

## **DETECTIVE FORMULA IN AGATHA CHRISTIE'S DEATH ON THE NILE**

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**Abstract:** This research employs a qualitative research design to investigate the application of the Detective Formula in Agatha Christie's mystery novel, *Death on the Nile*. Emphasizing the main character's problem-solving abilities, the study was made in qualitative approach, as the data acquired are in the form of words. Qualitative research aligns with the study's objective of analyzing the intricacies of detective methodologies within the narrative. In this context, the researcher uses qualitative methods to extract insights from books, movies, and internet sources. This qualitative research not only in the literary merit of Christie's work but also contributes nuanced perspective research is grounded in the nature of the data, which is primarily textual and visual, allowing for a descriptive analysis of classic detective fiction. This study will be focused on the detective formula in *Death on the Nile* by Agatha Christie. In the context of the research background outlined above, the study aims to explore the application of the Detective Formula in problem-solving within Agatha Christie's *Death on the Nile*. This inquiry examines the actions and strategies undertaken by the main character as they address challenges while solving the cases presented in the novel. The objective is to analyze the protagonist's approach, methods, and decision-making processes, providing insights into how they navigate and resolve complex mysteries within the novel.

**Keywords:** *Detective, Formula, Analysis, Novel*

### **INTRODUCTION**

According to (Delamater & Prigozy, 2001) Detective Formula is "a literary genre based on the fundamental assumptions that a crime has been committed, that it can be solved, and that its solution depends upon the exercise of deductive reasoning by a central character, the detective". The Detective Formula has focus on the investigation and exploration of a crime, with the detective as the central figure in a story.

The general story or plot of the Detective stories have evolved over time, with different authors and variations on the formula, but the main elements is a crime and a detective. The evolution of the detective story has seen the introduction of new sub-genres, such as the hard-boiled detective story popularized by the authors like Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett (Panek, 1981). *Death on the Nile* novel by Agatha Christie is one of the popular literatures that categorized as detective story genre. The story follows the main character, Hercule Poirot, where he embarks on a vacation in Egypt, but finds himself solving two murder cases.

The story takes place on a luxurious cruise ship traveling along the Nile River in Egypt. The characters are confined to this specific location, creating a closed-circle mystery. The murder occurs on the ship, and the investigation unfolds within the constraints of this limited space. In "*Death on the Nile*" by Agatha Christie, the narrative revolves around the characters central to the unfolding mystery. Hercule Poirot, the renowned Belgian detective, takes on the pivotal role of solving a murder that transpires during the Nile River cruise. The story introduces a diverse and intriguing cast of individuals, each harboring their own motives and concealed truths. The crux of the narrative involves identifying the perpetrator among the passengers and crew aboard the ship. As Poirot conducts his investigation, he delves into the characters' backgrounds, relationships, and hidden agendas, unraveling the intricacies that lead to the revelation of the truth behind the crime.

This exploration of characters and their complexities is integral to the classic mystery structure of the novel. While Agatha Christie's *Death on the Nile* is a classic example of a detective novel, in many ways it also subverts expectations about the genre. This is because the detective, Hercule Poirot, is not only an expert investigator but also an expert on detective fiction. Many aspects of the novel follow the conventions of a detective novel, where realism is less important than weaving a compelling mystery. There are elaborately planned crimes, an improbably high body count, and other unrealistic elements commonly seen in the detective genre. At the same time, however, many of the characters—and especially Poirot—are familiar with the tropes of older detective fiction, with the murderer even trying to mislead Poirot by writing the letter J in the victim's blood. Detective fiction is a genre built around carefully

orchestrated surprises, and in *Death on the Nile*, Christie subverts some expectations while fulfilling others in order to keep her audience guessing about what the final outcome will be, while still delivering the thrills of a traditional mystery story.

The detective formula is an example of how the skills of critical thinking and problem-solving can be applied in real-world situations. By analyzing and solving crimes as a detective, readers and viewers of detective stories can develop these skills in solving problems, and how can people use elements of the detective formula into their life to be more critical in thinking to solve a problem.

Based on the background above, the writer chose classical detective formula in popular literary work because there is a little of works that discuss the formula of popular literature especially in classical detective novel. *Death on the Nile* is a good example of classical detective fiction because contained classical detective formula elements. Thus, this study will be focused on the detective formula in *Death on the Nile* by Agatha Christie. In the context of the research background outlined above, the study aims to explore the application of the Detective Formula in problem-solving within Agatha Christie's *Death on the Nile*. This inquiry examines the actions and strategies undertaken by the main character as they address challenges while solving the cases presented in the novel. The objective is to analyze the protagonist's approach, methods, and decision-making processes, providing insights into how they navigate and resolve complex mysteries within the novel. •How is the Detective formula presented on Agatha Christie's *Death on the Nile*. "Literature mirrors and expresses life that is even more ambiguous" (Wellek and Warren, 1959: 3).

It means that the literature is come up from the events happen in the society. In literature, the author presents a work to delivers his/her ideas to the reader. Here, we can understand that in every work has its own characteristic dan authors' objective. It is obvious that the author's ideas in a work can be very influential to the readers' mindset. Moreover, the definitions of literature cannot only stop in one person's opinion. The researcher will come up some definitions from some experts of literature in this discussion. Literature as the media to cultivate the value. Discuss about value and the literature it is closely related. "An author can be recognized by his/her book". The writer

can draw conclusion that literature mirror the way of human life, the outlook, ideas and aspiration through the medium of language that fantastically describes human life.

Research is performing a methodical study in order to prove a hypothesis or answer a specific question. Finding a definitive answer is the central goal of any experimental process. Research must be systematic and follow a series of steps and a rigid standard protocol. Research must be organized and undergo planning, including performing literature reviews of past research and evaluating what questions need to be answered.

Method is a way of doing something, especially according to a system or establishing a new method of multiplication that guides and directs the researcher. In doing this research, the writer will use Qualitative Research, because the data acquired in words. Qualitative research is descriptive. The data collected are in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers (NURUNNISA, 2015:23). In other words, the writer used qualitative research in analyzing the data, because the data will be collected from books, movie and internet. "Analysis means breaking something down into its component and discovering the relationship among them that the give unity and coherence to the whole" (Griffith, 1986 :30). It means that the data must be analyzed to answer the problem of the research.

"Objective orientation, which on principle regards the work of art in isolation from all these external points of reference, analyzes it as a self- sufficient entity constituted by its parts in their internal relations and sets out to judge it solely by criteria intrinsic to its own mode of being" (Abrams, 1979: 26). In analyzing this research, the writer will use Objective approach. It means that objective approach only focuses on the element of literary work itself such as theme, characters and setting. The writer will also apply detective formula (Cawelti, 1976:165).

## **FINDINGS**

In this central chapter, we explore Agatha Christie's mysterious world, "Death on the Nile," where the mysteries of the narrative unfurl, revealing the intricacies of her storytelling skills. Having initiated this literary journey guided by the research questions posed in Chapter I, we now stand on the precipice of discovery. This

chapter serves as the cornerstone of the research, bridging the gap between inquiry and insight. Through a systematic analysis of textual passages, character dynamics, and thematic threads, aimed to unearth the treasures concealed within the pages of this timeless novel. As navigated the complex twists and turns of the narrative, the findings will shed light on the author's craftsmanship and provide a deeper understanding of the novel's enduring allure.

In Chapter I, the writer initiated an exploration into the presentation of the Detective formula in Agatha Christie's *Death on the Nile*. To investigate this captivating narrative, the writer posed the central research question: How does Agatha Christie depict the Detective formula in *Death on the Nile*? This question served as the cornerstone for our entire effort, guiding us through the intricate plot complexities and showcasing Christie's storytelling skill and mastery. In this chapter, the writer embarks on a journey to uncover the subtleties of the narrative, seeking enlightenment on how Christie's craftsmanship entices readers with her Detective formula.

### ***Murder Mystery***

The setting of the novel, particularly the fact that it takes place on a cruise ship traveling down the Nile River, is established early in the story. The characters board the cruise ship, and the setting is vividly described as they prepare to embark on their journey down the Nile.

This setting is pivotal to the murder mystery because it establishes the isolated and confined environment in which the murder occurs, setting the stage for the closed-circle mystery.

In the novel "*Death on the Nile*" by Agatha Christie, this intriguing exchange between two characters, Simon and an unknown interlocutor, highlights the underlying theme of careful planning and the complex nature of the murder mystery. Simon's laughter in response to the suggestion that thorough planning is akin to the actions of a skilled murderer foreshadows the central plot of the story. It emphasizes the idea that every detail and arrangement are crucial elements not only in the world

of crime but also in solving the crime. As the story unfolds, readers are drawn into a complex narrative journey where the characters' actions, motives, and alibis are closely examined, mirroring the very notion Simon humorously mentions. This quotation thus serves as a subtle clue that readers should pay attention to the intricacies of the characters' plans and actions, setting the stage for the detective work that will follow in unraveling the mysterious murder aboard the Nile cruise.

'Oh, I'm not afraid of death! What have I got to live for, after all? I suppose you believe it's very wrong to kill a person who has injured you – even if they've taken away everything you had in the world?'(91)

In this striking passage from "Death on the Nile," the character's reflection on the insignificance of life and the moral intricacies of seeking vengeance encapsulates the core themes of the novel. The character's lack of fear towards death and their willingness to confront the moral quandaries of taking another person's life highlights the profound exploration of justice and retribution in the story. This introspective moment also underlines the idea that personal grudges and the desire for retribution can be powerful motivators for criminal actions. As readers navigate the labyrinthine plot, they become ensnared in the complex web of emotions, motives, and character interactions, echoing the moral conundrum presented in this quote. Agatha Christie's prowess in crafting these multifaceted layers of human psychology within the murder mystery creates an alluring and enigmatic narrative that continues to captivate readers.

In "Death on the Nile," Agatha Christie expertly constructs a murder mystery that heightens intrigue from the outset. The choice of a cruise ship traveling down the Nile River as the setting is pivotal to the murder mystery's core. This isolated and confined environment establishes the foundation for the closed-circle mystery, adding layers of complexity and suspense.

The quotation, where Simon humorously remarks about meticulous planning akin to a skilled murderer, foreshadows the central theme of the story – the careful orchestration of a murder. This early clue subtly underscores the importance of every detail and arrangement, a motif that runs throughout the novel. As the story unfolds,

the writer navigates skillfully through the intricate plot complexities, showcasing Christie's storytelling artistry in building and sustaining suspense. The story becomes a labyrinthine journey of uncovering motives, deciphering alibis, and exposing the truth, mirroring Simon's humorous remark. In this way, the murder mystery in "Death on the Nile" aligns with the conventions of classic detective fiction, where the careful planning of a crime is at the core of the intrigue.

'It's so dreadfully easy – killing people. And you begin to feel that it doesn't matter . . . that it's only you that matters! It's dangerous – that.' (402-403).

In this compelling and reflective passage from "Death on the Nile," the character's reflection on the simplicity of taking another person's life and the subsequent feeling of detachment from the consequences encapsulates a central theme of moral and psychological complexity in the novel. The character's acknowledgment of how straightforward it is to end another person's life highlights the disconcerting notion that life can be viewed as negotiable, particularly when driven by personal grievances or desire. The act of taking a life becomes part of a twisted and intricate thought process, one that Agatha Christie masterfully integrates into the fabric of her narrative. This passage further explores the dilemma of human nature and morality, showcasing Christie's skill in investigating the darker facets of human psychology. Her expert handling of these intricate ideas makes the narrative all the more captivating and adds an enigmatic layer to the story's allure.

### ***Detective Formula***

A detective story is a type of popular literature in which a crime is introduced and investigated, ultimately leading to the revelation of the culprit. Within this rich literary tradition, Agatha Christie's "Death on the Nile" masterfully incorporates the core elements of a classic detective story, enriching the narrative through elaborate plots and character dynamics.

Traditional Elements of the Detective Story: Christie's novel cleverly integrates the fundamental components of a classic detective story, each playing an essential role in its timeless appeal.

### ***The Seemingly Perfect Crime***

At the heart of the narrative lies a crime that seems to be executed with great precision. The murder of Linnet Ridgeway, a seemingly faultless act, serves as a captivating puzzle, drawing readers into the intricate web of deception.

"Oh, I'm not afraid of death! What have I got to live for, after all? I suppose you believe it's very wrong to kill a person who has injured you – even if they've taken away everything you had in the world?" (Page 91)

This quote emphasizes the gravity of the crime while hinting at the seemingly perfect execution of a murder that robs a person of everything.

### ***The Wrongly Accused Suspect***

The formula introduces a falsely accused suspect, at whom circumstantial evidence strongly hints. It's the initial suspicion surrounding characters like Simon and Jacqueline Doyle that sets the stage for an exploration of their motives and alibis. "But, Monsieur, I was nowhere near. . . What could I have seen or heard? I was on the deck below. My cabin, it was on the other side of the boat, even. It is impossible that I should have heard anything." (Page 216)

This quote portrays the perspective of a character, Jacqueline, who is wrongly accused due to her proximity to the crime scene. Her situation reflects the classical element of a wrongly accused suspect.

### ***The Bungling of Dim-Witted Police***

As the story develops, the reader witnesses the inadequacy of local authorities. These less capable law enforcement officers provide a stark contrast to the keener powers of observation and the superior intellect of our detective, Hercule Poirot.

In 'Death on the Nile, the narrative unfolds to reveal the inadequacy of local authorities in their efforts to solve the intricate murder case. Throughout the story, their bungling and inability to make substantial progress stand in sharp contrast to the keen investigative powers of observation and the superior intellect of the story's detective, Hercule Poirot.



### ***The Greater Powers of Observation***

Hercule Poirot personifies the essence of a master detective. His careful attention to detail and reliance on logical, evidence-based reasoning perfectly illustrate the superior intellect that lies at the core of the detective formula. Hercule Poirot embodies the quintessential qualities of a master detective. His meticulous scrutiny of details and his unwavering commitment to logical, evidence-driven deduction epitomize the superior intellect that is at the heart of the detective formula.

### ***The Startling and Unexpected Denouement***

The detective story shifts toward its climax, where an astonishing and unanticipated resolution takes center stage. It is here that Poirot reveals how the identity of the perpetrator was established, unraveling the intricate puzzle of motives and alibis to deliver justice and closure.

Red herrings are cleverly woven throughout the narrative to mislead both the characters and the readers, adding to the suspense and complexity of the mystery. These false clues divert attention away from the true identity of the murderer.

"The woman who was murdered was a perfect stranger to me. We never met in our lives till we found ourselves on board the Karnak together."(130)

Jacqueline's claim that she had never met the victim, Linnet Ridgeway, until they found themselves on board the Karnak exemplifies a cleverly deceptive red herring woven into Agatha Christie's "Death on the Nile." Initially, her statement suggests that Jacqueline had no motive for the murder since she asserted no prior acquaintance with the victim before the journey. However, this seemingly straightforward declaration becomes a misleading detail that heightens the intrigue surrounding the case. It's one of those intricate elements that confound both the characters within the story and the readers, leaving them in a state of puzzlement. The significance of this statement lies in how it misguides and diverts attention away from the actual motives and relationships among the passengers. It typifies Christie's storytelling skill, where even simple declarations can conceal deeper truths and contribute to the complex nature of the mystery. This red herring, like others in the

narrative, keeps the readers and investigators alike on a perplexing journey, challenging them to navigate the intricate paths of the story to uncover the real killer.

### ***Justice and Resolution***

In the world of detective fiction, the concepts of justice and resolution stand as pillars that uphold the very essence of the genre. These themes are the driving forces behind the complex plots and the characters' motivations, shaping the stories into captivating narratives.

Agatha Christie, a luminary in the realm of detective fiction, brilliantly incorporates these themes into her works, with "Death on the Nile" being a prime example. At the heart of this narrative is Hercule Poirot, Christie's iconic detective, who personifies the ideals of justice and resolution. Poirot's character is marked by an unwavering commitment to uncovering the truth, a commitment that becomes palpable as he scrupulously navigates through the intricate web of clues and deceptive trails to unveil the identity of the real perpetrator. His methodical approach, characterized by meticulous attention to detail and a reliance on logical, evidence-based reasoning, ensures that justice not only prevails but is also perceived as just by all involved.

'No, it's no use being sentimental. I might do it again . . . I'm not a safe person any longer. I can feel that myself . . .' She went on broodingly: 'It's so dreadfully easy – killing people. And you begin to feel that it doesn't matter . . . that it's only you that matters! It's dangerous – that.'(403)

In this chilling passage from "Death on the Nile," the character's contemplation of her actions captures the unsettling nature of the moral dilemma presented by Agatha Christie. Her insight into the ease of taking a life brings to light the disturbing aspects of human nature, where individuals might see others as expendable in their pursuit of self-preservation. The notion that it's "dreadfully easy" to end a life hints at the dark complexities threaded throughout the story. The character's acknowledgment of becoming an "unsafe" person reflects the intricate and confusing interplay of motives and emotions in the plot. Agatha Christie's skill in crafting these

thought-provoking and morally puzzling moments demonstrates the depth and sophistication that makes her work so captivating. It underscores the enigmatic and morally challenging aspects of human nature found in this murder mystery, ultimately contributing to the enduring attraction of Christie's storytelling. This passage emphasizes the pervasive theme of morality and the profound exploration of justice and resolution within the novel.

Christie's artistry lies in the seamless intertwining of justice and resolution in her storytelling. The revelation of the wrongdoer serves as the vehicle for justice, but it is far more than a mere exposé; it is a cathartic moment that provides closure to the characters within the narrative and, just as crucially, to the readers themselves. The painstakingly crafted plot, filled with twists and turns, serves to heighten the anticipation, making the final resolution all the more gratifying.

In the world of detective fiction, where baffling mysteries beckon and intricate puzzles abound, it is the pursuit of justice and the ultimate resolution that leave an indelible mark. Agatha Christie's legacy endures precisely because of her masterful exploration of these themes, as exemplified in "Death on the Nile." Through her storytelling, she not only challenges readers to exercise their deductive faculties but also invites them to contemplate the moral dimensions of justice and the satisfaction of a well-resolved mystery.

The themes of justice and resolution hold a central place in the novel of "Death on the Nile." Agatha Christie, a luminary in the realm of detective fiction, seamlessly incorporates these themes, making them integral to the story's fabric.

Hercule Poirot, the embodiment of justice and resolution, embarks on a relentless quest to uncover the truth. His character embodies unwavering commitment and meticulous attention to detail, ensuring that justice prevails. Christie's portrayal of Poirot as the embodiment of these ideals underscores the moral dimensions of justice and the pursuit of truth.

The revelation of the murderer is not merely a means of justice; it is a cathartic moment that provides closure for both the characters and the readers. Christie's deliberate plotting, riddled with twists and turns, heightens the anticipation, making

the final resolution profoundly gratifying. The intricate weaving of justice and resolution ensures that the reader experiences a sense of fulfillment and closure at the story's conclusion.

In essence, "Death on the Nile" exemplifies Agatha Christie's mastery of detective fiction, where the pursuit of justice and the ultimate resolution intertwine to create a story that lingers in the minds of readers, inviting them to contemplate the moral complexities of crime and the satisfaction of a well-solved mystery.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, our exploration of Agatha Christie's "Death on the Nile" has been one of profound examination into the art of detective fiction. This central chapter has been crucial in unraveling the intricacies of Christie's storytelling skills and how she cleverly employs the detective formula. We've delved into the murder mystery's pivotal elements, from the captivating setting of the cruise ship to the meticulous planning and moral dilemmas that underlie the plot.

The skillful use of red herrings and the intricate interplay of alibis and motives have kept us continuously engaged, as characters' innocence blurs with guilt. Ultimately, the novel's enduring charm lies in its profound exploration of justice and resolution, as embodied by the unwavering Hercule Poirot. With Christie's expert weaving of these themes, we're left with a captivating mystery that not only challenges our deductive faculties but also invites us to contemplate the moral complexities of crime and the deep satisfaction of a well-solved puzzle.

"Death on the Nile" stands as a testament to Agatha Christie's unparalleled craftsmanship in the realm of detective fiction, leaving a lasting mark on the genre and an everlasting appeal for readers around the world.

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