

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Thrillers, whodunits, mysteries, crime fiction, and detective fiction refer to the same kind of genre; it is the mystery or crime story (“Mystery Genres”). Mystery is “a genre of fiction in which a detective, either an amateur or a professional, solves a crime or a series of crimes” (Wiehardt). During the year 1910 till 1950 England, mystery novels are really demanded and liked by middle-class readers (Rubinstein).

Agatha Christie is one of the most popular mystery writers in the world (Curran). She is an English writer who has written “80 novels, 30 short story collections and 15 plays” (“Agatha Christie is born”). It is during 1919 when she started writing and began her works as a writer (“Agatha Christie Biography”). Some of Christie’s novels are *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926), *Peril at End House* (1932), *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934), and *The ABC Murders* (1935) (Curran). In my thesis I would like to discuss *The ABC Murders*.

In her novel *The ABC Murders*, Christie tells about a serial crime murder which is done by one murderer. The murderer's target is only one but then he kills four people to confuse the detective or the police. Furthermore, the murderer succeeds to make the police and the detective confused. Victim by victim, who has been killed, makes the reader curious even more about the murder. Moreover, at the end of the story the reader finds surprising facts about the mystery, who the murderer is and what the motives are.

M.J. Murphy states that “novels of adventure, mystery, crime, and detection, espionage and often science fiction, usually have well worked-out plots” (134). In addition, as the plot in *The ABC Murders* is the most outstanding literary element, I would like to discuss it in my thesis. Plot is “a carefully thought-out plan in which all the events, all the actions and reactions of the characters, contribute towards the forward movement of the story” (134). Plot consists of three elements, they are suspense, surprise, and artistic unity. Suspense is “the quality in the story that makes the reader asks ‘what is going to happen next?’ or ‘how will this turn out?’ and impels him to read on to find the answers to these questions” (Perrine 45) while surprise is “proportional to the unexpectedness of what happens; it becomes pronounced when the story departs radically from the reader’s expectation” (47), and artistic unity means

. . . the condition of a successful literary work whereby all its elements work together for the achievement of its central purpose. In an artistically unified work nothing is included that is irrelevant to the central, nothing is omitted

that is essential to it, and the parts are arranged in the most effective order for the achievement of the purpose (“Artistic Unity”).

Statement of the Problem

The problems are stated as follows:

1. What are the suspenses in the novel?
2. What are the surprises in the novel?
3. How is the artistic unity presented in the novel?

Purpose of the Study

The purposes of the study are stated as follows:

1. To show the suspenses in the novel.
2. To show the surprises in the novel.
3. To show how the artistic unity is presented in the novel.

Method of Research

I use library research in writing my thesis. First, I read Agatha Christie’s *The ABC Murders* as the primary text. Then, I take some data from the Internet sites and sources to support my analysis of the elements of plot in the novel. In the end, I draw some conclusion.

Organization of the Thesis

The thesis is organized into three chapters, which are preceded by the Table of Contents and the Abstract. Chapter One contains the Background of the Study, the Statement of the Problem, the Purpose of the Study, the Method of Research, and the

Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two contains the analysis of the elements of plot of Agatha Christie's *The ABC Murders*. Chapter Three is the Conclusion. The thesis ends with the Bibliography and the Appendixes, which consist of the Synopsis of the Novel and the Biography of the Author.