

**EIGHTH GRADE SUMMER READING AND QUESTIONS**  
**EACH ANSWER MUST BE A WELL-WRITTEN RESPONSE (THAT DOESN'T**  
**NECESSARILY MEAN A PARAGRAPH, BUT IF THAT'S WHAT IT TAKES...)**

**Due the FIRST DAY of SCHOOL, August 28, 2020**

***And Then There Were None* by Agatha Christie**

**FOLLOWING AND**  
**UNDERSTANDING THE STORY**

1. Who is U. N. Owen? What do we learn about him in the novel's opening pages?
2. Where does this story take place? Describe the primary setting of *And Then There Were None* with as much detail as possible. How and why is Indian Island so important to the narrative?
3. Identify the ten guests who have been invited to Indian Island, giving their names and backgrounds. Did any of these individuals—when you first encountered them in the introductory Cast of Characters, or in the following pages—strike you as especially sinister? Threatening? Harmless? If so, state which one(s) and explain why.
4. Describe the poem Vera Claythorne finds on display above the mantel in her bedroom (in chapter 2). What kind of poem is it? How are the poem's meaning and imagery changed by its context in this novel? How does it relate to the centerpiece of small china figures that first appears in the subsequent dinner scene (in chapter 3)? And how does this poem relate to the larger plot or structure of the novel?
5. In Chapter 3, the ten guests are gathered for their after-dinner coffee when suddenly an "inhuman, penetrating" voice begins to speak to them, one which has been prerecorded on a phonograph record. What exactly does "The Voice" accuse each guest of doing?
6. Who dies at the end of Chapter 4? Look again at the victim's last words, and then explain the irony or black comedy of this particular murder, given these final comments.
7. In Part 5 of Chapter 5 we learn the following about General Macarthur: "*He knew, suddenly, that he didn't want to leave the island.*" Why do you think he knows this? Provide as many reasons as you can. What is the general going through? Describe his state of mind—what it is, and what it might be.
8. How does Mrs. Rogers meet her demise in chapter 6? And why does Mr. Blore immediately suspect that Mrs. Rogers was killed by her husband, the butler? Explain Mr. Blore's accusation, pointing out its strengths and shortcomings.
9. In Part 3 of Chapter 7, Mr. Lombard and Dr. Armstrong discuss the two deaths that have occurred thus far. Why do they conclude that both deaths must have been acts of murder? How does this conclusion relate to the absence of Mr. Owen? And why do Mr. Lombard and Dr. Armstrong then agree to enlist Mr. Blore in their search mission? What and where do they plan to search?

10. Reread the last sentence of Chapter 8. Identify the possible as well as the inevitable implications of this last sentence—for the plot of this novel and the fate of its characters. What sort of threshold has been crossed, and how is the story different from this point on?

11. After the murdered body of General Macarthur is discovered, the seven remaining characters participate in an informal yet serious court session to “establish the facts” of what has transpired since their arrival at Indian Island. Who is the leader of this parlor-room inquest? Does this appointment seem fitting? Why or why not? In light of the novel’s ending, why is the identity of the leader in this scene ironic? Also, how do the other six characters react to this leader’s questions and conclusions? And how do they react to one another’s accusations? In your view, who seemed most likely to be guilty at this point in the narrative, and who seemed most likely to be innocent?

12. In Part 4 of Chapter 10 we encounter Miss Emily Brent at work on her diary. She seems to be nodding off while sitting at the window and writing in her notebook. “The pencil straggled drunkenly in her fingers,” we read. “In shaking loose capitals she wrote: THE MURDERER’S NAME IS BEATRICE TAYLOR. . . . Her eyes closed. Suddenly, with a start, she awoke.” What do you make of this passage? What does it mean? Why would Miss Brent jot down such a statement? Think about what you have learned of Miss Brent’s background, mentality, spiritual outlook, and idea of right and wrong when answering these questions.

13. As Chapter 11 begins, what is different about the arrangement of the china figure Indians in the dining room? How many are now in the table’s centerpiece—and what does this number tell you? How has Mr. Rogers been killed? At the end of this chapter, everyone is having a hearty breakfast, being “very polite” as they address one another, and “behaving normally” in all other ways. Does this make sense to you? Explain why or why not. What else is going on? Reread the conclusion of chapter 11 and then comment on the thoughts and fears these characters are experiencing.

14. How is Miss Brent murdered, and why is Dr. Armstrong immediately suspected of committing this crime? What telltale item in the doctor’s possession turns up missing? And what item originally in Mr. Lombard’s possession also disappears?

15. Five people are still alive as Chapter 13 begins. In the second paragraph, we read: “And all of them, suddenly, looked less like human beings. They were reverting to more bestial types.” Explain this behavior, and provide several examples of it by referring to the text of the novel. Is this similar to how you yourself would behave if placed in this horrific situation? Explain why or why not.

16. Earlier in the narrative, both a ball of gray wool and a red shower curtain suddenly go missing. How and where do these items reappear? At the end of Chapter 13, Mr. Lombard exclaims, “How Edward Seton would laugh if he were here! God, how he’d laugh!” Identify the implied, potential, and literal meanings of this “outburst [that] shocked and startled the others.”

17. The narrative of *And Then There Were None* seems to become more detailed—more carefully descriptive and deliberately paced—as it draws to a close. In Chapter 14, for instance, we encounter extended interior monologues involving Miss

Claythorne and ex-Inspector Blore. Why do you suppose the author begins to focus on her characters in this way, and at this moment in the tale? What do we learn from the private thoughts of these two characters? How do their ideas and impressions in Chapter 14 advance the story?

18. What happens to Dr. Armstrong? How and when does he disappear? How is Mr. Blore murdered, and why do Miss Claythorne and Mr. Lombard suspect that Dr. Armstrong is Mr. Blore's killer? Also, when you reached the point where Miss Claythorne and Mr. Lombard are the only two characters remaining, which one did you think was the murderer? Or did you suspect someone else? Use quotes from the novel to support your answers. Finally, who kills Philip Lombard? And who, ultimately, is responsible for the death of Vera Claythorne?

19. Look again at the book's Epilogue. Who are the detectives in charge of solving these crimes? Are they able to come up with any answers? Evaluate their success, identifying the points on which they are correct and those on which they are incorrect in their reconstruction of the events on Indian Island.

20. Who is the murderer? How is his or her identity revealed? And who is the mysterious Mr. Owen? Were you satisfied with the novel's conclusion? And were you surprised by it? Did you, as a reader and an armchair detective, find the ending fully credible and plausible? Did the murderer's "confession" seem fitting and appropriate to you? Explain your answers.

21. *And Then There Were None* is generally seen as one of the best mystery novels ever published. What are the clues in this mystery? What are the red herrings?

22. Consider the many narrative hooks in this novel—that is, the abrupt endings in several of the chapters (and parts of chapters) that feature a shocking note or detail that compels you to keep reading. How effective did you find these hooks? Was this book easy for you to read and understand, or did you find it difficult in any way? Justify your answers.

23. What is a motive? (Distinguish between the words *motive* and *motivation*. Consult a dictionary, if necessary.) What motives, if any, did each of the ten guests have for committing these horrible murders?

24. Who is telling the story of *And Then There Were None*? Did the tone, voice, or language employed by the narrator make the tale more frightening to you? Explain.

25. Which one of the killings depicted in the novel seemed especially accurate or believable to you, and which one seemed especially incredible or fantastic?