

Murder on the Orient Express

Essay Prompts

1. Examine the importance of the setting in the novel. Early in the text, M. Bouc comments that a train “lends itself to romance”. What makes a train the perfect setting for a murder? What role does the season of the year play in the events of the novel? What role does the time period play? Could the murder of Ratchett have taken place in any other setting? Compose a thoughtful analysis of the role of setting in Agatha Christie’s novel.
2. The characters in *Murder on the Orient Express* are examples of stock characters – flat, static stereotypes we recognize because we have seen them in other fictional works. Write an essay that explains how one of the characters from the novel serves as an example of a specific stock character type. Use passages from the text to support your claims; you may also find it useful to compare your character to another fictional character that exhibits similar stock character qualities.
3. Creating suspense in a story is a technique that’s employed by murder mystery authors as well as those writing other kinds of stories. How do murder mystery authors create suspenseful narratives? How do writers writing in different genres create suspense in their plots? Consider a novel you read that is NOT a murder mystery but keeps you on the edge of your seat. Write a compare and contrast essay that focuses on explaining exactly how your book and *Murder on the Orient Express* create suspense in readers.
4. One of the early assumptions that Dr. Constantine and M. Bouc make about the murderer is that it must have been either a woman or the Italian. Why do they draw these conclusions? What stereotypes cause them to leap to these conclusions? Write a persuasive essay that addresses the problem of judging others based on appearance of stereotypes.
5. When questioned about her role in obstructing Poirot’s investigation, Princess Dragomiroff responds: “In this case I consider that justice – strict justice – has been done.” In your opinion, was the murder of Ratchett an act of absolute justice or was it an act of private vengeance? Support your answers with specific details from the text and appropriate rhetorical appeals to logic, emotion, and/or ethics.
6. At the end of the book, although one of the passengers confesses to the entire crime, all three men investigating the murder choose to withhold the truth about what happened on the Orient Express from the authorities. Compose a persuasive essay that explores the following questions: Do you think they did the right thing? Is there ever a time when a person should be allowed to get away with murder?