

Tier 1.5: “Three Blind Mice” and “The Adventure of Johnnie Waverly”

Agatha Christie Author Study (Suspense and Irony Development)

Essay Prompt (10.25.23)

Agatha Christie is a very well-known and popular writer of mysteries, and while people around the world avidly read her books and stories, many of her stories have a similar formula. After reading “Three Blind Mice” and “The Adventure of Johnnie Waverly,” explore Christie’s formula by examining how she does some things in common throughout her stories, specifically by looking at 1) how she builds suspense and 2) how she likes to work toward ironic, unexpected endings by intentionally misdirecting the reader.

In a multi-paragraph essay, examine how Christie builds suspense in her stories and how she also creates the ironic endings through intentional misdirection of the reader. You might consider applying Hitchcock’s “Let ‘Em Play God” essay to the stories, evaluating the extent to which Christie builds suspense in a Hitchcockian manner (though it is not a requirement to do so). If you choose to do so, you can show and argue that Christie very much, only somewhat, or does not at all build suspense in the way that Hitchcock says to do it.

You will write two body paragraphs, one for “Three Blind Mice” and one for “The Adventure of Johnnie Waverly,” and each paragraph will begin and end with an effective topic sentence. Each paragraph will also contain some necessary summary as well as quotes and correct citations from each of the appropriate texts in order to prove that the suspense and/or intentional misdirection actually exists. The bulk of each paragraph will be comprised of your explanation of why/how those examples help either to build suspense or to create irony through misdirecting the reader.

Additionally, you’ll write an introduction and conclusion paragraph, each of which includes an effective thesis statement. General formatting will require that you double-space your essay, use standard font (Times New Roman or Ariel) and size (11 or 12 point), avoid first person, and format your paragraphs correctly.

While reading the texts, you’ll keep an annotated journal for each story. These journals will keep track of **1)** your thoughts, questions, reactions (what you like/don’t like), and connections you make (to other stories, music, movies, life) as you read. You should also keep track of **2)** things that you notice where Christie is developing suspense and/or where she intentionally misdirects the reader to build irony. Because “Three Blind Mice” is not divided into chapters, divide your journal into sections for every ten pages of the story, and at the end of each section, **3)** write a brief 2-3 sentence summary of what happened in that ten pages. For “The Adventures of Johnnie Waverly,” journal the whole story, focusing on the same things as above, but without any divisions and only a single summary of the story at the very end.

After you finish journaling, you’ll complete three different pre-writing worksheets to help assist you in building each of your paragraphs for the essay.

Introduction

Structure

- Begins on effective hook, and smoothly transitions to thesis (5 pts)
- Begins with a hook and transitions to thesis (4 pts)
- Major concerns with intro structure (3 pts)

STR _____

Thesis

- Present effective thesis (5 pts)
- Present but thesis has minor flaws (4 pts)
- Present but thesis has major flaws (3 pts)

THS _____

Body Paragraph I

Topic sentence

- Effective (3 pts)
- Minor issues/concerns (2 pts)
- Major issues/ineffective focus (1pt)

T.S. _____

Support

- Thorough; good use of quotes; well explained (12 pts)
- Ample; adequate explanation (10 pts)
- Some gaps in support/explanation; unclear relationship b/w support and t.s. (8 pts)
- Very underdeveloped; not enough or inadequate quotes; no explanation (7 pts)
- Incomplete or off topic (6 pts)

SPT _____

Restatement of Topic Sentence

- Effective (3 pts)
- Minor issues/concerns (2 pts)
- Major issues/ineffective focus (1pt)

T.S.R. _____

Body Paragraph II

Topic sentence

- Effective (3 pts)
- Minor issues/concerns (2 pts)
- Major issues/ineffective focus (1pt)

T.S. _____

Support

- Thorough; good use of quotes; well explained (12 pts)
- Ample; adequate explanation (10 pts)
- Some gaps in support/explanation; unclear relationship b/w support and t.s. (8 pts)
- Very underdeveloped; not enough or inadequate quotes; no explanation (7 pts)
- Incomplete or off topic (6 pts)

SPT _____

Restatement of Topic Sentence

- Effective (3 pts)
- Minor issues/concerns (2 pts)
- Major issues/ineffective focus (1pt)

T.S.R. _____

Conclusion

Structure

- Begins on thesis, and smoothly transitions to effective clincher (5 pts)
- Begins with a thesis and transitions to clincher (4 pts)
- Major concerns with conclusion structure (3 pts)

STR _____

Thesis

- Present effective thesis (5 pts)
- Present but thesis has minor flaws (4 pts)
- Present but thesis has major flaws (3 pts)

THS _____

General

Citations

- All quotes cited and handled correctly (5 pts)
- Minor errors (4 pts)
- Major errors (3 pts)

CIT _____

Formality

- No first person used in essay (4 pts)
- One or two instances of first person used (3 pts)
- Three or four instances of first person used (2 pt)
- Five or more instances of first person (1 pt)

FML _____

Format

- Font, font size, margins and paragraphing all correct (5 pts)
- Minor issue in font, font size, margins and paragraphing (3 pts)
- Major issues in font size, margins and paragraphing (1 pt)

FMT _____

TTL _____/70