

And Then There Were None



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF AGATHA CHRISTIE

Agatha Christie was born into an upper middle class family in South West England. Her mother was British and her father was a wealthy American stockbroker educated in Switzerland. Agatha was the youngest of three children and had a happy early life but her father died of a heart attack when she was only 11, and she later said that this marked the end of her childhood. After her father's death she was sent to receive a formal education first in her native town of Torquay and then in Paris. Agatha began writing after finishing school but could not get anything published. At the same time she was looking for a husband, and after a few failed relationships, met Archibald "Archie" Christie in 1912 and the two were married soon after. Archie went away to fight in World War I and Agatha helped the wounded soldiers back in England as a part of the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD). Agatha published her first novel in 1920, which introduced her longest running and possibly most famous detective character, Hercule Poirot. In 1926, Agatha published her first big hit: *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, but in the same year her mother died and her husband left her for his secretary. Agatha ran away after this and was found days later registered at a hotel under her husband's mistress's name. They divorced in 1928 and Agatha retained custody of their one child, Rosalind. In 1939 Agatha married archaeology professor Max Mallowan and traveled with him on many trips. She developed a great interest in archaeology and Egyptology. Agatha continued writing into old age and wrote 66 novels and 153 short stories in total.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Christie lived through a tumultuous period in England, including two World Wars. She joined the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) in WWI, tending to wounded soldiers in England. During WWII she worked at the pharmacy in the University College Hospital in London where she learned a great amount about poisons, which she would use to great effect in her post-war mysteries. Christie's 1941 novel, *N or M?*, describes a search for two of Hitler's top-secret agents and features a character named Major Bletchley. This led the British intelligence agency to investigate Christie, out of fear that she had information on the British top-secret code-breaking agency, Bletchley Park. All turned out to be just a coincidence, as Christie had apparently invented a surprisingly appropriate name.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

As the world's best selling mystery writer Agatha Christie has an incredible number of related literary works. *And Then There Were None* was her most popular and best selling novel, but it did not include her most popular characters, Hercule Poirot or Miss Marple. Christie herself didn't much care for Detective Poirot even though he starred in 33 of her novels and 54 of her short stories. She found him "insufferable" but knew the public liked him and felt it was her duty as an entertainer to produce what the public wanted. She also must have felt some sort of debt to him because it was her first Poirot novel, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, which first got her published. Christie loved her other recurring character, Miss Marple, although she only appeared in twelve of Christie's novels

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *And Then There Were None*
- **When Written:** 1939
- **Where Written:** England
- **When Published:** November 1939
- **Literary Period:** Popular fiction
- **Genre:** Murder Mystery
- **Setting:** Soldier Island (in other editions it is also called Indian Island), off the coast of England
- **Climax:** Justice Wargrave's revelatory letter in a bottle, which appears in the second epilogue to the novel.
- **Antagonist:** Justice Wargrave
- **Point of View:** Third person omniscient

EXTRA CREDIT

Christie vs. Shakespeare: Christie is the best selling author of all time after Shakespeare and the Bible.

Agatha on Stage: Agatha Christie claimed that the happiest moment of her life was when she was in a Gilbert and Sullivan play as a child but she later said, "an experience that you truly enjoy should never be repeated." She did go on to write the longest running play, *The Mousetrap*. It opened at the Ambassador Theater in London in 1952 and ran until 1975 and then moved next door to The Saint Martin's Theater where it is still running.

Popular Poirot: Hercule Poirot is the only fictional character to ever receive an obituary in the *New York Times*. It appeared on the front page in August 1975, following the publication of the last Poirot novel, *Curtains*.



PLOT SUMMARY

Riding on a train through England, Justice Wargrave begins thinking about where he is going: Soldier Island. He remembers a story of a millionaire who lived there, but has heard that the **Island** was recently bought by a man named Mr. Owen. The scene quickly changes to another woman on the train, Vera Claythorne who is similarly curious about this island. The narrative shifts among a variety of other characters, the mysterious Philip Lombard, the rigid spinster Miss Emily Brent, the retired General Macarthur, the successful Dr. Armstrong, the reckless Anthony Marston, and the lying Mr. Blore, who are all also headed to Soldier Island.

They are taken by boat to the island by a local named Fred Narracott. At the island the host is not there but two servants, Mr. and Mrs. Rogers, tell the guests that dinner is almost ready. The guests go up to their rooms and notice that there is a nursery rhyme hung in each, "Ten Little Soldiers." In each verse another Little Soldier dies in some strange way. After a pleasant dinner, the guests all gather in the parlor for drinks. All of a sudden a loud voice takes over the room, accusing each guest, one at a time, of murder. When the recording ends, Mrs. Rogers faints and is taken upstairs by her husband and the doctor.

The voice has come from a gramophone hidden in the next room. Justice Wargrave, a retired judge, begins an impromptu court session – asking everyone to explain his or her accusation. Each guest has some sort of excuse. They realize that they have all been invited to the island under false pretenses by someone with the name U. N. Owen which, as Wargrave points out, spells out Unknown. Then, all of a sudden, Anthony Marston chokes, falls over, and dies. Dr. Armstrong checks Marston's drink and discovers that it has been poisoned! They take him up to his room and all decide that they will try to leave in the morning. In bed in her room Vera realizes that Marston's death mirrors the first line of the Ten Little Soldiers rhyme.

The next morning Mr. Rogers tells everyone that Mrs. Rogers died in the middle of the night. He also says that two of the little soldier figurines that had been decorating the table had now disappeared. The guests now decide that there must be a "raving maniac" on the island. They all think that they should leave but a **storm** is coming and no boat will be able to get to or from the island. Blore and Lombard decide to search the island but find no one. They do discover that Lombard has a revolver. Mr. Rogers calls everyone in for lunch, but they realize that General Macarthur is not there. Dr. Armstrong goes to check on him and finds him dead – hit on the head with a life preserver. Wargrave holds another court-session and decides that although no one person stands out as the murderer, the killer must be one of the guests on the Island.

The next morning they wake to find Rogers dead – struck on

the back of head with an axe while chopping wood. Vera and Miss Brent prepare breakfast now that there are no surviving servants. After breakfast, Miss Brent feels weak so stays seated as the rest of the guests clear the table. When they come back they find Miss Brent dead. She has been poisoned with a syringe in the neck and the murderer even took the time to put a bee in the room (to match the verse in the Ten Little Soldiers rhyme). Wargrave suggests that they should lock up any dangerous items that they have brought, but when Lombard goes to get his revolver he realizes that it is missing.

Next Wargrave dies, shot through the head and dressed up as a judge while a decoy of a drowning scene frightens Vera and distracts all the other guests. That night Lombard hears a noise from his room and wakes up everyone else only to realize that Dr. Armstrong is missing. They believe that Armstrong must be the murderer. They spend the morning outside the house where it feels open and safe. Finally Blore decides to get some **food** from the house, but on his way inside he is crushed by a bear shaped statue dropped from above and which had been sitting on Vera's mantelpiece. Lombard decides that they should find a high place on the Island and stay awake all night but when they get there they find Armstrong dead. Vera and Lombard are the only two remaining on the island. They both suspect the other but Vera manages to snatch Lombard's revolver and shoot him. She then feels a sudden calm and walks back to the house intending to eat something and sleep. Instead she thinks about the little boy she tricked into drowning in an attempt to free the man she loved to marry her (except that the man figured it out and left her immediately). She notices a noose hanging in her bedroom and a chair placed just under it, and hangs herself.

The epilogue is set in Scotland Yard where Sir Thomas Legge and Inspector Maine are discussing the mystery murders on Soldier Island. They go through all the facts but cannot understand how everyone on the Island could be dead. The final chapter is a letter from Wargrave describing how he has always been obsessed with justice and death. As a small child he enjoyed killing animals, but he never wanted to harm anything innocent. This led him to a career in the law, but he always felt something lacking. After learning he was soon to die from a medical condition, he decided that for his final act in life he wanted to commit the perfect murder. But he also did not want to kill innocent people, so he collected a group of men and women who had committed crimes for which they had never been punished, and brought them to Soldier Island. Then he killed them one by one, saving the guiltiest for last. He hid his own involvement by getting the doctor to help fake his own death (tricking the doctor into thinking such a ruse would help out the "real" murderer), and then killing the doctor. After Vera hanged herself, Wargrave arranged the house just so, and then carefully killed himself.



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Justice Wargrave – A recently retired Judge who quickly re-assumes this role on the island, holding impromptu "court cases" after nearly every murder. He is obsessed with **justice**, and also with death, as he reveals at the end of the novel through a letter placed in a bottle and put in the ocean. Since he was a child he has taken great pleasure from the idea of **death**, and even killed animals, but he was also pained by the idea of killing anyone who was innocent. When he realized that he was going to die he decided to finally commit the perfect murder – by killing people who had murdered themselves yet were beyond the reach of the law.

Emily Brent – A religious woman certain of her own righteousness, she is convinced also of everyone else's sinfulness. Long before coming to the island, Emily Brent fired and kicked out of her house a woman named Beatrice Taylor because Beatrice had gotten pregnant out of wedlock. Beatrice, in despair, subsequently killed herself. Brent never consciously feels any remorse (though there are hints that subconsciously she may) and she therefore feels confident that she will not be killed even after the recording plays.

Vera Claythorne – A schoolteacher who is invited to Soldier Island as a secretary. She is very practical and careful, but she is also a romantic. She fell in love with a man named Hugo while she was employed as a nanny for a young boy, Cyril Hamilton. Cyril's birth took away Hugo's chance at an inheritance and Hugo told Vera at one point that he would marry her if he still had money. Vera therefore allowed Cyril to swim out into the ocean too far and drown. She was not convicted because she swam out after him as if she were trying to save him. Yet Hugo knew the truth, so he went away and never spoke to Vera again. Vera is plagued with this **guilt** for the rest of her life until, after surviving to the very end of Soldier Island, she hangs herself.

Philip Lombard – Lombard was hired by Mr. Isaac Morris to come to Soldier Island and watch out for any trouble. He is a very resourceful and creative man who used to be a soldier in Africa. While in Africa he left a group of natives to die in order to save his own life. He is very clever and is able to escape **death** until the very end of the novel, when he trusts Vera too much because she is a woman.

Dr. Edward Armstrong – A successful doctor who comes to Soldier Island because he is told that Ms. Owen is sick. He used to drink too much and once accidentally killed an old woman because he was drunk while operating on her. He is very preoccupied with maintaining his reputation, and hence his success. At the same time, he is a very gullible man. He trusts Wargrave and helps the judge fake his own **death**. Once the other surviving characters think that the judge is dead, Wargrave has free reign of the **island**. Wargrave eventually kills

Armstrong by pushing him off a cliff.

William Henry Blore – An ex-police inspector who is tricked into coming to the island when he is told that he is supposed to protect Mrs. Owen's jewels from a thief. In his past Blore, in order to gain a promotion for himself, sent an innocent man named Landor to a penal colony, where he died. Blore is practical and careful, but he has very little imagination, which is possibly a reason why he was not able to get promoted on his own merit. In spite of his careful observance of the guests, he is always guessing the wrong person as the murderer and he is not careful enough to avoid his own **death**.

Thomas Rogers – The butler on Soldier Island, Mr. Rogers is a dedicated and professional servant. He always brings the drinks and food on time and is always polite and deferential. Yet he killed an old woman he used to work for, Jennifer Brady, by not administering her medicine so he could receive the money that Mrs. Brady had left to him and in his wife in her will.

General John Gordon Macarthur – A general in World War I, he is the oldest guest on the island and is suspected of intentionally sending a lieutenant, Arthur Richmond, to his death. Macarthur did this when he learned that Richmond was having an affair with his wife. Macarthur's guilty conscience has always left him with the feeling that his fellow veterans know about his dark past and he separated himself from his Army friends after the war ended. His wife also died soon after the war and he has been lonely and weary since then. Once he gets to Soldier Island, he realizes that he is tired of life and the effort that it takes to live with his secret, and is ready to die.

Ethel Rogers – Mr. Rogers's wife, Ethel cooks all the meals on the island and does the housekeeping. Vera notices from the very beginning that Ethel looks constantly frightened and this seems to relate to her sense of **guilt**. Ms. Rogers dies in her sleep from poison during the first night on the island.

Isaac Morris – Morris is never actually present in the novel but he is hired by Wargrave to purchase the island under the name of Mr. Owen, and find plausible ways to invite all the guests. Owen is a shady businessman who has been involved in the drug trade and convinced a daughter of one of Wargrave's friends to start taking drugs, after which she committed suicide. Wargrave is able to kill Morris with poison even though Morris never comes to Soldier Island, and Morris leaves no trace of Wargrave's presence in the business dealings that enabled the multiple murders on Soldier Island.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Anthony Marston – This wealthy, daredevil of a young man is first seen zipping down the road in his fancy car. He once hit two children and killed them, but he feels no remorse for the act because he believes it was an accident. Marston is a man with basically no morals.

Fred Narracott – A man from the mainland who ferries the

boat to Soldier Island.

Inspector Maine – An inspector from Scotland Yard who is mystified by the murders on Soldier's Island.

Sir Thomas Legge – Another mystified inspector from Scotland Yard.



THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.



JUSTICE

Mystery novels, of which Agatha Christie is often considered the queen, generally present a complex and confusing cast of characters that, through the efforts of the detective/narrator/reader become organized into groups of good and bad, black and white. Generally, there are one or two criminals and lots of victims. *And Then There Were None* never works out this neatly. Agatha Christie presents justice as an ambiguous concept. Who deserves punishment and how much? The criminal of *And Then There Were None*, Justice Wargrave, is a justice fanatic. He believes that because the guests on Soldier's Island all committed crimes for which they were never punished, they now deserve to be emotionally tortured and eventually killed. Even if someone were to agree that the ten criminals deserve such punishment, Wargrave's conception of justice is complicated by the fact that, in the name of justice, he commits a much graver crime than any of the other characters in the novel.

Agatha Christie demonstrates that since humans are inherently flawed, justice is too. The ten victims in *And Then There Were None* were able to get away with their crimes because of some flaw in the system: there wasn't enough proof, the crime happened far away in another country, the death was caused by some accidental carelessness that does not count as murder. Yet when they get to Soldier's Island they enter a sort of penal colony where justice all of a sudden becomes an extremely rigid concept. By presenting the arbiter of justice as a life-long death and legal obsessed maniac, Agatha Christie shows the danger in a simplistic view of justice. There is a reason that the system is flawed, that one is innocent before proven guilty. There is no perfect way to catch and punish every criminal, but breaking from the existing, flawed system is even more dangerous. At the end of the novel, when the house and island are strewn with dead bodies it is hard to believe that the best answer to murder is more murder.



GUILT

And Then There Were None presents two kinds of guilt: personal and legal. The majority of the characters in the novel are people who have escaped the latter but are plagued by the former. Justice Wargrave understands the power of personal guilt as shown by the fact that he guesses Vera will kill herself when she is the last one left on the island. Yet he does not believe that a sense of personal guilt is enough. Wargrave cannot stand that these people have not been declared guilty by a court of law. Agatha Christie, on the other hand, shows that the self-inflicted punishment that comes from personal guilt is often even more painful than any sentence given by the law. For example, General Macarthur wishes death upon himself because he cannot handle his guilt-ridden any longer and Vera is constantly plagued by dreams and visions of the little boy she killed for the man she loved. Agatha Christie demonstrates that guilt is not only doled out by a jury, but rather, like justice, it is a complicated concept that involves human flaws and inconsistencies.

Through Miss Emily Brent, the novel also presents a religious view of guilt. Brent's solid belief in God, and her belief that she is always in God's good graces, means that she is incapable of feeling guilty. Her understanding of guilt is similar to Wargrave's understanding of justice: Brent believes that she is not guilty because she killed a *sinning* woman, and Wargrave believes that he can cause ten murders if it is in the name of justice. Both of these characters show how guilt can be defined by one's own personal moral and legal system. The guests on Soldier's Island have been able to survive for so long with their own guilt because they come up with various definitions of right and wrong to pardon themselves. For example, Anthony Marston thinks that he ran over those children accidentally so it doesn't matter – everyone has their own way to cope with guilt. The central question at the end of the novel is “who is guilty?” Is Wargrave guilty because he killed ten people? Or was he only following his duty as a servant of the law? Did the guests of Soldier's Island deserve their fate, were they guilty enough to deserve death no matter what? These answers depend on the reader's highly subjective understanding of guilt.



DEATH

Death is obviously a central part of *And Then There Were None*, but it is treated quite casually. There is no pomp or circumstance surrounding the death of any of the characters. They are laid out on their beds and that is it. This simplicity comes from the fact that the characters revert to a more primitive state when death becomes present in their everyday lives. When so many people are dying there is no time for mourning, and life just has to go on. In addition, their own murderous pasts have brought them to this proximity with

death. The characters have all killed other people so they are unusually knowledgeable about death.

The inevitability of death is highlighted on Soldier's Island. Many of the characters, such as Vera, Anthony Marston, Mr. Lombard and Mr. Blore, feel immortal. They believe that they will be the ones to survive because they have avoided danger at other times in their lives. Yet one of Wargrave's lessons is that no one can escape death.



CLASS

Each character has a very specific, defined role in English society. For example, the Rogers come as servants, Vera as the secretary, and Anthony as the moneyed socialite. There is a doctor, a judge, a general, and a spinster, and each play out their roles exactly as they should – at least when they are first on the island. This IN this way, the novel establishes the rigidity of the English social order. *And Then There Were None* is set in 1930s England, a highly stratified society where one's social class could define one's life and relationships. The chaos and fear that comes to rule the island is the only thing that can break down these social and class barriers. Yet it is difficult for some of the characters to leave their expected roles, even when this puts them in danger. Mr. Rogers maintains his duties as servant even after his wife, along with some of the other guests, have been killed. He makes meals at the appropriate time, serves cocktail and even ventures out alone to chop wood for the guests – which leads to his death.

Agatha Christie sets up this rigid structure and maintains it for a while to demonstrate how difficult it is to break down the barriers set by class. When it does finally happen the characters don't only lose their social graces, they also begin to revert to an inhuman, animalistic state. They start eating out of cans in the kitchen, and leaving the house to find safety in nature. Vera even observes that the guests who have survived start to look more like animals. When their main worry is survival there is no time to worry about what is proper. Yet Agatha Christie shows that it takes something of the magnitude of being trapped on an island with an insane murderer to interfere with the class order of British society.



SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



THE STORM

In the very beginning of the novel, Mr. Blore encounters an old man on the train who warns him of a coming storm. Mr. Blore does not believe him because it

looks bright and sunny outside. Yet the storm does come. The slow approach of this bad weather mirrors growing danger on Soldier's Island. At the same time, the storm itself puts the guests on the island in even greater danger. No one can get to or leave the island when there is any bad weather so this random act of nature traps the characters – the weather only clears up once they are all dead. The storm also highlights how separated they all are from all civilization. Soldier's Island is completely isolated and still controlled by the natural environment. The ten guests on the island have returned to a more primitive state of nature, a world totally consumed by the struggle to survive.



THE ISLAND

The island is more than the setting of the novel. It also, like the storm, sets the characters in a space apart from the world. In this isolated space the typical rules of law and civilization no longer hold any sway.



FOOD

The change in the presence of food throughout the novel demonstrates the demise of civilization and order on the island. When the guests first come to the island they have an elaborate meal prepared by Mrs. Rogers that is served by Mr. Rogers. Even after Anthony Marston and Mrs. Rogers die, much of the pomp and circumstance surrounding the presentation of food and drink remains: the guests are served cocktails, and even after Mr. Rogers dies, Miss Brent and Vera still make tea for the men. The persistence of these food rituals shows how important and ingrained they are for these characters. And when the rituals do break down – the guests start eating tongue and fruit out of cans, and eventually Vera and Lombard won't even return to the house to get any food – it's clear that all law, order, and civilization has broken down in the dwindling community on Soldier's Island.



THE MARK OF CAIN

Judge Wargrave explains this symbol in his secret letter, sealed in a bottle. He writes that the mark on his forehead is one of the three clues that could help explain the nearly unsolvable murder he committed on Soldier's Island. The bullet wound on his forehead mirrors the mark that Cain received from God after he murdered his brother Able, thereby committing the first murder in the Bible. This mark shows that even Wargrave admits his own evil. As his letter shows, he knows that he brought these guests to Soldier's Island not only to seek justice for their unpunished murders, but also out of his own bloodthirsty desire to kill. The mark symbolizes his sinfulness, and by extension the sinfulness and guilt of all of the people on the island.



QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Harper edition of *And Then There Were None* published in 2011.

Chapter 1 Quotes

☞ Definitely Soldiers Island was news!

Related Characters: Justice Wargrave (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 2

Explanation and Analysis

As the story begins, Justice Wargrave is in transit to Soldiers Island. While browsing the newspaper, he thinks of the various times he has read of the destination before.

Wargrave's comment that the island "was news" establishes the relative notoriety of the destination. What is to come in the text, then, will not take place in an anonymous or blank space, but rather in a destination already associated with stories and scandals. In this way, the setting mirrors the unscrupulous lives of the characters, making it the perfect symbolic site for the murders. Indeed, that the island "was news" foreshadows how their story will itself become a part of Soldiers Island's infamous narrative.

Furthermore, this line shows that Wargrave has read extensively about the setting of the novel. He evidently has a body of knowledge about the island that other characters lack. Although this information might seem to present him as a trustworthy character, the careful reader should be suspicious of his mastery of the space. Christie here foreshadows how Wargrave will be more capable and more in control of the events to come.

☞ "Watch and pray," he said. "Watch and pray. The day of judgment is at hand."

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 16

Explanation and Analysis

Mr. Blore speaks to an old stranger on the train. The man warns him of an impending storm, both physical and metaphorical.

The dialogue here enters a prophetic and spiritual tone. The repetition of the phrase "Watch and pray" combined with the commanding statements casts the old man as a sort of oracle. By his account, Mr. Blore should prepare himself for the trying events ahead. This oracular tone is corroborated by the idea of "the day of judgment": a Christian belief in the return of Christ. According to that theological belief, the second coming of the messiah will cause a world-wide judgement of sinners. The old man applies this religious belief to Mr. Blore and implicitly to the other character's in the novel — contending that they will meet their own trial.

This man's presence poses a deeper question on fate and destiny within the novel. Although the murders to come are ultimately the result of human action, they often appear to have taken place due to divine intervention. That sense is primarily the result of the internal symbolic coherence of the text: Various images and lines predict what will transpire, giving the novel a sense of inevitability. Christie thus poses the question of whether the characters ultimately deserve their fates for having sinned before—and whether their murders are cruel or a twisted form of justice.

Chapter 2 Quotes

☞ The faded blue eyes, shrewd in spite of their age, sized up Lombard. For a moment a judgment showed in them – had there been anyone to read it.

Related Characters: Philip Lombard (speaker), Philip Lombard, Vera Claythorne

Related Themes:

Page Number: 23

Explanation and Analysis

As they wait for their taxi, Vera meets Lombard. She examines him closely, and both characters reveal deep skepticism of the other.

This interaction foreshadows the way that different characters will try to analyze each other's behaviors and actions. Without any rationale, Vera is already paranoid about Lombard, while he similarly questions her role as a secretary. Their suspicions function as an analogy for what the reader of Christie's novel is doing: gathering

information about new characters to try to ultimately determine a suspect. Indeed her reference to “had there been anyone to read it” is a subtle wink to the novel’s reader—who, unlike the characters, *can* interpret such signals.

Christie’s use of the word “them” is notably vague: it could refer to either Lombard or Vera’s eyes. In the first case, Vera would be seeing the judgment in Lombard’s eyes, while in the second, she would be revealing her own judgment. In a sense, both readings are correct, and Christie therefore uses a clever linguistic trick to establish an environment of deep suspicion and uncertainty among the characters, and even in the language of the text itself.

●● He might have noticed that a curious constraint came over the other members of the party. It was as though the mention of their host and hostess had a curiously paralyzing effect on the guests.

Related Characters: William Henry Blore

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 25

Explanation and Analysis

Mr. Blore makes the first reference to the mysterious host on Soldiers Island. Everyone is notably unnerved at his comment.

This scene shows how little information the guests have about the development of the events in the novel and how unnerved they are by what is transpiring. That their response is “a curious constraint” emphasizes that it is surprising and suspicious—as if they all have something to hide from the others. The “curiously paralyzing effect” is similarly enigmatic, and Christie resists providing information on each person’s individual response that would clarify their silence.

Yet if the allusions to “curious” behavior distances the reader from the events, we are also given relatively *more* information than the characters themselves. That Christie writes, “he might have noticed” instead of, say, “he noticed,” draws the reader’s attention to what the characters fail to perceive. Christie implicitly informs us, then, to not make the same mistake and to notice details, thus putting us in a position of greater awareness than the characters. In this way, Christie interweaves information and mystery for the reader, tempting us with more knowledge than the

characters while simultaneously leaving much undivulged.

●● The sea ... So peaceful today – sometimes so cruel ... The sea that dragged you down to its depth. Drowned ... Found drowned ... Drowned at sea ... Drowned – drowned – drowned ...

Related Characters: Vera Claythorne (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 35

Explanation and Analysis

Vera reads the “Ten Little Soldier Boys” rhyme she finds in her bedroom. She connects the poem to the island’s name and then looks outside to the sea.

This passage makes use of a common literary device called the *pathetic fallacy*. This term refers to when a text attributes human emotions and behaviors to a natural object, in order to reveal the perspective of a character or a narrator. Here, for instance, Vera’s reference to the way the ocean can be “cruel” does not actually refer to its evil character, but rather to her own nature. The reference to drowning, after all, foreshadow what we will eventually learn of Vera’s past—that she was responsible for a drowned child—and what we will learn of her future—that she will ultimately commit suicide from guilt.

Thus Christie sneaks into this simple description an indication of Vera’s guilt, as well as her eventual suicide. Though this information is not yet accessible to the reader, Christie leaves a symbolic clue here. She turns the detective game into a psychological rather than factual one, in which the reader is tasked with interpreting the thoughts of characters to ascertain their guilt. And the text of the little soldier boys becomes a way, just as the text of the novel is, to visualize her crime and to hold her accountable for what she has done.

●● “Oh, yes. I’ve no doubt in my own mind that we have been invited here by a madman – probably a dangerous homicidal lunatic.”

Related Characters: Justice Wargrave (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 61

Explanation and Analysis

After discovering the gramophone that has charged everyone with being a murderer, Wargrave organizes the other characters to assess the situation. He expresses the belief that their host is insane.

Wargrave's tone here is notably assertive and commanding. This quality speaks foremost to his role as a judge, for he rapidly takes control of an uncertain group of people and establishes a site and framework of justice. He rapidly psychologizes and passes judgement on the host, which sets Wargrave as the leader of the scene and binds together the characters.

That Wargrave has "no doubt," however, strikes as somewhat suspicious given the relative lack of information available to him. Why, the reader must wonder, would he be so purely confident given a relative lack of evidence on the matter? The qualifications "in my own mind" and "probably" speak to a latent doubt, making the close reader suspicious of Wargrave's professed certainty. Only later will the true irony of the comment become clear, when we learn that Wargrave himself is responsible for the murders: He is indeed correct that the host is a "dangerous homicidal lunatic" because he is himself that lunatic.

Chapter 4 Quotes

☛ "Whoever it was who enticed us here, that person knows or has taken the trouble to find out a good deal about us all"

Related Characters: Justice Wargrave (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 63-64

Explanation and Analysis

The characters continue to pool information on their host. Wargrave observes how much the host has learned about the invitees.

Wargrave's comment shifts the attention away from the host and back to the other characters. Instead of trying to ascertain more about the person who invited them, he characterizes the host with a flippant "whoever" and instead focuses on the "good deal about us all" that has been uncovered. Wargrave implies that there is a specific reason why each character has been brought to the island and that the host deeply researched their histories in order to do so. Much like Soldiers Island's notorious past, the characters themselves may have personal histories they hope not to

divulge. In this way, Wargrave presents the host as a kind of analog to a detective or jury—someone who has uncovered facts about characters who (we will eventually learn) are all guilty in some way. Christie thus blurs the delineations between criminal and victim by making both host and visitors play both roles.

Chapter 5 Quotes

☛ He thought: Best of an island is once you get there – you can't go any farther ... you've come to the end of things ... *He knew, suddenly, that he didn't want to leave the island.*

Related Characters: General John Gordon Macarthur (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 86

Explanation and Analysis

After the first murder, the characters retire to their rooms and reflect on their feelings of guilt. Macarthur curiously decides that despite the impending danger he does not want to leave the island.

Once more, Christie uses the physical geography of the novel to give the reader access to the psychology of the characters. Just like Vera found the sea to be cruel, Macarthur finds the island calming because it provides a symbolic "end of things." This image implies that the island forces characters to confront their guilt and their pasts: By placing them in a closed space, it offers no alternative routes and no progress in which one could go "any farther." It thus functions like a physical manifestation of the last judgment of which the old man on the train spoke.

Though many might consider this "entrapment" to be an unpleasant feature of an island, Macarthur finds in it a source of solace or freedom. His professed wish not to "leave the island" thus reflects a sense of wanting to escape his guilt, of wanting to receive the punishment that his guilt tells him he deserves and that will, at the same time, free him from that guilt forever. Christie thus shows how the host's murderous activities, for all their cruelty, do offer a certain moral and poetic justice.

☛ Why had Anthony Marston wanted to die? She didn't want to die.

She couldn't imagine wanting to die ...

Death was for – the other people ...

Related Characters: Vera Claythorne (speaker), Anthony Marston

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 89

Explanation and Analysis

After MacArthur describes his acceptance of dying on the island, the scene shifts to Vera. She expresses the opposite belief: a firm desire to stay alive.

Her question about Marston is perplexing here. Wondering “why” he “wanted to die” indicates that his demise was an active choice, rather than the result of a murder. Vera thus contends that death is a matter of individual agency rather than something occurring at the whims of another. This perspective foreshadows the way she will try to defend her own life later in the text, hoping to thwart the prophecy of the ten little soldiers. By juxtaposing her ardent resistance to death with MacArthur’s solemn acceptance, Christie shows the divergent ways that people conceive of and react to their guilt.

This passage is also an excellent example of how Christie gives the reader contradictory and confusing information on the guilt of the characters. Although Vera’s belief that death was for “the other people” might seem to cast her as the murderer, her belief that Anthony willed his own death implies that she does not actually know what is causing the murders. Thus Christie maintains dramatic tension through two seemingly contradictory sets of clues.

Chapter 6 Quotes

☛ We're not going to leave the island ... None of us will ever leave ... It's the end, you see – the end of everything ...”

He hesitated, then he said in a low strange voice:

“That's peace – real peace. To come to the end – not to have to go on ... Yes, peace ...”

Related Characters: General John Gordon MacArthur (speaker)

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 103

Explanation and Analysis

When Lombard and Blore discuss the potential arrival of a motorboat, MacArthur makes this pronouncement. He believes they will all die on Soldiers Island.

This passage shows the bizarre psychological effect that the events on Soldiers Island have on different characters. Whereas some try to staunchly defy their imminent demise, MacArthur accepts his fate. His tone here is not one of desperation: Rather, his “low strange voice” implies a calm acceptance of what will transpire. Indeed, he comes to see his demise as a form of “peace”: a peace not just from life but more specifically from the guilty existence he has lived since committing his murder. Though some may interpret these beliefs to be the manic ravings of the psychologically disturbed, they also imply that MacArthur is coming to terms with his own guilt. Thus Christie presents the story as a tale of repentance for these characters, in which the bizarre set-up of Soldier’s Island forces them to reconcile with their crimes.

Chapter 7 Quotes

☛ “I mean – it explains Soldier Island. There are crimes that cannot be brought home to their perpetrators. Instance the Rogerses! Another instance, old Wargrave, who committed his murder strictly within the law.”

Related Characters: Philip Lombard (speaker), Ethel Rogers, Thomas Rogers, Justice Wargrave

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 114

Explanation and Analysis

With Dr. Armstrong, Lombard reviews the information on the visitors to the island. He concludes that everyone who was invited is guilty of some form of murder.

Lombard articulates, here, the unifying concept for the island and for Christie’s text. He is thus the first character to be an effective detective, providing a model for the reader to follow as we take on a similar investigating role. Like any good reader, Lombard first reviews the information available to him and then makes a final pronouncement—“it explains”—that can connect all the threads of information.

The common feature for those who have been invited to the

island deserves some consideration: The guests are not just murderers but rather ones whose crimes resist traditional methods of prosecution. They cannot be tried in normal courtrooms and thus the island becomes itself a pseudo-courtroom—a place where culpability is punished in a way that normal social regulations do not permit. Christie thus complicates the ethics of the ensuing murders, casting them as cruel but also as providing a form of vigilante justice that could not be dealt out elsewhere in society.

☞ “Your argument seems logical. I agree that one of us is possessed by a devil.”

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 151

Explanation and Analysis

After the third murder, Wargrave concludes that one of the guests must be the mysterious Mr. Owen. Miss Brent affirms this belief but offers a different explanation for the murderer's actions.

This response shows how the characters respond to questions of faith and guilt in varying ways. Whereas Wargrave and Miss Brent are both relying on “logical” statements, Miss Brent bases her logic not on social ethics but rather on religion. She thus examines the same information as the other characters but reaches the wildly different conclusion that someone is “possessed by a devil.” For her, evil is not a matter of personal choice but rather occurs as a result of divine forces. Through Miss Brent, Christie demonstrates how personal identity and background structure one's conception of fate and of guilt. Her novel becomes far more than a straightforward detective story in which one character is guilty—but rather an exploration of what causes people to assign guilt and blame in themselves and in each other.

☞ “I know very well that I'm not the murderer, and I don't fancy there's anything insane about you, Vera. You strike me as being one of the sanest most levelheaded girls I've come across. I'd stake my reputation on your sanity.”

Related Characters: Philip Lombard (speaker), Vera Claythorne

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 168

Explanation and Analysis

The characters have concluded that one of them must be the murderer but that there is no way to know who it could be. Vera asks Lombard who he suspects, and he responds that he believes it *not* to be her.

Although he lacks a rational reason to trust Vera, Lombard seems to confide in her entirely. His explanation focuses exclusively on her “sanity,” implying that he thinks the murders must be the result of mental instability. As a result, determining the psychological health of each character becomes of utmost importance, for the guilty person would be the most unstable. Just as Miss Brent offered the religious explanation of being possessed by the devil, Lombard relies on psychological analyses.

Despite this emphasis on mental stability, Lombard and Vera's behavior is actually deeply irrational. They have no real reason to trust each other and seem to do so largely as a response to a stressful environment in which no other option for support is available. Thus even as Lombard asserts Vera's steadiness, their interaction also foreshadows the way that these characters will become increasingly *unstable*—ever more likely to behave rashly as their paranoia grows.

Chapter 11 Quotes

☞ “The damned fool, he believed every word I said to him. It was easy ... I must be careful, though, very careful.”

Related Characters: Justice Wargrave (speaker), Dr. Edward Armstrong

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 195

Explanation and Analysis

While eating breakfast, the characters continue to panic about the murderer. Scraps of interior dialogue mix into the text, one of which seems to come from the murderer's own mind.

Christie uses an innovative narrative style to generate dramatic tension. Though the novel has previously plunged into the interior psyches of the characters, here she declines to identify whose mind each line of text is in. This line, for instance, could perhaps be spoken by the murderer: for he would consider Rogers to be a “damned fool” and to have been easily manipulated. Or perhaps it references the syringe that has just been taken from Dr. Armstrong in

order to kill Miss Brent in the ensuing scene. Similarly, he would want to be “be careful” about his future killings. This sentence thus confirms that the murderer is one of the guests who is still alive, instead of an additional character hiding on the island. Furthermore, by not making the thinker of this statement clear, Christie puts the reader in an analogous position to one of the guests at the table: able to presume that the guilty person is among them while lacking the capacity to identify just who that is.

Chapter 12 Quotes

☞ “One more of us acquitted – too late!”

Related Characters: Justice Wargrave (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 202

Explanation and Analysis

Miss Brent is discovered dead in the kitchen. In response, Wargrave makes this exclamation about how she is now innocent.

The reference to being “acquitted” actually has a double meaning in this sentence. It refers most directly to the fact that Miss Brent could not be the murderer since she has been killed. But it also refers to her earlier crime that has brought her to the island in the first place. Wargrave implies, then, that Miss Brent has been “acquitted” from her own crime by herself dying. So her murder becomes an act of ethical justice. Yet the fact that it is “too late” implies that each of the characters must die in order to doubly absolve themselves: of both suspicion for the murders committed on Soldiers Island and of guilt for what they have previously done. In this way, the text makes an odd parallel between being acquitted and dying, implying that the only “justice” for these characters can come in their demise.

Chapter 13 Quotes

☞ There was little pretense now – no formal veneer of conversation. They were five enemies linked together by a mutual instinct of self-preservation.

And all of them, suddenly, looked less like human beings. They were reverting to more bestial types.

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 211

Explanation and Analysis

After Miss Brent’s murder, the social bonds between the characters start to erode. They think of each other only as enemies and suspicions creep ever higher.

This passage demonstrates the way in which social forces are undermined in extreme circumstances. Though the guests have all previously tried to maintain normal practices—mealtimes, conversations, etc.—here they abandon that “formal veneer.” This phrase casts “conversation” as itself a showy luxury, in contrast to the “self-preservation” that must now predominate. For all its poetic and symbolic artifice, Soldiers Island actually signals a return to more basic forms of human interaction. It becomes a site to play out human psychology in its most anxious and ungrounded state.

Christie draws attention in particular to the difference between human and animal behavior. She contrasts the characters’ previous decorum with their current “more bestial types,” implying that their identities have corroded, become more animal-like, under psychological stress. Thus even as the characters are charged as humans for their crimes, they are described in increasing animalistic terms.

☞ Philip Lombard's senses seemed heightened, rather than diminished. His ears reacted to the slightest sound. His step was lighter and quicker, his body lithe and graceful. And he smiled often, his lips curling back from his long white teeth.

Related Characters: Philip Lombard

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 212

Explanation and Analysis

After the lights go out, Lombard searches for candles. His movements are described as furtive and calculated.

This passage continues to make use of animal imagery to describe the altered way that the characters have begun to behave under stress. Although the psychological disturbance would seem to weaken them, instead Lombard finds himself “heightened, rather than diminished.” The physical disappearance of the lights thus serves as a metaphor for the way the characters have become increasingly disoriented. But instead of being immobilized by this event, Lombard becomes “lighter and quicker.”

Language like “lithe and graceful,” in particular, casts his behavior to be like that of an animal. Christie thus highlights how the events that have transpired so far cause the characters to act less and less like humans.

Yet this image does not transform Lombard into just any animal. Rather the reference to his “lips curling back from his long white teeth” presents him as a predator. One might interpret this as a sign of his guilt, as evidence that he is the murderer preparing to strike on his victims. Yet the fact that similar language is applied to many such characters implies that they are all taking on increasingly predatory tactics: The psychological toil has turned them once more into potential murderers.

Chapter 14 Quotes

☛☛ They'd believe her all right. Cyril often told stories. He was an untruthful child. Cyril would know, of course. But that didn't matter ... and anyway nothing *would* go wrong. She'd pretend to swim out after him. But she'd arrive too late ... Nobody would ever suspect ...

Had Hugo suspected? Was that why he had looked at her in that queer far-off way? ... Had Hugo known?

Related Characters: Vera Claythorne (speaker)

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 230

Explanation and Analysis

Alone in her room, Vera remembers the events leading up to Cyril's death. She recalls worrying that her murder attempt would be unsuccessful.

This interior monologue marks a decisive shift in Vera's character. Whereas before the reader has only scant knowledge about the crime she has committed, here the true nature of her murder becomes horrifyingly clear: She was responsible for the death of a child. Even more alarmingly, what she recalls is not guilt or uncertainty about the crime—but rather fear of being caught. Thus Vera's previously sympathetic character becomes increasingly diabolical, perhaps even deserving of the murder that, at this point in the novel, seems like it might possibly be her fate.

Even so, Vera seems to now be experiencing remorse for what she has done. That she was previously able to exclude these thoughts from the narrative shows how the events transpiring at Soldiers Island are causing her mindset to shift. She is increasingly forced to confront the nature of her

crime, pointing to the efficacy of host's plan to bring the characters to moral justice.

Chapter 15 Quotes

☛☛ “But don't you *see*, he's *mad*? It's all mad! The whole thing of going by the rhyme is mad! Dressing up the judge, killing Rogers when he was chopping sticks – drugging Mrs. Roberts so that she overslept herself – arranging for a bumble bee when Miss Brent died! It's like some horrible child playing a game. It's all got to fit in.”

Related Characters: Vera Claythorne (speaker), Justice Wargrave, Thomas Rogers, Ethel Rogers

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 248

Explanation and Analysis

Blore and Lombard continue to fixate on the revolver, but Vera becomes frustrated with their narrow-mindedness. She argues that each of the murders must fit into the ten little soldiers nursery rhyme in some way.

Vera's impassioned tone shows how a sense of desperation has sunk into the characters at this point. Overwhelmed with false clues and misinformation, they have become increasingly disoriented and uncertain in how to proceed. Ironically, Vera exclaims repeatedly about madness even as she herself is becoming less mentally hinged. She thus comes to mimic the manic role of the murderer, a pattern followed by many of the characters.

Perhaps due to this increased similarity, her assertions actually interpret quite accurately the murderer's intentions. Whereas Blore and Lombard are focused on traditional symbols in a murder case like the revolver, Vera is attentive to the specific conditions of *this* event. She correctly links each murder to a line in the poem and demands that each event has “got to fit in” to the metaphorical whole. That Christie makes symbolic interpretation of the poem the key to solving the murder further renders Vera an analog to a good reader of the novel.

Chapter 16 Quotes

☛☛ “*Why did I never see his face properly before? A wolf – that's what it is – a wolf's face ... Those horrible teeth ...*”

Related Characters: Vera Claythorne (speaker), Philip Lombard

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 262

Explanation and Analysis

After seeing the dead body of Dr. Armstrong, Vera and Lombard both believe each other to be the killer. Vera looks with new eyes at Lombard and perceives an entirely different person.

Christie shows, here, just how radically the characters' apprehensions of each other shift based on their psychological states. Though Lombard's actual facial features have, of course, not changed, Vera identifies him in starkly different terms. Her use of the term "properly" implies a level of objectivity, asserting these to be his actual features—and thus showing how unaware Vera is of how warped her reality has become. That his features are animalistic, in particular, highlights that the characters have continued to shed their human qualities as the story has developed. Indeed, Vera adopts similar imagery as Lombard himself did while describing his own senses to become like a predator as he crept through the darkened house. That they both simultaneously use this language demonstrates how pervasive this animalism has become to the interior symbolism of the text. Thus it is not only the result of Vera's psychological deterioration, but also a metaphorical structure employed by Christie to show how humans regress to a state of pure survival.

☛ How very quiet the house was. And yet –it didn't seem like an empty house ...
Hugo, upstairs, waiting for her ...

Related Characters: Vera Claythorne (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 268

Explanation and Analysis

After killing Lombard, Vera returns to the silent house. She feels as if someone else is present and imagines it to be her former beloved, Hugo.

These lines show how Vera's mental state has continued to degrade in the wake of the murders. She now seems to be fully hallucinating, believing that the house is not "empty" despite how "quiet" it is. By juxtaposing Vera's belief that the

house is occupied with her actual hearing (i.e. its quietness), Christie emphasizes just how unstable Vera has become. Meanwhile, Vera's thoughts gravitate, in particular, to Hugo, the man who moved her to commit murder, verifying that the events on Soldiers Island force the characters to confront their past misdeeds. That she imagines Hugo is "waiting for her" demonstrates that Vera believes her life to still be scripted by the ten little soldiers poem: Christie demonstrates that in her deeply fraught existence, Vera has come to see the poem as a kind of prophetic text—which will dictate her destiny.

Epilogue 1 Quotes

☛☛ "And therefore, sir, there must have been *someone else* on the island. Someone who tidied up when the whole business was over. But where was he all the time – and where did he go to? The Sticklehaven people are absolutely certain that no one could have left the island before the rescue boat got there. But in that case –"

...
"But in that case," he said, "*who killed them?*"

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 283-284

Explanation and Analysis

In the tale's first epilogue, Assistant Commissioner Sir Thomas Legge and Inspector Maine discuss the murders. They observe that someone remained alive after Vera's death and wonder who this could have been.

Their discussion adds a further complication to the story: Though the reader likely thinks at this point that Vera is the murderer, the fact that someone "tidied up" means that there must have been an additional presence on the island after the events of the previous sixteen chapters. Though this observation confirms Vera's feelings before that she was being watched, it also makes the progression of events increasingly difficult to figure out.

Recall that the characters were absolutely certain, after searching the island, that one of them had to be the murderer. Christie is playing here with the conventions of a normal detective or mystery story: Generally the criminal is revealed at the end of the story and certainly by the end of an epilogue. But here, the epilogue only features two people trying to put together the details of the murders just as the reader is, with the addition of even more contradictory information.

☛ I was born with other traits besides my romantic fancy. I have a definite sadistic delight in seeing or causing death.

Related Characters: Justice Wargrave (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 285

Explanation and Analysis

The second epilogue is a letter that we later learn was written by Wargrave. He observes how his personality is composed of contradictions of romanticism and sadism.

For the first time, here, the reader begins to understand the inner workings of the murderer's mind. The epilogue relies on some of the conventions of a confession text: a writer expressing his motivations to an unknown audience and at last divulging the secrets previously obscured. Yet it also plays with those traditional expectations: If a normal confession would begin by explaining the motivation to murder a specific person or group of people, this one starts with a personal self-analysis. In explaining his actions based on his "traits," Wargrave implies that the events of the novel were a way for him to manifest that personality.

More specifically, they resulted from the interaction between his "romantic fancy" and "sadistic delight." The first of these phrases clarifies the way that Wargrave organized the murders around the ten little soldiers poem—providing an organized symbolism that turned the proceedings into a game. The second reveals the more direct impulse for murder, and the combination thus resulted in a uniquely diabolical and creative series of events. Christie thus grounds her tale not in a normal narrative arc of cause and effect but rather in the unique and paradoxical personality of Wargrave.

☛ I have wanted – let me admit frankly – to commit a murder myself. I recognized this as the desire of the artist to express himself! I was, or could be, an artist in crime! My imagination, sternly checked by the exigencies of my profession, waxed secretly to colossal force.

Related Characters: Justice Wargrave (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 287

Explanation and Analysis

Wargrave continues to provide backstory on his motivations for the murders at Soldiers Island. He explains that serving as a judge did not fully satisfy his sadistic impulses and that he wished to actually commit a crime.

Whereas the letter's previous sections show that Wargrave was able to release his cruel wishes through a lawful court system, this passage shows that those mechanisms were insufficient. Saying, "let me admit frankly" indicates that he speaks openly and without shame, confirming that this epilogue serves as a way for Wargrave to release his previously unacknowledged sentiments. This wish for release is paralleled by the way the murders on Soldiers Island allowed Wargrave to manifest his long-with-held desires to kill others.

He couches those desires, more specifically, in the language of artistry. In this way, Wargrave contrasts the more mechanical and structured form of justice in the courtroom—"the exigencies of my profession"—with the creative and chaotic events that took place at Soldiers Island. This passage casts the homicides, then, as a way for Wargrave to play the "artist" and to integrate his romantic and sadistic desires. Christie thus presents an increasingly complicated moral and psychological picture for the reader—in which Wargrave is both cruel and brilliant, simultaneously an artist and a killer.

☛ When the sea goes down, there will come from the mainland boats and men.

And they will find ten dead bodies and an unsolved problem on Soldier Island.

Related Characters: Justice Wargrave (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 300

Explanation and Analysis

At the second epilogue's end, Wargrave has finished explaining the way he organized the murder at Soldier Island. He correctly predicts the way that the site of the crime will be discovered.

The text returns once more to a prophetic and spiritual tone. Wargrave imagines the necessary future of the "sea goes down" much like an oracle would, thus recalling the man on the train who predicted that a final judgement would be born on the characters. Rising and falling sea

levels also calls to mind the Christian tales of the great deluge and Noah's arc. Unlike with Noah, however, Wargrave prophesies that none will survive and that the declining sea level will only reveal "ten dead bodies." Christie demonstrates through these religious allusions the depths of Wargrave's megalomania: He presents himself as a pseudo-god who can pass divine justice on the other characters.

It bears noting, however, that the "unsolved problem" is in

fact solved by the text's end. Though Christie has resisted the conventions of a detective story by previously failing to reveal the outcome even in the first epilogue, the reader does finally hear the entire narrative parsed out by Wargrave's letter. Thus even as he seeks to leave the events unsolved, Wargrave also reveals a wish for his story to be known—for his artistry of murder to be disseminated, just as Christie's own skills are made clear through her literary art.



SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER 1

Justice Wargrave reads the paper on a first class train and starts thinking about his destination: Soldier Island. He remembers the gossip that an American millionaire had lived there but that it was then bought by Mr. Owen. This started many rumors that it had actually been bought by a movie star or a Lord.

This establishes the mystery surrounding Soldier Island. No one knows the history of the place, only that it has been owned by someone wealthy.



Justice Wargrave takes a letter out of his pocket. It is his invitation to Soldier Island from Constance Culmington, a woman he hasn't seen for seven years. Wargrave believes that all this mystery and gossip around the Island is typical of someone like Constance.

The Justice's thoughts introduce information about the Island. In contrast, to Constance, Wargrave is presented as a reliable figure, a sense strengthened by his professional connection to the law.



Vera Claythorne is riding the same train in third class and looks over a letter from Una Nancy Owen, asking Vera to come to Soldier Island as a secretary. Vera remembers all the gossip about the island and is excited to see it. She has been working as a games mistress at a school, which she doesn't enjoy but feels lucky to have because of a scandal in her past.

This quick jump between class groups highlights the fact that no one knows anything but gossip about the island -- regardless of his or her privilege. Information is already beginning to conflict, introducing the mystery.



Details from Vera's past come back: how nice Mrs. Hamilton was to her, Hugo, and Cyril's head bobbing up and down swimming to the rock. She remembers lying by the sea with Hugo, and then quickly tries to put him out of her mind.

The lives of the characters are as mysterious as Soldier Island. Vera's actions also introduce a typical reaction to guilt in the novel: to put it immediately out of one's mind.



Philip Lombard looks at Vera from across the carriage and thinks her an attractive and practical looking girl. He is on his way to Soldier Island for a mysterious job. Mr. Isaac Morris gave him one hundred guineas to go to the Island and take the job, but would not tell him why. Philip Lombard thinks the whole thing sounds a bit strange, but remembers that he has gotten himself out of many tight spots in the past.

Vera has just been daydreaming about a mysterious past but Lombard sees her as practical. Appearances can be deceiving in the novel. Lombard is also introduced as a man with a mysterious, or guilty past.



Miss Emily Brent sits rigidly in her train car thinking about the weakness and laziness of the current generation. She goes over her invitation to Soldier Island in her head. It's from someone she met in a guest house a couple years ago but the signature is messy (she can only make out U.N.O...) and Miss Brent cannot remember exactly who this woman she met in the past is. But Miss Brent doesn't have much money anymore and is happy to have a free vacation.

In addition to her rigid and self-righteous introduction, Miss Brent is also shown as being motivated by money. Her thoughts further demonstrate that no one knows exactly why they were invited to Soldier Island.



General MacArthur, in another train car, thinks about the trip he's on to Soldier Island, where he will be meeting some of his old army friends. He is excited to talk about old times, and hopes that none of them believe or remember the rumor that had floated around about him nearly thirty years ago.

MacArthur's first thought is guilt about his dark past. Almost every character is shaped by his or her guilt or obsession with the past.



Dr. Armstrong is driving up north, tired from his busy schedule as a doctor. He thinks about his success and the fact that he has been hired to look over Mrs. Owen of Soldier Island for such a huge fee. He then remembers how lucky he is that the bad event fifteen years ago didn't ruin his career.

Armstrong's guilt is overpowered by the knowledge of his success and money. This shows another technique that characters use to cope with personal guilt. For Armstrong, the benefits outweigh the original crime.



Tony Marston speeds his sports car past Dr. Armstrong. He thinks that Mr. Owen's island should be fun, but wonders whether there will be enough drinks. He thinks it's too bad that a movie star didn't really buy the Island. As he stops the car and steps out of it to get a drink, some women watch his handsome body.

Tony Marston has no feelings of guilt – he is essentially conscienceless. He is almost barbaric – there is nothing more to him than his love of speed and thrills and his beautiful exterior.



Mr. Blore is on the slow train from Plymouth, looking at a list of all the guests going to Soldier Island. He thinks that the “job ought to be easy enough.” Blore decides that he should pretend to be from South Africa.

Not only will the guests of Soldier Island hide or obscure their pasts, some will also flat out lie.



Mr. Blore remembers Soldier Island from when he was a boy and wonders why anyone would want to build a house there. A man in the corner of the train wakes up and says that there is a storm coming. Mr. Blore comments that the weather looks fine, but the old man assures him that a **storm** will come.

Blore has actually seen Soldier Island and knows that it is not an idyllic spot. The mysterious prediction of a coming storm forebodes bad events to come.



CHAPTER 2

There are two taxis to meet the guests at the train station. The guests start to introduce themselves to each other. Lombard remarks to Vera that it seems strange that she is taking up a secretarial post in the middle of summer, but she assures him it is not.

Small inconsistencies are starting to reveal themselves in the characters reasons for coming, but none of the "guests" fully realize this yet.



Mr. Blore introduces himself to the group as Mr. Davis from South Africa. When he mentions that they shouldn't keep their hosts waiting a strange hush comes over the group.

This is the first flat out lie of the novel. Blore's lie also unintentionally reveals that no one quite knows why they are here. Then mention of the hosts puts them on edge.



The taxis carry them to a dock. As all the guests are boarding the small boat to be ferried to the island, a large car zips down the road driven by a young, handsome and powerful man. Anthony Marston honks his horn and gets out of the car, he seems “something more than mortal.” Many of the guests remember this fact later.

The ferryman, Fred Narracott, thinks as he drives the boat that this is a strange bunch of guests. He was expecting fancier people in yachting clothes like the parties the American millionaire, Elmer Robson, used to have. Narracott thinks that Mr. Owen must be a “different kind of gentleman,” but he is not sure because he has never seen Mr. or Mrs. Owen. Everything was organized and paid for by Mr. Morris.

Narracott looks over everyone in the boat and decided that only Mr. Marston looks like he should be there, since Marston looks like he was born into money. But, Narracott decides, what did he know? The whole event seems very odd to him.

The house finally comes into view. It is a very modern house. Lombard comments that it must be difficult to land the boat in bad weather and Narracott says that the house can sometimes be cut off for a week or more.

The guests enter the house, where the butler, Mr. Rogers, is waiting for them. The house is lovely, as is the view of the ocean. The butler brings them into the hall where drinks are laid out and tells them all that Mr. Owen is delayed and won't arrive until tomorrow. But he left instructions and everything is arranged; dinner is at eight.

Vera is brought into her room by Mr. Rogers's wife, Mrs. Rogers who Vera thinks looks “frightened of her own shadow.” Vera becomes uncomfortable wondering what this woman is afraid of. Vera asks Mrs. Rogers if she knows that Vera is going to be the Owen's new secretary, to which Mrs. Rogers responds that she knows nothing, only a list of the names of the guests. Mrs. Rogers reveals that she and Mr. Rogers have never seen Mr. Owen. They are the only servants on the island.

The novel foreshadows the death of Marston by mentioning that he seems “more than mortal” and then quickly jumping out of the present action to mention that the other characters will remember this thought later



Narracott, an outsider, first notices the strangeness of the group. The fact that he is from a lower class makes him able to view the action as an outsider and clearly see that this bunch doesn't seem to fit together. Yet he also reveals that he knows nothing about the situation on Soldier Island.



The same class difference that gives him clarity makes Narracott afraid to made any judgments about the group.



The scene is set—the guests will be cut off from the world. Although the house is well equipped, they will have no access to anything else.



The beautiful surroundings contradict all the foreboding information about the island that has just been presented. Yet the mystery deepens when it becomes clear that the host is not there.



Mrs. Rogers's wife seems guilt-ridden as well. In spite of the fact that she is taking care of the house with her husband, Mrs. Rogers knows nothing about the why the guests are here or what is going on. There is absolutely no information about the Island available. It is a complete mystery.



Vera thinks that it's strange the Rogers have never seen Mr. Owen. She also thinks that the guests seem odd. She walks around her modern bedroom and notices a white marble bear on her mantelpiece. She then sees the old nursery rhyme hanging on the wall: "Ten Little Soldier Boys." It tells of 10 boys who die, first from choking, then oversleeping, getting stung by a bee, etc. Vera smiles when she remembers that this is Soldier's Island. She then looks out the window at the sea and thinks of drowning.

Dr. Armstrong arrives at the Island late. He was tired after his long drive and is excited to get to the island where he feels he can leave the whole world behind. Dr. Armstrong runs into Justice Wargrave on the terrace and remembers how he has had to testify for some of Wargrave's cases. He remembers that people call Wargrave a "hanging judge."

Wargrave also remembers Armstrong and thinks he is, like all doctors, a damn fool. Wargrave tells Armstrong that the host and hostess are not here. He asks Armstrong if he knows Constance Culmington. He does not, and Wargrave thinks how strange it is that there has been no mention of the woman who invited him to the island.

Antony Marston takes a bath and thinks about the evening to come. A shave, a cocktail, dinner ... and then what?

Mr. Blore worries that people know that he is lying. He notices the nursery rhyme and thinks it a "neat touch." He remembers coming to Soldier Island as a child and never thought he would do this sort of job here. He thinks it's a good thing that he can't foresee the future.

General Macarthur decides he wants to leave the island, but the motorboat has left so he'll have to stay. He thinks Lombard is strange and lying about something. Lombard smiles to himself as he walks down the stairs and thinks that he is going to enjoy this week.

The rhyme – which gives the Island and the books their names – entertains Vera at first. At this point it only appears to be a cute decoration. Christie slowly introduces the information that will come to plague her characters. She also shows that Vera is consumed with guilt – it crops up whenever she is idle.



Armstrong believes (incorrectly) that the island will be a place of rest. He also introduces the fact that Wargrave is connected to death; the judge does not just bring about justice, he is a man who seems to enjoy pronouncing death sentences.



Spoiler alert! At this point in the novel it is not at all possible to know that Wargrave will turn out to be the murderer. But note how Christie allows Wargrave to lie to himself in his thoughts, masking that he is the mastermind. She leaves very few clues for the reader – only the ones that the other characters could see.



The guests are primed for excitement. Though certainly not the kind that will come.



Blore intends his comment about not being able to see the future to relate to the guilt he feels regarding his current profession. But Christie also uses it to foreshadow the events to come.



Macarthur is the first person to realize that something is wrong. Christie contrasts Macarthur's worry with Lombard's calmness in order to highlight that no one really know what is happening on the island. Not even the reader



Emily Brent sits in her room reading from the Bible about sinners receiving their punishment in hell. Then she goes down to dinner.

The Bible offers a traditional sense of justice and guilt. This will return later to show how the murderer—who also believes in punishment for the guilty—is playing God. Note also, though, that Miss Brent, who also believes in these biblical teachings, denies her own guilt later.



CHAPTER 3

Everyone feels better and starts to enjoy themselves after dinner. Wargrave is amusing, Mr. Blore (pretending to be Davis) discusses South Africa; Mr. Lombard continues to eye everyone suspiciously. Anthony Marston comments on the small soldier figurines placed in the middle of the table. Vera points out that they must be connected to the nursery rhyme in her bedroom and everyone responds that they have the same thing in their own rooms.

The comforts and pleasures of civilized society make everyone feel better. It is also revealed that the entire house is structured around the idea of the Ten Little Soldiers poem. In spite of this oddity no one yet suspects that anything is wrong. This shows how much people trust the order and structure of upper class society.



Miss Brent and Vera get up and everyone follows them to the drawing room. Vera says that it must be difficult to get here in a storm – hard to get servants. Miss Brent responds that Mrs. Oliver was lucky to get these two. Vera thinks it's funny that old people always get names wrong and says that Mrs. Owen has been lucky indeed. Miss Brent says she's never met anyone named Mrs. Owen.

This is the first moment when the characters begin to see a crack in the story—a crack we, as readers, have known all along: the guests were not all invited here by the same person.



The men enter before the women can finish their conversation. Mr. Rogers serves coffee and all the guests feel satisfied with their meals. All of a sudden a recorded voice pierces the silence. It charges each of the guests with a murder. It knows the specific date of the murders and the names of the people killed. The voice ends with “Prisoners at the bar, do you have anything to say in your defense?”

The secrets that everyone has been holding are all of a sudden revealed by an anonymous voice. Each one of the guests, who felt protected by the fact that no one knew about his or her past crime, has now been revealed as guilty. The voice also structures the speech as if it were a court, implying that there will be justice.



When the recording ends, Mr. Rogers drops the coffee tray and at the same time there is a scream and a thud as Mrs. Rogers faints. Everyone starts frantically asking what happened and only Wargrave and Miss Brent seem unmoved.

Christie often provides information about who doesn't react to events. This draws the reader to participate in the detective work.



Wargrave looks around the room and opens a door where he finds a gramophone on a table. There are three holes in the wall to the other room so the sounds can get through. Mrs. Rogers comes to and Dr. Armstrong gives her brandy.

The discovery of the gramophone shows the guests that the whole speech was planned long in advance. It also shows that whoever planned this stunt has a sense of the theatrical.



Wargrave asks Rogers if he put the record on. Mr. Rogers tells them that he was told to turn the gramophone on, but assumed that it was music. He swears that Mr. Owen instructed him to do it. The name of the record is “Swan Song.”

Mr. Rogers and Dr. Armstrong take Mrs. Rogers to bed. Marston says that she needs a drink and he and Lombard come back with some whiskey. Dr. Armstrong comes back and says he has given Mrs. Rogers a sedative.

Wargrave then takes charge and the room becomes a court of law. Everyone tries to pool their information to see what they know about the situation. It turns out that no one has ever seen Mr. Owen. Mr. Rogers shows the letter from Mr. Owen with their instructions. Mr. Bloore looks at the letter and determines that there are no clues in it. Marston comments on Owen's fancy name: Ulick Norman Owen.

Each continues to go around and explain their situation, and why they were called here. They all provide the same information that was given in chapter one when each character was introduced, except Lombard who lies and says that a mutual friend of Mr. Owen invited him.

Wargrave then turns to Mr. Bloore and says that his given name, Davis, was not mentioned in the recording. Mr. Bloore explains that he is not actually Mr. Davis but says that he was hired by Mr. Owen as a detective to watch over Mrs. Owen's jewels. But now Bloore believes that there is no Mr. Owen.

Wargrave agrees, and points out that the initials given U. N. Owen can be easily turned into UNKNOWN. Vera exclaims that this is all insane while Wargrave announces his belief that they are dealing with a “dangerous homicidal lunatic.”

CHAPTER 4

Wargrave continues the impromptu court session and shows his own proof: the letter from Lady Constance Culmington inviting him to Soldier Island. He then concludes that whoever invited them all to the island knew enough about them to create plausible reasons to invite them there. He implies that this means that the accusations of murder could be true.

Whoever organized this was able to use Rogers without arousing his suspicion. A “Swan Song” is the last effort made before death – an ominous, foreboding title.



Christie is very clear about which character does what action in an attempt to bring the reader into the detective work. She develops suspicion for all of them



The scene very quickly becomes a courtroom controlled by Wargrave. This impromptu court adds to the feeling of suspicion, but also keeps everything in order. These very civilized characters are dealing with the recent events in an organized and civil manner. The society has not yet broken down.



The reader has more information than the characters as this point. A careful reader can find inconsistencies in the characters' actions or stories, as we do with Lombard.



Bloore switches the attention from himself and his own lies to their host, Mr. Owen. From this point on everyone is constantly under trial and trying to keep the guilt off of him or herself.



Now it is clear that there is no Mr. Owen – a person with a false identity has lured them all to this island. And whoever this unknown person is, he is trying to kill them all.



Wargrave uses logic to argue that not only is Mr. Owen homicidal, everyone on this island also really is a murderer. This complicates the concept of guilt. The victims are also guilty. And it complicates any effort the victims might make to band together, because how can they trust each other?



Wargrave explains away the accusation placed against him: he was the judge for the case of Edward Seton and sentenced him to execution. Dr. Armstrong thinks to himself that he remembers the case and it seemed as if Wargrave had something personal against Seton.

Wargrave then tries to say that he is not one of the guilty parties, but it seems like although he killed someone within the law, it may have also been more personal, or he may have enjoyed it.



Vera explains that she had been a governess to Cyril Hamilton. One day Cyril swam off into the ocean while Vera wasn't paying attention and although she swam after him she couldn't catch up.

Each person has a clean way to explain away his or her accusation of guilt.



General Macarthur explains that he sent a man, Arthur Richmond, on a reconnaissance mission during the War (WWI) and he was killed. The voice had accused Macarthur of sending Richmond to his death because he had an affair with Macarthur's wife and the General says that this is completely false.

But we have already seen that that they are plagued with guilt, so their explanations cannot be completely true. In this way, Christie allows the reader to see the difference between the characters' inner lives and their presentation to the world.



Lombard explains that he got lost with some natives in Africa in the bush. He abandoned them to save himself. Anthony Marston says he ran over some children accidentally and that it wasn't his fault.

Lombard and Marston are more forthcoming about the deaths that they were involved in. This is because they do not feel as guilty about them.



Rogers explains that he and Mrs. Rogers were taking care of an old woman and when she got sick Rogers went out to find a doctor but by the time he got back she was dead. The old woman left the Rogerses money in her will.

The Rogerses are the first to demonstrate that they got something out of the death that they caused. They show a clear motive, while other characters try to present the murders they committed as accidental.



Mr. Blore explains that he was on a bank robbery case and he got the evidence that sent a man named Landor into penal servitude where he soon died. This led Mr. Blore to get a promotion.

Blore, like the Rogerses, shows that he benefited from his crime.



Mr. Armstrong says he can't quite remember the name of the patient who died during an operation. But then he thinks to himself that it really was his fault – he was drunk during the operation, but wonders who could possibly have told.

Armstrong is hiding the true story, and he, like others, believes that he can hide it because no one else should know the truth. This is contradicted by their presence on the island.



Mrs. Brent admits to nothing. She says that she has always lived by her conscience and has nothing to admit.

Mrs. Brent feels no guilt because of her sense of religious righteousness.



With each story someone in the group thinks that the speaker must be lying. After the evidence has been presented, Wargrave suggests that they should try to leave as soon as possible. Rogers tells him that there is no boat on the island and the man who delivers food, Fred Narracott, will not come again until the morning.

The characters suspect each other because most of them are lying themselves. This shows that a sense of personal guilt leads you to suspect others. Each character personally knows the depths to which a person can fall, and the lengths to which he will go to hide it—because they have all done it.



Everyone agrees that they should leave as soon as possible except Anthony Marston, who suggests that they should stay and try to solve the mystery. Then he takes a drink, chokes, and quickly dies.

Marston, the one who feels no guilt, is the first to die. As will be made evident, the killer tries to kill the victims in order of their guiltiness and guilt.



CHAPTER 5

Dr. Armstrong jumps up to check Marston's pulse and proclaims him dead. No one can believe it because Anthony looked like such a healthy, godlike man. Armstrong smells Anthony's breath and states that he has been poisoned. He then smells the bottle of whisky and the soda and says they are both un-poisoned, so Marston must have put the poison in his own glass. No one can believe it but they can't think of a better explanation. Miss Brent suggests that they should all go to bed.

The shift from healthy life to cold death is so quick that no one can believe it. Although Marston has just been poisoned no one tries to figure out who did it. It seems unlikely, given his personality, but they all believe it must have been suicide. They don't believe that anyone would murder Marston without knowing him and without having good reason.



Mr. Rogers checks on his wife and says that she is sleeping well. Everyone goes upstairs, says goodnight and locks their doors

They still maintain civilized practices, but they are starting to fade.



Wargrave, alone in his room, thinks of Seton. He remembers how much he enjoyed the case: Seton's lawyer had made a great final speech but then Wargrave summed it up and sealed Seton's execution. Downstairs, Rogers notices that one of the Soldiers on the dining-room table has gone missing.

A soldier is taken away because one of the guests has been killed, a pattern that will be repeated throughout the novel. We learn that Wargrave feels no guilt.



General Macarthur cannot fall asleep because he keeps thinking of Richmond. Macarthur had loved his wife, Leslie, and was happy when she became friends with Richmond. He was devastated when he found out, from a misaddressed love letter, that Leslie was having an affair with Richmond. He was so angry that he deliberately sent Richmond to his death. Leslie never said anything and died three or four years later. Macarthur worried that other people in the Army had known; he never had any real knowledge that anyone did, but he began avoiding his fellow veterans.

Macarthur's life, since he sent Richmond to his death, has been plagued with guilt. Christie slowly reveals the reason that each character committed murder. They are all ambiguously guilty. For example, Macarthur did not actively kill Richmond. This is why he has been able to conceal it, and has not been punished, for so many years.



Macarthur wonders whether anyone believed the accusation and then thinks that it is impossible that the two women on the Island had committed murder. He wonders when they will all leave and then thinks of all the troubles and worries that await him on the mainland. He realizes then that he doesn't want to leave the island.

Macarthur realizes that his guilt has become too burdensome. He does not even want to live anymore. Almost every character has made the sacrifice of living with guilt to avoid punishment, and this has become too much for Macarthur.



In her own bed, Vera thinks about Hugo, who said that he couldn't marry her because he didn't have enough money, and that he would have inherited money if Cyril hadn't been born. Vera knew that Cyril wasn't very strong but Cyril kept whining, annoyingly, that he wanted to swim out to the rock. Vera looks at the poem on the wall that says, "Ten little soldier boys went out to dine; One choked on his little self and then there were Nine." She realizes that this was just like tonight. She can't imagine that Anthony Marston would want to die – or that anyone could want to die. She thinks death is for *other* people.

Vera is the first to make the connection between the nursery rhyme hung on the walls and the first death. The events of the night have brought back her recurring, yet murky, memory about Cyril and Hugo, although we do not fully understand what happened yet. Her belief that death is for "other people" shows her idea (which other characters share) that she is somehow exempt from the rules and laws that govern human life.



CHAPTER 6

Dr. Armstrong dreams that he is performing his failed operation again. But in his dream he is operating on Miss Brent and realizes that he has to kill her. She laughs at him and says, "In the midst of life we are in death." She then turns into Anthony Marston, and Armstrong wakes up. Rogers is shaking him and says that he can't wake his wife up.

As the characters are forced to face their pasts, vivid memories of guilt come back to them. It happened to Vera last chapter and now to Armstrong in his dreams. Further, the characters begin to think about killing each other, as none of them can trust the others as death is taking them one by one.



Armstrong goes down to see Mrs. Rogers and sees that she is in fact dead. Armstrong asks Mr. Rogers if he gave anything to his wife last night and Rogers responds that all she took was what Armstrong gave her.

The second death proves that something is truly wrong on the island. Both deaths appear inexplicable, but it is clear that they can't both have been accidental or suicide.



Everyone is downstairs for breakfast at nine o'clock. Vera and Lombard had walked up to the summit of the island to look down at the house. They tell the others that Mr. Blore is up there now, looking for the boat, but nothing has come.

Everyone's one hope is now escape from the island. But it does not seem as if anyone will come. They are stuck on this remote island—all they have is each other.



After breakfast Armstrong tells the rest of the guests that Mrs. Rogers died last night. Armstrong says that he cannot tell how she died. Miss Brent thinks that she died from a guilty conscience; she calls it an Act of God. Mr. Blore thinks that Mr. Rogers killed his wife so she wouldn't spill the beans about the murder they had committed together.

There are many theories going around about this new death. Each character creates an idea that is in line with his or her own character. Miss Brent sees everything in terms of religion, Blore in terms of self-serving and cold-blooded actions.



Mr. Rogers then comes in and Wargrave asks him what time the motorboat normally comes to the island. Rogers tell shim about 7 or 8am, but that it is now 9:50am. Everyone is silent until Macarthur all of a sudden tells Rogers that he is sorry to hear about his wife.

Because they are all so worried about their own lives, no one at first takes the time to comfort Rogers or acknowledge his loss. They are losing their civility and moving towards a more primal, survivalist state.



Outside, after breakfast, Lombard asks Blore what he thinks about the motorboat not arriving. Blore thinks that it is not an accident that it hasn't come and then Macarthur jumps in the conversation and says that the boat will never come. He continues by saying that they are not going to leave the island and that this is the end of everything. Macarthur walks away unsteadily. Blore says that Macarthur has gone crazy.

Macarthur has decided that he no longer wants to live with so much guilt and has resigned himself to the fact that he will never escape the island. Blore and Lombard have not given up and so they only want to see Macarthur as crazy.



Rogers calls Armstrong into the dining room and says very nervously that something is wrong. Rogers says that he counted the little soldiers on the table after dinner and there were 10, before they went to bed there were 9 and now there are 8.

The soldiers continue to disappear as characters die. There seems to be some larger plan that no one yet understands.



CHAPTER 7

Vera and Emily Brent go for a walk to the summit of the island to look for the boat. Vera has begun to get very nervous and tries to tell herself to calm down. She asks Miss Brent whether she thinks the Rogerses are really guilty and Miss Brent says that they certainly are.

The characters are still hoping for a way to escape. Miss Brent's religious certainty makes her feel very willing to pronounce guilt on others, though she seems to feel none at her own actions.



Vera asks if this means that Miss Brent believes the others are guilty. Brent says that besides Lombard who killed the natives and the Rogers, all the other stories seem rather ridiculous.

Brent's dogmatic religious fervor means that although she sees herself as innocent and pure she thinks that everyone else is a sinner and a liar.



Emily Brent says that given the circumstances last night, with gentlemen around, she of course wasn't going to say anything about her own story. Miss Brent continues that Beatrice Taylor was in her service but she turned out to not be a "nice girl." When Miss Brent found out that Beatrice had gotten "in trouble" as they say, she kicked her out of her house, as did Beatrice's parents. After this happened Beatrice threw herself into a river to kill herself.

Regardless of the circumstances (in this case everyone in the room had just been accused of murder), Brent maintains her sense of decorum. She didn't share her story because she thought it would have been improper. Her sense of strict religious rules means she has missed out on an important part of Christianity: compassion.



Vera is horrified by this story but Miss Brent feels no guilt or remorse. She says that if Beatrice had behaved like a "decent modest young woman" none of it ever would have happened. Vera is now even more horrified.

Miss Brent's lack of guilt or sympathy for other people shows the flaws a strict, unwavering view of right and wrong can create. Just as a justice system without exceptions or nuance is flawed.



Dr. Armstrong comes outside to talk to someone about the situation on the island. He sees Wargrave but decides he doesn't want to speak with him and instead chooses Lombard. They go over the Rogers's story and Armstrong points out that Mr. and Mrs. Rogers could have killed the old lady they were taking care of just by not supplying her medicine – through neglect. Lombard then makes the conclusion that everyone on Soldiers Island is here because they have committed a crime for which they cannot be convicted.

Armstrong comments that two suicides within 12 hours are simply implausible, and that Anthony Marston must have been murdered. And if Anthony Marston was murdered then Mrs. Rogers must have been murdered, too. They then go over the poem that is hung on each of their walls: the first soldier boy chokes and the second overslept – just like Marston and Rogers! They decide that the poem, the missing soldier figurines on the table, and the fact that the motorboat didn't come this morning must mean that there has been foul play. There is a “raving maniac” on the island. They decide to search the island with Blore's help.

CHAPTER 8

Blore agrees to search the island but he thinks that maybe one of the guests is actually the murderer. Either way they decide to search the island and Blore asks if anyone has a revolver. Lombard says he does – he explains that he has gotten in “some tight places” before and always carries a revolver.

Searching the small island ends up being quite simple. Towards the end of their search they run into General MacArthur looking at the sea. He pays no attention to them and looks rather dazed. MacArthur keeps repeating “there is so little time” and that no one should disturb him. As they leave Blore says MacArthur looks insane.

When the three men get to the top of the island Blore suggests that they light a bonfire but the others think that the murderer might have already prepared for this and told everyone on the mainland to ignore the shenanigans on the island.

They look down the cliff and wonder if anyone could be there. Lombard suggests he should climb down and see if there are any hidden recesses in the cliff. Blore goes to look for a rope.

Armstrong's choice of Lombard over Wargrave shows that he sees Lombard as someone who is helpful in a time of emergency. Lombard proves his levelheaded cleverness by laying out all the facts. Armstrong shows that he is starting to distrust everyone and Lombard agrees. Lombard is the first to figure out the reason everyone was brought to this island.



Armstrong, Lombard, and Blore decide to take action against the unknown threat by searching the Island. They show that they still believe that there is a hope for escape or to stop the “raving maniac.” They have not resigned themselves to their fate even though they have started to figure out what is going on. They desperately want to live.



Now that the idea is out that one of the guests could be the murderer, the characters do not know whether they can trust each other. But in order to try anything to save themselves they have to put aside their suspicions, at least for a little while.



MacArthur decides to do nothing because he has given up on life. For those who are still trying to live this looks like insanity, but for him he would rather die than continue to live with his guilt.



They are starting to understand how comprehensive the murder's plan is.



The younger men in the group try to combat their lack of power through action.



Miss Brent sits on the porch knitting and Vera avoids her. Wargrave also sits on the porch and when Vera looks at him she imagines that she sees him pronouncing a death sentence upon Edward Seton. Vera goes down to the sea where she meets Macarthur. Macarthur tells her that he is waiting for the end, and that none of them are going to leave the island.

Vera witnesses that the older crowd does not feel the need to fight the uncertainty. They either resign themselves to it (Macarthur) or seem to feel no fear because of their sense of self-righteousness (Wargrave and Miss Brent).



Macarthur says that he loved his wife Leslie very much and then admits that this is why he sent Richmond to his death. Macarthur says that now he is alone and he will be happy to end it all. He says that one day she will also be happy when the end comes.

Macarthur admits his guilt to Vera as a last confession. He is ready to die not only because he is alone but also because he has released the secret, and hence the guilt he has been holding for so long.



Blore comes back with a rope and Lombard has gone to test some theory. Armstrong tells Blore that he is worried that Macarthur has gone crazy. Blore agrees, but says that doesn't mean that Macarthur is the murderer. Lombard returns and is soon scaling the cliff. He is a talented climber and Blore thinks this makes him even more suspicious. Lombard comes back and says he has seen nothing. The criminal must be in the house or nowhere.

After their whole search the men come up with nothing – except suspecting each other more. There is no place for the murderer to be on the island except for in the house, meaning that one of the characters is almost certainly the murderer.



They search the house easily, as it's a very modern home without hidden areas. As they are finishing their search Rogers comes out with a tray of cocktails. As the three men are up in the last corner of the house they hear a soft sound from above in the Rogers' room. They think this would be a great hiding space – in the very room where a dead body lies. But when they get up there they see that it is just Rogers who has decided to move to a different room. Blore comments that Rogers moves very quietly; none of them heard him come upstairs.

Rogers maintains the civilized façade of the gathering in an almost absurd manner. Social structures and rules are helping to maintain a thin veil of order. The house is similarly deceptive in its appearance. The modern design seems to contradict the fact that there could be a murderer hiding in their midst.



The search ends and Blore, Lombard and Armstrong are all very dirty and dusty. There is no one on the island but the eight guests in the house.

The murderer must be one of the guests, breaking down any bond of trust that might form between the characters.



CHAPTER 9

Lombard says that they must have been wrong – the deaths were just coincidences. Blore asks Armstrong whether he may have accidentally overdosed Mrs. Rogers on a sleeping pill. Armstrong says that this is ridiculous and Lombard says that they should stop accusing each other.

Lombard, with his logical mind, does not want to believe that one of the guests could be the murderer, or that their comprehensive search could have failed.



Blore then turns on Lombard and asks why he brought a revolver on a social visit. Lombard says that he “expected to run into a spot of trouble” on the trip. He explains that he was asked to come here by a man named Morris who offered him 100 guineas to keep his eyes open. Lombard explains that he didn't say anything last night because he thought the event was exactly the thing he was supposed to cope with. But now Lombard believes he is in the same sticky situation as everyone else – Mr. Morris was lying to him and they are all in a trap.

After having unsuccessfully worked together all day to look for the criminal the men start accusing each other. Society is starting to break down. Blore is understandably skeptical of Lombard's weapon, but Lombard assures him that they are all in the same boat. Although he doesn't want to believe the murderer is one of the guests, he does believe that they are in some sort of trap.



The lunch bell rings and Rogers apologizes that he is only serving cold ham and cold tongue along with other things he could find in the pantry. Lombard asks whether they have enough food and Rogers responds that they have more than enough.

Rogers is trying to keep up the civilized order but he cannot fully succeed any longer as suspicions grow among the guests. At the same time the UNKNOWN host has provided enough food—he wants to punish them directly, not by starving them.



Miss Brent comes in and says it looks like a storm is coming. Vera apologizes for coming in late, but Miss Brent responds that General Macarthur still has not come. Armstrong volunteers to go get Macarthur when Vera says he is sitting by the sea.

The approaching storm mirrors the growing fear among the guests. The social rules are deeply ingrained in all the guests; in spite of their fear they still show up to lunch on time.



After everyone has been eating for a bit Armstrong comes running and shouts that General Macarthur is—and Vera finishes his sentence—“Dead!”

Vera expected Macarthur would be dead because he said he was ready to die.



As the men come back in with Macarthur's body, the storm breaks. Vera goes into the dining room, followed soon after by Rogers. They are both checking the soldier boys and now there are only 7.

This third death makes it clear that the other two were not mistakes, and the breaking of the storm heightens the power of this realization.



Armstrong says that Macarthur was killed by being hit with a life preserver. Wargrave now takes over the conversation. Wargrave says that he has been sitting all morning thinking over the situation and decided that the two deaths yesterday were not accidental or suicides. Wargrave has therefore concluded that Mr. Owen is on the island. He is one of the guests!

Wargrave asserts what everyone has been suspecting. That Mr. Owen is one of them. By making this statement to the whole group, unlike others who have been making it in individual conversations, he puts himself in a position of power just as he did after the first recorded accusation.



Vera is shocked but Miss Brent believes that Wargrave's theory is true: one of them is possessed by the devil. Blore blurts out that Lombard has a revolver and Lombard explains why he does. Lombard then says that the women must not be suspects but Wargrave responds that either of them would have been physically capable of the murders.

The guests fall back on their usual defenses to explain what is going on. Miss Brent explains it in terms of religion and Lombard still keeps his masculine conception of the world. Wargrave says that they cannot make any assumptions.



Wargrave says that there can be no exceptions based on “character, position, or probability” they must look at the facts. They agree that anyone could have drugged Marston but Armstrong or Mr. Rogers are most likely to have killed Mrs. Rogers. But then Wargrave states that really anyone had the chance to do it.

Because they cannot figure anything out from the first two murders, Wargrave decides to move on to the third. They go through each of their alibis. Everyone has a fairly weak alibi, but no one seems to stand out as the killer. They then call in Rogers and he doesn't have much to add either.

Wargrave gives his final summation in which he says that no one person stands out as the criminal. Yet he remains positive that the killer is on the island. He tells everyone to keep their guard up, take no risks and be alert to dangers.

CHAPTER 10

Vera asks Lombard to wake her up so she can realize that this is all a bad dream, but Lombard tells her that won't happen. Vera asks Lombard who he thinks the murder is and he comments that she must be excluding the two of them. Lombard agrees that Vera couldn't have committed the murder because she is such a levelheaded, sane girl.

Vera says she can't see Lombard as the murderer either. Lombard thinks that it is Wargrave because he has played God as a judge for so long that this must have gotten to his head.

Vera thinks that it is Dr. Armstrong because two of the deaths have both been by poison. And she thinks that he killed Macarthur when he went down to call him to lunch. She also says that he is the only one with medical knowledge so he can declare that Macarthur had been dead for at least an hour and no one would know the difference.

Meanwhile, elsewhere, Rogers asks Blore if he has an idea who the criminal is. Blore says he has an idea but he doesn't want to say it yet. Rogers says it's all like a bad dream and that he has no idea who the killer is and that's what scares him the most.

There are no real clues left; the only thing they know is that the murderer could be any of the guests. No one has an alibi that puts them above suspicion.



Wargrave takes charge as judge as he did after the accusation. He does not exclude himself but does seem to place himself above the others by serving as the arbiter of justice.



This statement makes survival the one important concern for the guests on the island. They are starting to revert to a primitive state in spite of the comfortable surroundings.



The guests begin to form loose alliances. They have no real evidence but they join with the people they naturally trust, out of fear and some need to feel that they are not alone in this nightmare.



Lombard sees Wargrave's authoritative tendencies as condemning.



Vera believes that Armstrong's experience must mean he is the murderer. The problem is that although both of their theories though these guesses seem supportable, they have no further evidence. It is all guesswork.



The lack of knowledge is what truly scares the characters. Both Vera and Blore relate the experience to a dream because they can't find another way to explain it.



Dr. Armstrong is talking to Wargrave, saying that they must escape. Wargrave responds that it's very unlikely that a boat could get to them. Wargrave adds that he believes he knows who the killer is – he has no concrete evidence but he thinks that one person is clearly indicated. Armstrong doesn't understand.

Miss. Brent is in her room and starts to read her Bible but then puts it down and writes in her diary. She writes that Macarthur has been killed and that the judge has convinced her that the murderer is in their midst – that one of the guests is possessed by the devil. She writes that she knows who the killer is and then her eyes grow foggy and she writes in all caps, “THE MURDERER'S NAME IS BEATRICE TAYLOR ...” All of a sudden she wakes up and looks at what she has written. She thinks that she must have gone mad.

The storm is getting stronger and everyone sits huddled in the living room watching each other. Rogers brings tea and the mood lightens. Then Rogers comes in again and asks if anyone knows where the scarlet bathroom curtain went. No one knows and everyone becomes nervous again.

Dinner is eaten and cleared and everyone goes to bed and locks their doors. Rogers checks the table before he goes to bed, sees that there seven little china figures and locks the door to the pantry and the hall and puts the key in his pocket. He feels comforted that nothing will happen tonight. He checks the closet in his room and locks the door.

CHAPTER 11

Lombard wakes early, goes back to bed, and by 9:30 am is sitting in his bed, fully dressed and wondering why no one has called to wake the guests up. He goes to find Blore and tells him that although it is almost 10, Rogers is not up yet.

They wake the rest of the guests except Miss Brent, who is not in her room. Rogers' room is also empty. Miss Brent comes back from a walk outside and Blore tells her that taking a walk was a foolish thing to do.

They check the dining room where Rogers has laid the table for breakfast. But Vera notices that there are only 6 china figures on the table.

The people who believe they know who the murderer is do not want to share their information – knowledge is too precious.



Because Miss Brent will not admit to feeling any guilt for her actions, she can only access these feelings in a moment of near madness. All of the stress and mystery is starting to get to her in spite of her deep and unwavering faith.



The storm mirrors the progression of the madness on the island. Though the civilized structures of social life (serving tea) makes everyone feel at least momentarily better.



Rogers tries to take control of the small details that go along with each murder in order to stop the murders themselves. He is randomly groping to try to deal with the chaos.



Rogers' attempts to maintain the regular social operation of the house, and his efforts to avoid the murderer have been wildly unsuccessful. By ending one chapter with Rogers and then starting another with his death, Christie shows how precarious the guests' lives are.



By going for a walk Miss Brent shows that she has no fear for her own life because she believes that she is innocent and hence invincible.



Rogers was not able to protect the china figures even though he had the key. This again shows he must be dead.



After a search, they find Rogers dead in the woodshed where he had been cutting wood for the kitchen fire. Someone has hit him in the back of the head with a wood chopper.

Rogers did not veer from his domestic responsibilities in spite of the danger and this led to his death. This shows the rigidity of social roles in this society. Despite there being a murderer around, Rogers still does his job as a servant.



Afterwards they all discuss the murder and Vera starts laughing crazily. She asks if there are bees on the island and everyone stares at her. She says that the poem goes “Seven little soldier boys chopping up sticks” and the next verse is “six little soldier boys playing with a hive.” She keeps laughing until Armstrong slaps her, calming her. Vera and Miss Brent make breakfast.

Vera is the first to make the connection that the murders are following exactly along with the “Little Soldiers” nursery rhyme. This proves that the murders have been organized in advance.



Blore comments to Lombard that he finds it suspicious that Vera cracked up and then immediately calmed down, and that Miss Brent always seems utterly calm and was out for a walk in the morning when it is clearly so dangerous to walk out alone. Lombard responds that the real murderer would have made sure to be back in bed.

Whenever anyone makes an accusation it is always disproved in some clean easy way. There is no theory yet that seems to really work out.



Lombard adds that he's glad Blore no longer suspects him. Lombard then asks Blore for more details about what he was accused of by the recorded voice. Blore says that the man he put away, Landor, really was innocent, and that Blore knew he was innocent, but put him away anyway in order to get a promotion. Blore said he didn't know that Landor would die in penal servitude and Lombard says this was bad luck for Blore. If that hadn't happened he wouldn't be on Soldier Island now.

The murderer has brought all of the characters to the island to punish them for deaths they caused but for which they could not be convicted. But Lombard's point to Blore—that if Landor had just not died then Blore wouldn't be on the island—points out that the murderer, just like the law itself, isn't meting out perfect justice. Blore's crime would have been no different if Landor didn't die, but Blore wouldn't be on the island now if that had happened. These facts give the lie to any previous idea that the murderer was only out for justice. The murderer wants to kill these people, and just happens to want to kill people who have crimes in their pasts.



Blore says he's not going to die like the others, but Lombard responds that he will because he has no imagination. Lombard adds that he himself has been in many a tight situation and has a good imagination so he believes that he'll get out alive.

Both Blore and Lombard are self confident enough to believe that they will get out alive. They do not spend too much time feeling guilty or scared, they are only thinking about how to survive.



Vera is in the kitchen making breakfast and scolding herself for becoming hysterical earlier. She starts thinking about Hugo and wonders where he is now. Vera wonders how Miss Brent can be so amazingly calm and asks why she isn't afraid of dying. Miss Brent thinks that this is a ridiculous question: she is not guilty so she will not die. But Miss Brent then starts thinking about a dream she had of Beatrice Taylor last night. Taylor was asking to be let in and Brent wouldn't because she knew something terrible would happen to her if she did.

When the servant dies the women take over the kitchen work, further demonstrating the rigidity of the social order. Miss Brent is forced to remember Beatrice Taylor's death on the island and this has shown that maybe she does feel guilt. This may be the intent of the murderer – to torture the guests by making them feel real remorse for the crimes that they have gotten away with before actually killing them.



Everyone is outwardly very polite during breakfast, but on the inside they have “thoughts that ran round in a circle like squirrels in a cage.” They all wonder and guess who the murderer is and who will be killed next.

The characters try to maintain and outward appearance of calm but fear is starting to take over completely.



CHAPTER 12

After breakfast Wargrave suggests that they all meet in the drawing room in a half an hour to discuss the situation. Vera begins clearing the plates and Miss Brent gets up to help her but feels too weak to do so. Armstrong offers to give her something but she very quickly says, “NO!” because she is suspicious and afraid.

Once she has felt the slightest bit of guilt Miss Brent's sense of security fades. She is now just as fearful as everyone else is.



They all leave Miss Brent alone in the dining room as they clear the table. Miss Brent starts to feel drowsy and then hears a buzzing in her ears like a bee. Then she thinks that she starts to hear Beatrice Taylor coming from the river; this mixes with the buzzing of the bee, and then she feels the prick of what feels like a bee stinging the side of her neck.

This is the first death that the reader sees from the perspective of the character who is about to die. Yet we still do not get any real information besides the fact that Miss Brent is plagued by the memory of the girl she killed at the moment of her own death.



Everyone else is in the drawing room waiting for Miss Brent to come in. Vera volunteers to go get her, but Blore asks her to wait a moment, explaining that he thinks Miss Brent is the murderer because of her religious mania. He also says that she never gave an explanation for her gramophone recording accusation. Vera says that she told her about Beatrice Taylor and explains the story. Blore says that this is only further proof of her hard heart.

The fact that Blore believes that Miss Brent is the murderer right after we find out she has died shows that no one has any real idea what is going on. They are all in the dark.



Wargrave says that this isn't really proof and suggests that they should go get Miss Brent to join them. He agrees that Dr. Armstrong should observe Miss Brent's demeanor. They go in to find Miss Brent, blue-faced and dead.

The character's one agreed upon plan, to watch Miss Brent, is completely useless. She's already dead!



Armstrong says that she was killed by injection – there is the mark of a hypodermic syringe in her neck. There is also a bee buzzing in the room and Lombard says this is the mark of the creativity of the killer because the verse of the ten little soldier rhyme mentions being stung by a bee. Wargrave asks if anyone brought a syringe into the house and Armstrong says that he did. He then defends himself by saying doctors always travel with one. They go up to check his suitcase where Armstrong says he keeps it and it is not there.

Miss Brent was not really killed by a bee sting as it appeared in the vague passage describing her death, but the fact that the murderer took the time to put a bee in the room shows how dedicated he or she is to sticking to the form of the nursery rhyme.



Armstrong claims that someone must have taken it. Wargrave suggests that they all put whatever drugs or weapons they have in a safe place and then search every person and room. After some resistance from Lombard who doesn't want to give up his revolver, they all agree.

Although they do not trust each other, the characters believe that if they all give up a bit of power they will be collectively safer.



When Lombard goes to check his drawer where the revolver is kept he realizes that it is not there. Each one of them submits to a full search and they turn up with nothing. They lock up all the drugs they have in a place where it would be noisy to break into. They still cannot find the revolver but Blore says he knows where the syringe must be.

He goes to the window outside the dining room and finds the syringe and the broken soldier boy. The syringe had been carefully wiped. They decide to search for the revolver again and Wargrave says that they should all stay together for safety. They do not find the revolver.

CHAPTER 13

All of them now constantly wonder who is the murderer. There is no longer any semblance of civilized conversation or social interaction. They are all focused solely on self-preservation. They are all “reverting to more bestial types.”

Armstrong wants to do something, *anything* and Lombard thinks that the weather will clear up at some point and then they can try to leave. Wargrave says that they just must be very careful.

They eat lunch but they no longer sit at the table. They just stand around in the kitchen and eat tongue and fruit out of cans, staring suspicious at each other.

Vera asks if anyone wants tea and they all decide that they should watch her make it. All of a sudden the lights go out and they realize that no one has been running the engine that keeps the lights on since Rogers died. Wargrave has seen some candles in the larder and Lombard goes to get them.

It is only 6:20pm but Vera can't handle it anymore so she decides to go upstairs and take a bath. As she opens her door she smells the sea and hears Cyril's voice: he's asking her if he can swim. She tells herself to snap out of it but she still smells the sea. All of a sudden she feels a cold hand on her neck, a wet hand that smells of the sea and she screams.

Their plan has come too late, someone has already taken the revolver. The murderer is one step ahead of them.



The murderer is also very careful to cover his or her identity in spite of how quickly he or she has to work. Again, although they believe that the murderer is amongst them, there is still safety in numbers. No one can survive alone.



Although they decide to stay together, each person is thinking only of him or herself.



The characters one hope seems to be escape, but the storm seems to have come exactly for the purpose of keeping them on the island.



The civilized order that they held on to for so long has finally faded. They cannot keep it up when they are trying only to survive.



Rogers was taking care of all of them, not just serving tea. The remaining guests do not know how to keep a house because they have never fully had to. This seems to further lower their chances of survival.



In a state of fear Vera believes that the dead Cyril has come to haunt her on the island. Although she is always called “level-headed” by the other characters, Vera loses touch with reality because of her worry and fear and guilt.



The men run upstairs as Vera keeps screaming and she opens her eyes so see all the men around her. She looks up and sees wet seaweed hanging from the ceiling, which is what she felt against her throat in the darkness. She begins to laugh hysterically.

Someone offers her a drink but as she is about to drink it she refuses to because she doesn't know where it came from. Lombard tells her she has her wits about her, even after her fright. Lombard says that this is one murder that didn't work out.

All of a sudden Vera asks where Wargrave is. They realize he didn't follow them up the stairs and go to check on him in the living room. He is sitting in his high backed chair with two candles on either side of him. He is wearing a scarlet robe and a judge's wig and is bent forward, dead. There is a round wound on his forehead where he was shot. Vera realizes that the wig was made from Miss Brent's grey wool and Blore notices that the scarlet robe was made from the missing bathroom curtain.

Lombard remarks that Wargrave's act of playing court is over. Vera says that just this morning Lombard thought that Wargrave was the murderer. Lombard agrees that he did and responds, "Here's one more of us who's been proved innocent – too late!"

CHAPTER 14

After they carry Wargrave's body up to bed, they all stand around the kitchen eating canned tongue mechanically. Vera comments that she will never eat tongue again.

Blore says "only four of us now . . . Who'll be the next?" And Mr. Armstrong mechanically responds "We must be very careful," but stops when Blore tells him this is exactly what Wargrave said earlier.

They go over the fact that the seaweed was planted in Vera's room to get them all up there so they would be distracted. Lombard says that they weren't able to hear the shot because of Vera's screaming, the howling of the wind, and all the running. But he says that trick won't work again.

They each then stare at each other and say they know who the murderer is – but no one actually gives a name. They all decide to go to bed, and as they are going Blore wonders out loud where the revolver is.

Vera realizes that it was mostly her mind—her guilt—filling her with fear drives her even more crazy. She knows that she is losing it because of all the stress.



Vera's need to survive is greater than her confusion caused by fear.



This is the most theatrical of all the murders and the murderer has been laying away supplies (wool and curtain) to plan for it. The murderer makes fun of Wargrave for his belief that he could discover the crime through careful thought and investigation. The seaweed set up in Vera's room now seems to have been only a distraction to kill Wargrave.



Because everyone is a suspect, they can only be proved innocent by getting killed.



In spite of all that has happened Vera still believes that she will survive, shown by the fact that she talks about the future.



Being careful has not helped any of them yet, so they have absolutely no plan of what to do next.



The group always learns their lessons a fatal second too late.



There are so few people left that they each feel they have a good guess at who the murderer is. They all suspect each other.



When they get upstairs each stands in front of his or her door and then, as if there were a signal, they all go into their room at the exact same time and lock the doors behind them.

They only feel safe now when they are each alone and locked in their rooms.



In his room Lombard looks in the mirror and thinks that this insane island has started to get to him. Then his wolf-like smile flashes out all of a sudden. He undresses and goes over to the table by his bed. He opens the drawer and the revolver is back inside of it.

Lombard still feels that he has some control over the situation. He has been in tough spots before.



Vera thinks that she could just stay in her room for a day or two until someone comes to get her. But she realizes that if she stays here all alone she will just think of Hugo and Cyril. She returns to that time in her head: she tells Cyril that she will distract his mother so he can swim out to the rock. She worries that something might go wrong. What if Cyril is rescued in time? But then she realizes that she can just say that Cyril is lying, as he always does. She wonders whether Hugo suspected, because after the investigation he left so quickly and didn't respond to the letter she wrote him.

Although being alone seems like the safest choice, solitude also brings up the old ghosts of Vera's guilt. In this passage Vera finally reveals the story that she had hidden for so long. She told Cyril to swim out to the rock—knowing that he would drown in the attempt—in order to clear her way to be with Hugo, whom she loved. She has held this secret for so long partly because she believes that no one, not even Hugo, could know the truth. But now she starts to doubt that her secret really is a secret.



Vera, back in the present, wonders why she felt like Hugo was in the room with her this evening. She looks up and sees a big black hook in the middle of the room. It was used to hang the seaweed, but she had never noticed it before. She finds the hook mesmerizing.

Vera, in spite of her supposed level-headedness, is slowly becoming more obsessive and out of touch with reality.



Blore sits in his room and thinks about how cocky Wargrave had been. But even with all his self-professed wisdom and care he had died. Blore says to himself that he will not be the next one to go. But he still wishes he knew the location of the revolver.

Constant worry about the revolver shows Blore's lack of imagination, as Lombard says. He is focused on the weapons that the criminal used in the past even though these keep changing.



Blore lies in bed thinking about every detail from the beginning as he did in his police days. He starts seeing the faces of Mrs. Rogers and Anthony Marston. He then sees a face he doesn't recognize and realizes that it is Landor. For the first time he wonders what happened to Landor's wife and children. But then he just goes back to wondering where the revolver is.

Blore feels some guilt for the first time. But he is able to quickly push this out of his head so he can focus on survival.



The clock strikes one and Blore hears a sound as if someone were moving in the darkened house. He noiselessly goes to the door and listens. He doesn't hear the sound again but he is convinced that someone is creeping around in the night. He wants to investigate but he knows that this would be a foolish thing to do because he was probably being tempted by the murderer to do just that!

Blore finally hears a real clue and wants to do something about it. He knows that he should be wary of being tricked but the temptation of doing something, anything, to try to save himself is too great. He still keeps a level head and waits for a little longer.



Blore continues to listen and then all of a sudden he hears cautious footsteps. He definitely hears them pass his door. Blore grabs a lamp from his bedside to use as a weapon and slips out of his room just as he sees a figure pass through the front door. As he is about to run downstairs he realizes that he is making a fool of himself. Maybe this was just a trap? He realizes that he can just check which of the rooms are empty.

Blore is showing his police training. He also shows that he doesn't distrust everyone. He knows it is not smart to go after the murderer alone.



There is no answer on Armstrong's door, Lombard responds at once as does Vera. Blore explains to Lombard and they go check on Armstrong's room where they realize that the door has been locked from the outside. They go tell Vera not to leave her room under any circumstances. They say if Armstrong comes to her door and tells her someone has been killed she still shouldn't open it. She should only open if both Lombard and Blore come back and speak to her.

They have finally been able to form a team now that they believe they know who the murderer is. This is a small moment of purpose in a long line of confusing and powerless events.



Blore says to Lombard that they should be careful because Armstrong must have the revolver, but then Lombard reveals that the gun has been returned. Blore stops in sudden panic, but Lombard assures him that he is not going to shoot. Blore is not afraid of the now known threat of the revolver – he as tackled armed criminals before – he is only afraid of the undefined and supernatural danger he cannot see.

The characters have come to realize that the greatest threat comes from what you do not know.



Vera, meanwhile, distracts herself by trying to invent ways that Armstrong could try to trick her. She realizes that if she needed to she could jump out the window. She then starts to write in her diary but all of a sudden hears footsteps. Finally she hears Lombard and Blore asking to come in. They tell her that Armstrong has disappeared.

Vera is constantly trying to stay prepared. She knows how to keep herself alive.



Lombard and Blore have looked all over both the island and the house cannot find Armstrong anywhere. They also tell her that a pane in the dining room window has been broken and there are only three soldiers left.

The typical sign of one less soldier implies that Armstrong is dead, but that would mean that one of the three characters left is the murderer. No one knows what to think.



CHAPTER 15

The three remaining guests sit eating breakfast in the kitchen. It is a sunny day. The storm has passed. Lombard suggests that they should try to signal the mainland for help using a mirror. But Lombard adds that although the weather is better the sea still hasn't gone down and there will be no way to get a boat to the island before tomorrow.

Christie has given the remaining characters a ray of hope—they only have to survive for about one more day.



Blore wonders what happened to Armstrong. He suggests that the doctor might have been thrown into the sea, but then wonders: by whom? Blore says he doesn't know but what he does know is that Lombard has the revolver, and maybe he has had the revolver for the whole time. Lombard says that this can't be because they all searched the house together and the revolver was replaced. But Blore still suspects him.

Blore says that the only fair thing to do now is lock up the revolver and both Lombard and Blore can hold a key. Vera says that they are both acting like idiots and have forgotten the rhyme. "Four little soldier boys going out to sea; A red herring swallowed one and then there were three." She says that Armstrong is the red herring and isn't actually dead.

But Blore says that they searched the island and Armstrong wasn't there. Vera brings up that they couldn't find the revolver before – everything has fit with the nursery rhyme so this must too.

But, referencing the next verse, Blore says that there is no zoo on the island. But Vera says "Don't you see? We're the Zoo ... Last night, we were hardly human anymore. We're the Zoo ..."

They spend the morning at the cliffs with a mirror and flashlight trying to signal the mainland. There's no indication anyone on the mainland noticed. They search the island again and see no sign of Armstrong. Vera says she feels safer outside and they agree to stay out of the house for a while, although Blore says they will have to go back in for the night. Vera says she can't bear it and Lombard tells her that she will be safe enough locked in her room.

Vera feels almost happy in the sunlight. She feels like she can't die. Blore says he wants some lunch but Vera refuses to go back into the house. They argue a bit over who will get the revolver and then Blore gives up and goes to the house alone to get some food. Vera thinks that this is very risky but Lombard tells her that Armstrong is unarmed so it can't be too dangerous.

Blore is still preoccupied with the one known weapon on the island. Lombard's explanation seems reasonable, but reason doesn't matter anymore. No one can trust anyone else.



Lombard and Blore have become preoccupied with the details but Vera is still paying attention to the larger trends. She understands that Armstrong's disappearance is just a trick. Vera always seems one step ahead of everyone else.



Vera understands that you can't always trust your eyes on the island, but that everything will follow the rules that the murderer has set.



Blore is too literal. Vera can see the subtleties – the three of them are barely human anymore. Like animals they are only trying to survive.



The clean, modern house is more frightening than the natural landscape of the island. They know that they cannot control the house, and it holds secrets in spite of its orderly appearance. They feel more comfortable outside now that they have reverted to a more animalistic state. Society, with its rules and justice, is more threatening to them.



They feel that they know Armstrong is the murderer now, and that he has only hid himself, so with this knowledge Blore feels safe enough to venture off alone. He can avoid something that he knows exists.



Lombard starts to tell Vera that Blore's story about Armstrong and the footsteps clears both of them, but it doesn't clear Blore. He says that they should be careful of Blore; he might not even be an ex-policeman.

Lombard still doesn't trust Blore, but seems to trust Vera. He mentioned earlier that he can't imagine a woman committing such a crime, even though he knows that she has killed in the past. Though it's worth noting that Lombard has earlier stated that it is his imagination that will allow him to escape the island alive.



Lombard says that with his revolver he is going to take good care that Blore doesn't get them. He asks Vera why she trusts that he won't just shoot her and Vera says that she has to trust someone. But Vera still believes that Armstrong is the killer because she feels like someone is watching them.

Even when there are so few people left, they know that they cannot survive alone. They have to trust their unproven theories and animalistic instincts because these are the only tools they have.



Vera says she once heard a story about two judges in a small American town that administered Absolute Justice, but in fact the judges didn't come from the natural world. Lombard responds that he doesn't believe in the supernatural. Lombard then asks if Vera actually did drown the kid. Vera denies it and Lombard doesn't believe her. He says that the whole thing probably involved a man. Vera admits that it did.

Vera believes that there is some supernatural power controlling this island. Lombard is far too practical to think such a thing. Vera still will not admit to her guilt, even though it seems obvious that everyone on the island committed some sort of crime. Vera is plagued by guilt but also doesn't quite believe it. She is in denial.



They both hear a thud and a cry and run back up to the house. Blore has been crushed by a great block of white marble shaped like a bear – the one that was on the mantelpiece in Vera's room.

The bear that was referenced in the "zoo" nursery rhyme. Even this late in the game the murders are still perfectly planned.



Lombard says that Armstrong must be in the house and that he is going to go in and find him. But Vera stops Lombard and says that this is probably what Armstrong wants them to do.

They are now convinced that the murderer must be Armstrong because neither of them could have pushed the marble bear onto Blore.



Lombard decides that they should find a high place on the island and stay awake all night. They start walking and as they get by the sea they see a bundle in the rocks. They go closer and realize that it is Armstrong. He has drowned.

Lombard is trying to hold out until the sea calms tomorrow. Now that Armstrong it is only the two of them left on the island.



CHAPTER 16

Vera and Lombard slowly look up at each other. They realize that there is no one on the island except the two of them. Vera asks how he was able to hit Blore with the marble bear. Lombard tells Vera that in killing Blore she pulled off quite a good conjuring trick. Vera feels like she sees Lombard's wolfish face for the first time.

Now that there is no one left the only thing to do is accuse each other. Vera now sees Lombard as a wicked person even though she trusted him only a moment ago.



Lombard says that this is the end. He says it almost with acceptance, but Vera only feels rebellion. She says “Poor Dr. Armstrong.” Vera says that they should carry him up to the house and get him out of reach of the sea. Lombard laughs and agrees and they both begin tugging the body.

As they get him past the reach of the sea, Lombard asks if Vera is satisfied and she says she is. She shows him his revolver, which she took from him as they were dragging the body. Lombard knows that his death is near. He tells Vera to give him the revolver and springs towards her. Vera presses the trigger. Lombard is dead – shot through the heart.

Vera feels relieved. She realizes that she is hungry and sleepy, but mostly sleepy. She walks toward the house and realizes that she doesn't mind staying here anymore now that everyone is gone. As she walks in she sees three soldier boys on the dining room table and breaks two of them. She takes the third up to her room.

Vera remembers the last verse of the nursery rhyme “one little soldier boy left all alone; He got married and then there were none.” She suddenly feels as if Hugo were in the house. When she gets up to her room she sees a noose hanging from the hook on ceiling of her room and a chair ready to be kicked away. Then she realizes that the last line is really “He went and hanged himself and then there were None.”

The little china figure rolls out of Vera's hand. She is standing in the place where she was when she felt Cyril's cold wet hand on her throat. She realizes then that she really did murder him. She climbs on the chair, adjusts the noose around her neck and feels that Hugo is there to see what she has to do. She kicks away the chair.

EPILOGUE 1

Sir Thomas Legge, the Assistant Commissioner at Scotland Yard is peaking with Inspector Maine about Soldier's Island. They can't understand how there could be ten people dead on an island and no survivors. Legge wants to know who killed them, but there's very little evidence. Wargrave and Lombard were shot, Miss Brent and Marston died of cyanide poisoning, Mrs. Rogers died of an overdose of chloral, Rogers head was split open, Blore's head was crushed, Armstrong drowned, Macarthur's skull was fractured, and Vera was hanged.

Lombard is confused and hopeless. But Vera still wants nothing more than to live. She plays off of Lombard's weaknesses and plays the part of a compassionate, harmless girl.



Vera has played Lombard for a fool and kills him. This is the first murder that we, as readers, see. We know that Vera has killed Lombard, but did she also kill everyone else? At this point nothing else seems possible because she is the only one left on the island. Lombard's inability to imagine Vera as a killer proved his downfall.



Vera is exhausted. She has been trying to survive for so long and now that she has all she wants to do is sleep. She feels no remorse for Lombard's death, and feels safe now that everyone else is gone—all society has been eradicated from the island.



Vera misquotes the last line because she is thinking about Hugo, the man whom she killed for in the first place. The room has been set up to augment and play into Vera's guilt—to get her to kill herself.



At the moment of her death Vera can finally admit her guilt. She is now punishing herself for what she did after having stayed alive for so long. This is the justice the murderer was seeking. The guests have admitted their guilt and received their punishments.



Scotland Yard is trying to solve the mystery, but they do not have much more evidence than the reader. They cannot figure it out.



The Sticklehaven (mainland) people don't know anything except the fact that the island was owned by a Mr. Owen and all the arrangements were made by a man named Isaac Morris. And Morris is also dead. They know that he was mixed up in the drug business and was also involved in financial scandals. He was able to cover the financial tracks of his employer, Mr. Owen.

The Sticklehaven townspeople did not notice anything strange because the millionaire who owned the island before always used to have crazy parties. They had come to expect strange events from the island.

Fred Narracott tells the police that he was surprised by the people in the party who went to the island. The fact that they were all so normal and quiet led him to violate Mr. Morris's orders and take a boat to the island to check out the SOS signals they had been sending. The signals were seen by some boy scouts on the mainland on the 11th but they could not get there until the 12th because of the rough seas.

The gramophone record they found on the island was made by a theatrical company and sent to U. N. Owen, care of Isaac Morris. It was understood to be a part of an amateur performance of a new play. Inspector Maine says he has investigated everything as far as he could.

Maine then tells Legge about the accusations against all of the guests on the island. He mentions that Seton, who Wargrave convicted, was found later to really have been guilty. He also says that Isaac Morris died on the night of August 8th when he took an overdose of sleeping pills; there was nothing to show whether it was an accident or suicide. Legge thinks that the death of Morris must be related.

Maine says that they do know why everyone was killed. It must have been some person who was fanatical about justice. He picked ten people who were beyond the reach of law. He killed them and disappeared from the island. But it also could have been someone on the island.

They do have some evidence from the diaries kept on the island by Vera, Emily Brent and some notes by Wargrave and Blore. The death occurred in this order: Marston, Mrs. Rogers, Miss Brent, Wargrave. Blore then has a note "Armstrong disappeared."

Isaac Morris left no trail and no clues. Even with knowledge that the guests on the island did not have, Scotland Yard still cannot figure out the mystery.



The murderer planned well to make sure that no one would interfere.



The fact that the guests were of mixed classes and did not seem like the friends of millionaires was the real warning signal. With all of the other strange things going on this shows how powerful class structures are in this society.



Every single detail was thought out. The murderer left no tracks.



Wargrave is the only person on the island who really was not guilty. Even though Isaac Morris was not on the island he was still a victim of the murderer.



They realize that the murders were all committed out of a sense of justice – someone was taking the law into his or her own hands.



The number of clues left behind such as the diary entries from the guests makes it seem like they should be able to figure out who the murderer is.



Legge thinks that this must mean that Armstrong killed the others and tried to swim out. But Maine tells him that Armstrong's body was dragged above the high water line. Then the people left were Vera, Blore and Lombard.

Another piece of evidence is that the revolver was found in Wargrave's room with fingerprints on it. Then it seems like Vera could have pushed the statue on Blore, shot Lombard and hung herself. But there is one problem with this theory: the chair wasn't found kicked over. It was neatly put against the wall. So someone must have replaced the chair after Vera's death.

Therefore it seems like there must have been someone else on the island. But the Sticklehaven people are sure that no one could have left the island before the rescue boat came. So they have no idea who committed the murders.

EPILOGUE 2

This letter was sent to Scotland Yard by the master of the *Emma Jane* fishing trawler. The writer says that he has been a mass of contradictions since his youth. He has always had a romantic side: the side that is attracted to throwing a bottle in the sea with an important note, which is why he is writing this confession, putting it in a bottle, and throwing it into the sea.

At the same time he has always taken a sadistic delight with seeing or causing death, as well as a strong sense of justice. He hates the idea that an innocent person or creature should suffer – he has always “felt strongly that right should prevail.”

These natural tendencies led him to enter the legal profession. Crime and punishment has always fascinated him and he loves reading detective novels. He also loves to see a criminal in court, and to sentence them to death. He has never sentenced an innocent person, and has always told the jury that there was no case in such situations. He has a reputation as a hanging judge but he says he has only ever drawn the jury's attention to the actual evidence of a case and kept them away from emotional judgments.

For some years he has felt that he wanted to act rather than judge. He wanted to commit a murder himself. He wanted to commit something theatrical and impossible. But he was restrained by the sense that the innocent should not suffer.

But every theory is contradicted by another clue. This is similar to what would happen on the island when the guests were making wild guesses to figure out who the murderer was as well.



There was clearly someone alive on the island after Vera's death. But it seems clear that everyone was dead by the time Vera hanged herself.



With the weather it is impossible that anyone escaped. Scotland Yard has not gotten anywhere. The murder is a mystery.



The confession of the murder has been put in a bottle and thrown out to sea. The author, and murderer, starts by explaining his past.



He is obsessed with both death and justice. He has a black and white sense of right and wrong.



These combined obsessions led him to eventually become a judge. This way he could preserve justice, decide between right and wrong, and also sentence people to death. He says that he never tried to get a death sentence when someone was innocent.



But being a judge was not enough – he really wanted to kill someone, but without violating his belief that the innocent should not suffer.



Then one day he was talking to a doctor who mentioned how often murders must be committed that the law is unable to touch. The doctor then told the letter writer about the case of Mr. and Mrs. Rogers. The doctor believed that they had withheld medicine from the old woman in their care, but he had no way of proving it. Wargrave then realized that this was his opportunity to commit the perfect murder.

The author of the letter and the murderer, Wargrave, realizes that he could justifiably (to himself) murder people who had committed crimes that were out of the reach of the law. He believes that they deserve death, so he could kill them himself.



He remembered a rhyme from his childhood about ten little soldier boys and began collecting his victims. He heard about Armstrong while at a nursing home. He heard about General MacArthur from a conversation with two old military gossips in his Club. He selected Marston from a large group of people who had committed similar offenses; he heard about Miss Brent while traveling in Majorca. He heard about Blore through his own line of work in the legal system and a man who had returned from the Amazon told him about Lombard.

He slowly and carefully begins looking for people who have committed crimes without being punished.



Finally he ran into a man named Hugo Hamilton while crossing the Atlantic. Hugo was drunk and told him about a woman who took a kid out to sea and let him drown. Hugo knew the moment he looked at her that she had done it. What she didn't realize was that Hugo, whom she had loved, had loved the kid.

This is the story of Vera's Hugo – she killed Cyril, the child, in order to marry Hugo. Yet Hugo, despite loving Vera, also loved Cyril. And the realization of what Vera had done destroyed his love for her and filled him with his own guilt.



Finally he found Morris as the tenth victim. He was a dope peddler who had gotten one of Wargrave's friend's daughters to take drugs. The girl then committed suicide at 21.

Wargrave needed Morris to organize the details, and also chose him because he too was guilty (and therefore, according to Wargrave's moral system, eliminatable).



He did not act on the plan for a long time, but he finally decided to act when he learned from a doctor that he was ill and would die soon. He wanted to die in a blaze of excitement.

Wargrave makes the murders his last act. He knows that he has to go about it when he is going to die soon.



He used Morris to acquire the island and create believable invitations for each of his victims. It worked, and each of the guests arrived on August 8th. To take care of Morris, Wargrave gave him a pill, which he said was for indigestion, and told him to take it last thing at night.

Wargrave has so carefully planned out his mission that it goes exactly as he wants it to from the very beginning.



Wargrave chose the order of his victims very carefully. He believes that there were differing levels of guilt and he wanted the most guilty to suffer the longest. He believed that Marston had no conscience or moral responsibility and that Mrs. Rogers had been influenced by her husband. For Marston he used potassium cyanide which one can easily buy to kill wasps. During his sickness, Wargrave had been prescribed Chloral Hydrate which he kept until he had a lethal amount. He slipped this into Mrs. Rogers' brandy.

Even though everyone was being killed, Wargrave varied the sentences by making some suffer longer. He killed those who held the least responsibility for their murders first. He believes that this plan is the most just. He wanted the most guilty to suffer their guilt the longest.



Macarthur did not hear Wargrave sneak up behind him and his death was quite painless. Wargrave knew that he now needed an ally to complete the rest of his murders. He chose Armstrong because he knew Armstrong was a gullible man. Armstrong suspected Lombard, and Wargrave pretended to agree with him. He said that he had a scheme to make the murderer incriminate himself.

Wargrave needed help in order to finish his plan. He was able to fake his own death with the help of the gullible Armstrong.



On the morning of August 10th Wargrave killed Rogers while he was chopping sticks. While they were looking for Rogers, Wargrave slipped into Lombard's room and stole his revolver. And at breakfast he slipped the last bit of chloral into Miss Brent's coffee. Then when everyone left the room he injected her with cyanide and brought the bumble bee into the room to fit the nursery rhyme.

Wargrave's plan was so tight that no one even knew that he was sneaking around. In spite of his own cold-blooded and insensitive ways, Wargrave has an incredible sense of human psychology and seems to always know what people will do in every situation.



Next he convinced Armstrong that he (Wargrave) needed to be the next victim because this would rattle the murderer, who wouldn't expect it. They used some plaster of red mud on his forehead and Armstrong pronounced him dead after all the fuss with Vera screaming in her room.

This is how Wargrave really got away with the crime. By taking himself out of the picture he made sure that the guests suspected each other so they could not ever truly work together to save themselves.



Armstrong and Wargrave met in the middle of the night and Wargrave led Armstrong far away from the house because he convinced Armstrong that no one should see them. Wargrave then pushed Armstrong over a cliff. Wargrave returned to the house and intentionally made some noise in Armstrong's room to wake the others up. They saw him walk through the door but he looped back into the house and got into bed because he knew that they would search the house again but not look too carefully at any of the corpses.

Wargrave has great control over his body even though he is a dying old man. The fact that everyone was locked in their rooms, as he knew they would be, helped.



Wargrave then writes that he forgot to mention that he returned the revolver to Lombard's room. He had hidden it in a food tin at the bottom of the pantry. He had hidden the red curtain under one of the drawing room chairs.

Although this seems unnecessary at first, placing the revolver back in Lombard's room ensured that Vera could kill Lombard.



He knew that the three people would now be terrified of each other and one of them would have a revolver. When Blore came up to the house, Wargrave pushed the marble clock onto him. From the window he watched Vera shoot Lombard and then wondered excitedly whether she would play into the stage he set for her in her bedroom.

Wargrave writes that he thinks this is an interesting psychological experiment: would she cave to her own guilt? He thought she would and he was right. Vera hanged herself in front of Wargrave's eyes as he hid behind the wardrobe. He then returned the chair to its place against the wall and finds the revolver.

At this point he writes that he will now finish this letter and put it in a bottle. He wanted to invent a murder that no one could solve but he knows he will not be satisfied unless there is the possibility that someone will find out about his brilliance.

He believes that the mystery will remain unsolved but there are three clues. 1. The police know that Edward Seton was guilty and that therefore out of the ten people only one is innocent. 2. From the rhyme they know that Armstrong's death was a "red herring" so at this moment there must have been something strange going on. 3. A symbolic reason: the mark of Cain on Wargrave's head.

After throwing the letter into sea, Wargrave writes that he will go up to his room and attach an elastic cord to his glasses, he will lay on his glasses and will loop the cord around the door handle and attach it to the revolver. His hand, protected by a handkerchief, will press the trigger and the revolver will recoil to the door having been pulled by the elastic cord. The elastic will just hang down from the glasses and the handkerchief will rest on the ground. It will look as if he were shot through the head as the accounts claim.

When the sea goes down they will find ten dead bodies and an unsolved mystery on Soldier Island. He signs the letter: Lawrence Wargrave.

Wargrave seems to be almost omniscient. He knew, based on their characters, that Blore would separate himself from the group and that Vera was actually braver and more ruthless than Lombard.



At this point Wargrave wanted Vera to hang herself, and thought she would, but he also could have killed her himself if she didn't. But her guilt overtook her in the end. He moved the chair back to confuse everyone.



His pride in his own careful task and sense of extreme justice means he hopes someone will figure out the murder eventually. It is important to him to be seen as a man who committed the "perfect" crime.



The mark of Cain on Wargrave's head (the wound on him) shows that he is the secret murderer, just as Cain was a murderer in the Bible. This allusion also implies that Wargrave knows that although he was doing this out of a sense of justice, he is also evil himself.



Wargrave very carefully kills himself at the end to make it appear as if he were murdered. He knows that he is already sick and he has committed his last great act of his life so he feels no fear or worry about dying.



The sea, which isolated all his victims on the island, will now hold Wargrave's secret.





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