monsieur, Madame, Mademoiselle: the French words for Mr/sir, Mrs/madam and Miss

Major /'meidʒə/ (n) the title of an officer in the British army

Reverend /'revərənd/ (n) a title used for some officials of the Christian church

cliff /klɪf/ (n) high land with a very steep side next to the sea



‘Ah, that’s good exercise!’ replied Miss Brewster. ‘I haven’t been **rowing** yet today. It’s a good way to keep one’s stomach flat.’ Hercule Poirot’s eyes dropped uncomfortably to his rather large waist. Noticing his look, Miss Brewster said kindly, ‘That would soon disappear, Monsieur Poirot, if you took a rowing-boat out each day.’

‘*Non, merci!** I hate boats! The movement of the sea is not pleasant.’

‘Seasickness is very odd, isn’t it?’ said Miss Brewster. ‘Why should some people suffer and not others? It’s the same with heights. I don’t like them, but Mrs Redfern suffers much more. A few days ago on the cliff path she got quite faint and had to hold onto me. She told me she’s always had problems.’

‘She’d better not go down the ladder to Pixy **Cove**, then,’ said Lane. ‘Ah, here she comes now,’ he added. ‘She’s finished her swim.’

Christine Redfern was drying her hair as she walked towards them. She had very pale skin.

‘She isn’t as cooked as the others, is she?’ Major Barry said, laughing loudly.

* *Non, merci!*: French for *No, thank you!*

row /rəʊ/ (v) to move a boat through water using special long pieces of shaped wood
cove /kəʊv/ (n) part of the coast where the land curves and partly surrounds the sea



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Under the Sun

Agatha Christie

British English

Contemporary

At the Jolly Roger Hotel, the guests appear to be relaxing in the sun. But when a beautiful woman is killed, there are many possible suspects. What can the motive be? Is evil at work on the island? By chance, the great detective Hercule Poirot is also a guest. Can he solve the mystery?

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