



MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS

INTRODUCTION

Agatha Christie (1890 – 1976), one of the world's most famous mystery authors, published *Murder On The Orient Express* in 1934. It was a great international success. Agatha Christie created the brilliant Belgian detective, Hercule Poirot, who is one of the leading protagonists of this mystery.

In *Murder On The Orient Express* a murder is discovered on the train and the killer is on board, but no one knows who it is. There are several interesting and rather strange passengers on the Orient Express. Hercule Poirot decides to discover the truth using his unusual methods of investigation. Find out about Poirot's unusual methods of investigation in the Listening Activity [inserire link alle risorse di listening].

PREDICTION

1 What do you think?

1. Do the passengers on the Orient Express know that a famous detective is on board?

- a. Yes, they do.
- b. No, they don't.

2. Who is murdered on the train?

- a. A man.
- b. A woman.

3. Do the passengers know each other?

- a. Yes, they probably do.
- b. No, they don't.

4. Why are Hercule Poirot's methods of investigation unusual?

- a. They are not modern in the least.
- b. They are based on his observation of the people involved.

Mark your answers and when you finish the story go back and check your predictions.

- 1 **lodger** : a person who rents a room in another person's house.
- 2 **on my conditions** : following the rules I give you.
- 3 **disturb** : (here) go into his rooms.



READING ACTIVITY
2/6

READING ACTIVITY

Part 1 – Read the extract and then do the activity below.

It was five o'clock on a cold winter morning in Syria. On the railway station platform next to the train, two men were talking. The first was a young officer with the French army. The second was a small figure.¹ His face was almost completely hidden by his scarf and hat; the officer could see only a pink nose and the ends of an enormous moustache. 'Today is Sunday,' said the French officer, for perhaps the third time. 'Tomorrow, Monday evening, you will be in Istanbul.'

The young officer was nervous. The little man from Belgium was an important person. The officer remembered his own General thanking this man for his help, with tears in his eyes.

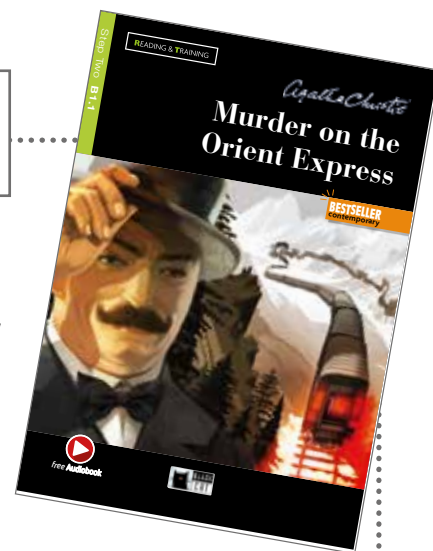
'That is true,' agreed Hercule Poirot. 'I shall remain in Istanbul as a tourist for a few days.' Above their heads, a young woman looked out of the sleeping car. Mary Debenham knew that she was in Aleppo, but she couldn't see anything on the platform except a young officer and a small man with an enormous moustache. Mary smiled. A ridiculous-looking little man.

Monsieur Poirot went aboard² and the train moved slowly forward.

A few hours later, Poirot was finishing his breakfast in the dining car. At these moments, he liked to study the people around him. There was only one other passenger at breakfast this morning: a young English lady, thin and dark, perhaps twenty-eight years old. She moved and spoke with confidence and perfect self-control.

(from Chapter One)

... to be continued in Part 2



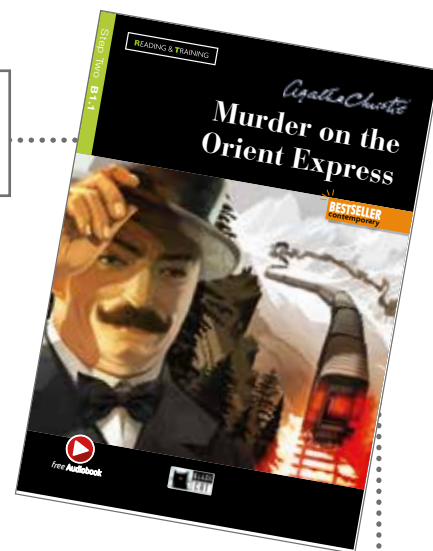
1 **figure** : the shape of a person.

2 **aboard** : on or in a train or ship.



READING ACTIVITY

3/6



2 Circle the correct word.

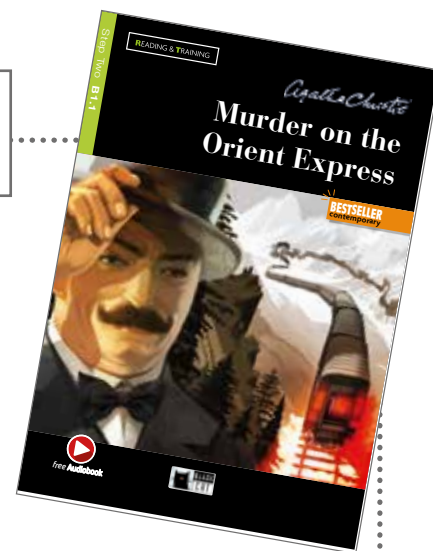
1. Two men were talking on the *railway station platform/train* in the city of *Aleppo/Istanbul*.
2. The little man with the enormous *pink nose/moustache* came from *Syria/Belgium*.
3. Mary Debenham was looking out of the *railway station/sleeping car*.
4. Poirot had *dinner/breakfast* in the dining car of the *train/railway station*.
5. Poirot noticed a *young/old* English lady who was *nervous/spoke with confidence*.

QUICK QUIZ!

3 Choose the correct preposition to complete the sentence.

1. They were standing *on/in* the railway station platform.
2. The train left the station *in/at* midnight.
3. She had dinner *at/in* eight o'clock.
4. They always travel *on/in* Saturday.
5. His birthday is *at/in* April.



READING ACTIVITY
4/6

Part 2 – Read the extract and do the activity below.

Then another man entered the dining car, a tall Englishman of between forty and fifty years old. He introduced himself to the young woman and joined her. Through their conversation, Poirot was able to learn their names: Miss Debenham and Colonel Arbuthnot.

Late that night, the train arrived at Konya Station and Poirot went for a walk on the platform. He turned a corner and stopped. The English couple were just ahead, with their backs to him.

‘Mary,’ said the Colonel.

‘Not now. Not now. When it’s all over. When it’s behind us—then—’

Poirot turned away. The calm Miss Debenham was clearly very upset.

The next afternoon they were in the mountains, far away from any station, when the train suddenly stopped. A conductor¹ told Poirot that this was because of a fire under the dining car. Mary Debenham was standing behind him.

‘Don’t worry,’ Poirot told her, in French. ‘We are in no danger, Mademoiselle.’

‘Yes, yes, I understand that. But the time!’ she said. ‘This will delay us. I need to catch the Simplon Orient Express at nine o’clock tonight.’ Her hands were shaking. ‘I—I must catch that train.’

Soon the engine started again. They arrived safely in Istanbul that evening, only a few minutes late.

Poirot went directly to his hotel. But before he could go to his room, he received an urgent telegram. The police in London needed his help on an important case.² There was no choice; he had to return to England immediately. Poirot cancelled his travel plans and booked a place on the Simplon Orient Express.

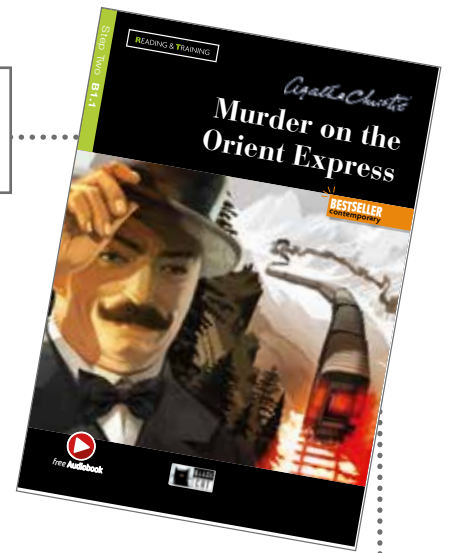
1 **conductor** : a worker on a train who helps passengers and keeps the train safe.

2 **case** : (here) a crime that someone is investigating



READING ACTIVITY

5/6



ODD ONE OUT!

4A Circle the word that doesn't belong to the group.

1. urgent essential immediate
unimportant
2. calm upset unhappy worried
3. danger alarming safe serious
4. trip journey voyage walk
5. cancel book erase delete

4B. Now complete the sentences with the odd words.

1. The Orient Express was an expensive and very train.
6. Did he a seat and a sleeping car on the train?
1. Poirot was bored with the conversation of the two ladies.
2. The tourists took a short in the city.
3. 'Please sit down and be !' said the conductor.

QUICK QUIZ

5 What is the adverb of these adjectives? The first is done for you.

ADJECTIVE

direct

1. happy
2. quick
3. safe
4. thoughtful
5. angry

ADVERB

directly

-
-
-
-
-

