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## Johnston Public Library Book Discussion Questions

### **The Murder of Roger Ackroyd** by Agatha Christie

#### Summary

Roger Ackroyd knew too much. He knew that the woman he loved had poisoned her brutal first husband. He suspected also that someone had been blackmailing her. Then, tragically, came the news that she had taken her own life with a drug overdose.

But the evening post brought Roger one last fatal scrap of information. Unfortunately, before he could finish reading the letter, he was stabbed to death.

#### Discussion Questions

1. How would you characterize the world in which these characters live?
2. What methods of reasoning and investigation does Poirot rely on?
3. What are some of the details that Christie includes as red herrings?
4. What do you think of the narrator voice? Do you trust him? Why? How does Christie make us trust him?
5. Do you find Sheppard believable? What about the other characters? Is that important in a mystery novel?
6. Is Sheppard a traditional villain? Why or why not?
7. Some characters in the novel dismiss Hercule Poirot because he is a foreigner. Is there any literary purpose to having Poirot be an "othered" individual, i.e. from the outside?
8. How does Christie portray the police in the novel?
9. Let's talk about genre. What do you consider some of the hallmarks of the mystery genre?
10. How does Christie play with those conventions?

11. What do you make of the constant allusions to mystery novels in this book?
12. Is Christie having fun with mysteries in a way? Were there moments in the book that struck you as funny or comical?
13. Does Christie respect the rules of "fair play" one expects in a well-conceived and well-written mystery? Does she provide clues to the culprit without giving away too much? Does she give away enough so the reader feels that they have a chance at solving the mystery?
14. This book was originally published in 1926. Does it still hold up for a modern mystery reader, or does it seem trite? Why?
15. In addition to the tension created by the central mystery, what other elements add to the narrative pull of the novel? Do the romantic entanglements and family relationships in the books engage your interest and sympathy? Do you think *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* transcends the boundaries of the mystery genre?
16. One of the pleasures of Christie's fiction is the intimate view one gets of life of England between the World Wars. How does Christie's depiction of the period compare to others you have read? Do her books confirm your previous impressions of mid-twentieth century English society? What were details that surprised or disturbed you?
17. Compare and contrast the detection methods employed in a Christie mystery to the techniques featured in contemporary crime novels or television programs. Which style do you find more compelling and why?
18. Christie is a seminal figure in crime literature. What contemporary mystery novelists are her most obvious heirs?