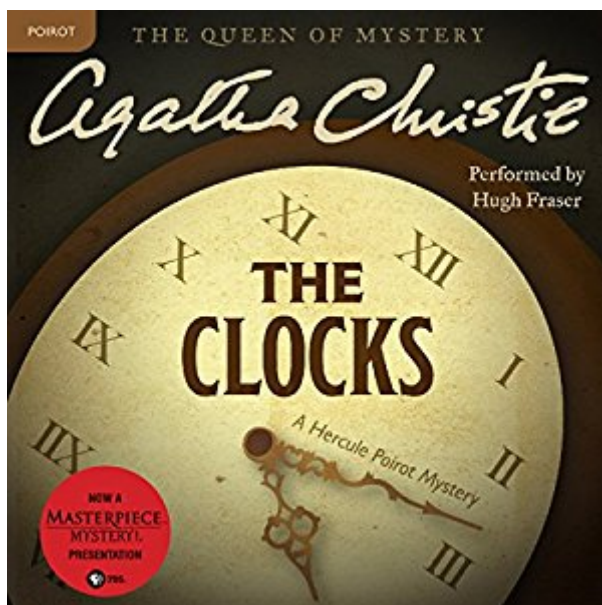


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The Clocks: A Hercule Poirot Mystery



Synopsis

Sheila Webb expected to find a respectable blind lady waiting for her at 19 Wilbraham Crescent - not the body of a middle-aged man sprawled across the living room floor. But when old Miss Pebmarsh denies sending for her in the first place, or of owning all the clocks that surround the body, it's clear that they are going to need a very good detective. "This crime is so complicated that it must be quite simple," declares Hercule Poirot. But there's a murderer on the loose, and time is ticking away.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Both of Christie's famous detectives were elderly when she created them (Poirot in 1920; Miss Marple in 1930) but as their creator aged herself, they REALLY got old. No one appreciates the pains and pleasures of old age until they live through it. I first read all of Christie's books as a young woman and now (as an old woman) I enjoy them in a different light. This one was published in 1963 and it shows neither the author nor her detective at their best. Old Poirot has (sadly) begun to drone on a bit. And yet, one of my favorite's (AT BERTRAM'S HOTEL) appeared in 1965. It featured Miss Marple. Do women age more gracefully (or less boringly) than men? For all that, it's still an enjoyable read and a clever story with some fine characters, a great deal of sly humor, and a satisfactory romance. A pretty young typist is sent to a London house and finds a body. She runs screaming from the house into the arms of young scientist-turned-spy Colin Lamb. Lamb is intrigued both by the young woman and the absurdity of a dead man being found in the tidy home of an elderly, blind

school teacher. And so he takes the strange story to his friend Hercule Poirot, hoping that having a puzzle to chew on will cheer up the pitiful old man. Before the tale is told, there are two more bodies (Christie never skimped on bodies!) and it's old Poirot who unravels the tangled story. It's not Christie's best and some of the coincidences are tough to swallow. The introduction of the nosy little girl and her evidence is charming, but not very believable. But if you want reality, watch "Cops." If you want a puzzle with lots of clues and red herrings, this is worth a read.

Sheila Webb is called out for a typing job to Ms. Pebmarsh's house. When she arrives, she finds a dead man and 4 clocks set to 4:13 in the house. Ms. Pebmarsh arrives soon after. Sheila runs out in terror into the arms of Colin Lamb, an intelligence specialist working on his own case. Soon after they find out Ms. Pebmarsh didn't call for a typist. The police, Colin and then Poirot all work on the puzzling case involving Miss Webb. Very well-written and interesting tale with a little romance mixed in.

This is nothing like vintage Christie. Poirot plays a walk-on role. Dame Agatha seems a bit the worse for wear; the years have taken their toll. Never mind. If you one of the very many who feels better for having read yet another of the long list of works she created throughout a long and productive life, you will enjoy this one. A dead body is found by a young woman called to the house in which the crime takes place by an assignment as a temporary secretary from the Agency for which she works. Later, another young woman from the same agency is murdered in the vicinity. A police inspector is in charge of the investigation, with his friend, a counter-spy, tagging along since he met the first young woman who came screaming out of the house. For the counter-espionage agent it is love at first sight. As the investigation runs headlong into a stone wall, the young agent visits with his friend, Hercule Poirot, who is idle and fretting over it. While we watch, the investigators gather evidence, the romance gathers steam, and Poirot digests the information given him. We stand in the wings as neighbors are interrogated by the police or softly questioned by the young agent. They are a diverse lot, as are the others who are dropped into the search for the killer. As indicated, despite the relative lack of complexity in plotting, and off-stage presence of Poirot, I enjoyed every part of the book. The Inspector is no fool nor brute, The young man personable, ah, the young woman is a mystery, what will we learn about her. Poirot is off in his London apartment, upset by the renovation of the building in which he has an apartment, happy to activate his little grey cells on the mystery brought him by his friend, the young agent. I enjoyed the book more than most of the (often quite good) current mysteries I read. Dame Agatha is a friend of long standing and I am

entertained by whatever she cared to share with us, her readers.

Good plot, good characters, typical Poirot whereby he is particularly lazy, as he refuses to leave his apartment till the very end: this is set where Poirot is already retired (though we all know that even retired he can't stop working on cases...) and he stubbornly refuses to move claiming - as usual - that one can always solve everything by reflecting and using the little grey cells. Of course, as is invariably the case, Poirot will solve the full mystery at the end, with no shortage of arrogance and usual self contentment. Otherwise in this book you will find what is apparently an old acquaintance of Poirot, here called Colin Lamb (though he is a spy and this is not his real name): I read majority of Poirot books but I cannot remember another novel with this character though... Be warned that in this book the inspector in charge (Hardcastle, who is actually quite smart in comparison with some other Christie's inspectors - but yet again he cannot even come close to finding the solution..) and Colin Lamb are mostly the ones making inquiries and investigating. You will see very little of Poirot till the end, where he shows everyone how it should be done (obviously this case is for him a simple walk in the park)...Note: at some point during the book Poirot is making interesting reviews of past crime writers: as often Sherlock is taking his fair amount of criticisms - quite funny and for avid Christie's reader, she usually makes snappy comments about - supposedly - shortcomings of Conan Doyle's Sherlock novels (of course these comments are not to be taken too seriously - but since I also read the complete Sherlock Holmes novel and I have to say though that Christie - or Poirot through whom Christie is generally speaking her mind - sometimes has a point).

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