

Hello and welcome to Unit 2 of

Popular Literature. We are doing the second part

of Agatha Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*.

And as discussed in the previous module, we're going to deal with

the events that lead to the crime, the crime here being,

the murder of Roger Ackroyd. The outline of the module is as

Follows: Death of Mrs Ferrars; Visit of Miss Russell; Ralph

Paton's mysterious visit to the town; Miss Russell's flustered

appearance; Mrs Ferrars letter to Ackroyd; The stranger at the

gate; The phone call; The timeline and position of each

character with respect to the

crime. At the end of this module, the learner will be able

to review the events that lead to the crime in the text;

interpret the actions of the

major characters; And lay out the exposition of the murder

mystery. So let's begin.

The novel starts with the death of Mrs. Ferrars. It is found

that she dies of overdose of veronal, which is of course

diagnosed by Dr. James Sheppard, who also happens to be

the narrator of the novel.

Mrs. Ferrars is the wife of Ashley Ferrars, who dies quite

recently in the novel because of alcoholism. She is a resident of King's Paddock and just before her death it is known that she meets Ralph Paton, the step son of Roger Ackroyd, and also happens to meet Roger Ackroyd himself. Now a little background to this meeting with Roger Ackroyd of Mrs Ferrars.

Mrs Ferrars and Roger Ackroyd allegedly have a love affair, and are soon going to get engaged.

However, before they enter in to a formal relationship, Mrs.

Ferrars wants Roger Ackroyd to know that it was she who had murdered her husband, Ashley

Ferrars; and she wants to see the reaction on the face of Roger Ackroyd after she repeats this to him.

Roger Ackroyd being a quite prudish man does not have a good reaction to this news.

This puts Mrs Ferrars in further dilemma. She knows that Roger Ackroyd is not going to accept her as she is. On the other hand, she's also being blackmailed by someone who knows that she has killed her husband.

The visit of Miss Russell to Doctor Sheppard. Soon after Mrs

Ferrars's death is announced, we have Miss Russell, the caretaker

of Fernly Park, that is Roger Ackroyd's house visit doctor

Sheppard at his clinic. She complains of a knee pain.

However, when she visits Doctor Sheppard, Doctor Sheppard

realizes that she's not really come to discuss her knee pain.

However, she wants to inquire about poisons. A particularly

cocaine. Now this puts Miss Russell also under the suspicion

of the police, and also Hercule Poirot. And as we know that the

entire novel runs through the perspective of James Sheppard,

he makes us feel that Miss Russell is no exception to the

rule. We then have Ralph Paton's mysterious visit to

the town. As we have seen earlier, Ralph Paton does

not share a fair relationship with his stepfather.

He meets Sheppard in Kings, about, but not at his own home.

He's found at Three Boars and is

very tensed. And Doctor Sheppard asks him what is the reason for

being so tensed? Ralph Paton does not reveal the exact reason

for his anxiety. However, he tells Doctor Sheppard that there

is something that he has to carry out, and that he has to

carry out alone.

Miss Russell's flustered

appearance: just after the death of Mrs. Ferrars, Roger Ackroyd wants to speak to his trusted friend James Sheppard and hence he invites him to dinner. When Sheppard arrives to dinner, he is welcomed by Parker, the butler; and as he is just about to open the door to the hall, he finds that he hears a sound of a lid shutting. When he opens the door, there is Miss Russell, who appears to be flustered and hurried out of somewhere and that is what puts him against her because he believes that she has something to do with the death of Mrs. Ferrars and also he has a suspicion on her for the events to come. When she is asked by Dr Sheppard as to why she appears so flustered, she explains that she was arranging the flowers and was not expecting Dr Sheppard to enter at this point of time in the hall. After the dinner we have Sheppard and Ackroyd meet in in the study. Ackroyd describes the last meeting with Mrs Ferrars and as we've already discussed, the contents of the meeting, you have Roger Ackroyd narrating the same thing to Dr Sheppard.

Mrs Ferrars tells Roger Ackroyd that she has been victimized, blackmailed, by one particular person and that

person knows about who killed Ashley Ferrars, and that's

obviously her, and he tries to gain money from her out of this

blackmail. However, before

she would actually reveal the name, Roger Ackroyd stops

reading the letter and it is James Sheppard who urges him to

move on. However, he does not move on, he says the letter is

meant for him and only him. Where does this letter come from?

The letter actually arrives when Sheppard and Ackroyd are having

a conversation and it arrives in the evening mail.

After the meeting,

Dr Sheppard leaves the house and he also informs Parker not

to disturb Roger Ackroyd. As he reaches the gate of Fernly Park,

he meets a stranger who wants to know the way to Fernly Park.

He realises that the voice of the stranger is familiar to

someone who he has already met. However, because it is dark and

it's almost 9:00 PM, he cannot make out the face of the

stranger and he directs him to Fernly Park and then moves on to

his own house. The mysterious phone call that Shepard receives

after coming home - a phone call that informs Dr Sheppard of

the murder of Roger Ackroyd. The caller identifies himself

as Parker. However, when Dr Sheppard rushes to the house

of Roger Ackroyd, Parker denies

having any information about the call. When they knock on the

door, they realize that Roger Ackroyd does not open the door.

They break in. They realize that Roger Ackroyd has been stabbed,

and quickly Dr James Sheppard sends

Parker to call the police and

to waken up all the members of

the house. Now this is a very important slide in terms of the

timeline and position of each character with respect to the

crime. We know that Sheppard leaves Fernly Park at

8:50 PM. He meets the stranger at the gate at 9, reaches home at

9.10. And at 9:30 PM, Raymond, the assistant of Roger Ackroyd,

actually hears the voice of Roger Ackroyd coming from his

study. At 9:45, Flora Ackroyd claims she meets Roger Ackroyd.

She met Roger Ackroyd, and she wished him good night. At 10:00

PM, Sheppard in his own house, prepares for bed and at 10:15 PM

the phone call informing about the murder comes or is being

received by Dr. James

Sheppard. Now we have to know where each of these characters

were when the murder actually took place. We have Parker, the

Butler who's outside the study, who has been asked by Sheppard

as well as Flora Ackroyd not to disturb Roger Ackroyd. We have

Flora Ackroyd who is the last person to meet Ackroyd alive

before she retires to bed. We have Mrs Ackroyd who has already

retired to bed. We have Geoffrey Raymond and Major Blunt

who are in the billiards room.

We have Miss Russell in the servant quarters and Ralph, as

mentioned is not to be traced on the scene. He was last seen by

Dr Sheppard, but after that, Ralph Paton is missing from the

scene. So that's it with this module in the next module we

will see how Agatha Christie continues to intrigue us with

the murder case.