

At Bertram's Hotel Study Guide

At Bertram's Hotel by Agatha Christie

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Plot Summary

At Bertram's Hotel is a novel by famed mystery author, Agatha Christie. This novel features one of Ms. Christie's beloved characters, Miss Jane Marple. Miss Marple is staying at a London hotel, Bertram's, as a gift from a niece. While there, Miss Marple begins noticing unusual things involving the staff and guests, especially the notorious Lady Bess Sedgwick. At the same time, Chief Inspector Davy is investigating several brazen robberies that seem to include a small connection to Bertram's. As the two detectives compare notes, it soon becomes clear that Bertram's is a front for a large criminal syndicate. At Bertram's Hotel is another fast paced, well plotted novel by one of the world's best mystery writers that will leave the reader guessing who done it until the end.

Miss Marple arrives at Bertram's Hotel in London and meets an old acquaintance in the lobby. As the two ladies catch up, Miss Marple notices how often her friend mistakes guests walking through the hotel for other people. Miss Marple puts this down to old age. At this same time, Miss Marple and her friend watch as the notorious Lady Bess Sedgwick enters the hotel. Miss Marple is aware of Lady Sedgwick from multiple newspaper articles that have discussed Lady Sedgwick's escapades over the years. Lady Sedgwick appears to enjoy scandal, having left her husband for another man years before, and indulging in such behavior as working with the resistance during the war, flying airplanes, and driving fast cars. The latest rumors have Lady Sedgwick involved with a famous race car driver.

Lady Sedgwick goes upstairs to her room and a few minutes later Miss Marple decides to go to her own room. As Miss Marple approaches the elevator, Lady Sedgwick appears once more. However, Lady Sedgwick sees something in the lobby that causes her a moment of uncertainty. Miss Marple turns and watches as a young woman and a middle-aged woman enter the hotel. Miss Marple is struck by the resemblance between the girl and Lady Sedgwick. Miss Marple turns back to the elevator and finds that Lady Sedgwick has reboarded the car, claiming to have forgotten something upstairs.

Miss Marple spends the next few days shopping for household linens. While at the Army and Navy stores, dining in the restaurant there, Miss Marple sees Lady Sedgwick having an intense conversation with the famous race car driver, Ladislaus Malinowski. Miss Marple walks near their table and pretends to drop her purse in order to hear their conversation, but is able to hear very little. A few days later, Miss Marple sees Mr. Malinowski again, this time in deep conversation with the young woman from Bertram's, Elvira Blake. Miss Marple is left with the impression that Elvira is very much in love with Mr. Malinowski.

As Miss Marple is enjoying her vacation, the police are looking into several daring robberies that have taken place in and around London over the past year or so. Chief Inspector Davy attends a meeting in which all the detectives on the various cases compare notes. Chief Inspector Davy, or Father as everyone calls him, notices a connection between several persons seen near the robberies and Bertram's Hotel.



When, a few days later, a guest of Bertram's is reported missing, Father takes advantage of the situation to do some nosing around the hotel. Father speaks to the manager and desk clerk, as well as several guests, attempting to learn all he can about the hotel and the missing guest. Miss Marple is able to tell Father that she saw the missing man leave his room in the middle of the night the day he went missing.

Father continues his investigation, learning that two known criminals, brothers, are the true owners of the hotel. Father also investigates the backgrounds of the employees and learns several of them have criminal pasts while others are actors. A theory begins to form in Father's mind, so he returns to the hotel to do some more snooping. Father speaks to Miss Marple again and she tells him about the conversation she overheard between Elvira and Mr. Malinowski. As they speak, they both hear gunshots out in front of the hotel. Father rushes outside to find Elvira screaming for help and the commissioner dead. Elvira claims that someone has tried to kill her and that this is the third time it has happened.

Elvira settles into a suite at Bertram's with her mother, Lady Bess Sedgwick, while Father continues to investigate the hotel as well as the murder. Father asks both Miss Marple and the missing guest, who has since turned up, to reenact the night the man disappeared. Miss Marple looks out into the hallway much as she did that night as the man, Canon Pennyfather, walks away much the way she claims to have seen him do that night. However, Miss Marple is convinced the man she saw, although he looked like Pennyfather, was not him. Father agrees, suggesting that someone was pretending to be Pennyfather in order to participate in a train robbery that very night.

Father and Miss Marple sit down with Lady Bess Sedgwick and tell her that they know she is the mastermind behind the robberies and that she used the Bertram Hotel as cover. They also suggest that Lady Sedgwick's lover, Mr. Malinowski, killed the commissioner because he was legally Lady Sedgwick's husband from a youthful incident that was never legally cleared up. Father claims the commissioner was blackmailing Lady Sedgwick. Lady Sedgwick denies that Mr. Malinowski killed the commissioner, but instead claims she did it. Then Lady Sedgwick escapes the room through a window and jumps into her car, dying a few moments later in a crash. Lady Sedgwick's confession is binding, but both Father and Miss Marple know she did not kill the commissioner. Elvira Blake killed the man out of a belief that he might be able to stand between her and her inheritance because of his marriage to her mother. However, they have no evidence, and therefore cannot prosecute.



Chapters 1-4

Chapters 1-4 Summary

Bertram's is an old fashioned hotel fashioned after the hotels of the Edwardian age in England. Many of the aristocrat's dowagers, clergymen, and Americans seeking a real English adventure stay at Bertram's Hotel.

In chapter 1, Lady Selina Hazy is sitting in the lounge of Bertram's Hotel enjoying the muffins they serve at tea hour and watching the guests walk by. Colonel Luscombe speaks to her for a minute before going to the desk to check into his room. Colonel Luscombe is a regular guest so the desk clerk, Miss Gorringer, not only knows him, but knows which room he prefers. Mr. Humfries, the manager, knows him as well and stops to say hello. Colonel Luscombe asks Mr. Humfries how some of the elderly guests can afford to pay the high prices at Bertram's and is told many of the regulars are given a special rate because they offer an atmosphere that rich American tourists expect to find at Bertram's. In chapter 2, Miss Marple arrives at Bertram's for a vacation paid for by a kind niece. Miss Marple especially requested to stay at Bertram's because she recalls staying there as a child and wants to see if it has changed. Miss Marple runs into Lady Selina Hazy in the lounge and they talk for a few minutes. As they do, Lady Hazy points out people she knows, but many of these prove to be a case of mistaken identity. Lady Hazy does recognize Lady Bess Sedgwick properly, however. Miss Marple recognizes Lady Sedgwick from her many appearances in the newspaper for her wild antics and multiple marriages. After sampling a doughnut, Lady Sedgwick goes up to her room. Miss Marple follows, only to be nearly knocked over when Lady Sedgwick returns to the lobby. However, spotting a young woman and a middle-aged woman entering the hotel, Lady Sedgwick quickly returns once more to the elevator, making Miss Marple wonder at her behavior.

In chapter 3, the Honorable Elvira Blake and her companion meet Colonel Luscombe, Elvira's guardian. They receive their room keys and speak for a few minutes before the companion excuses herself to go upstairs. Elvira asks Colonel Luscombe if she will come into some money at twenty-one and is assured that she will inherit a great deal of money. Elvira then asks who will get her money if she dies, but Colonel Luscombe does not know the answer. Finally, Elvira asks if her mother has ever tried to see her and receives a definite no. As Elvira and Colonel Luscombe finish their conversation, a loud man goes to the front desk to leave a message for Lady Sedgwick. This young man then asks for the phone number of the hotel, at first giving a wrong number that Elvira clearly overhears. Later, in her room, Elvira calls the number. In chapter 4 a meeting is taking place at Scotland Yard that Chief Inspector Fred Davy is attending. Davy, or Father, is investigating a string of robberies that have taken place in and around London. The meeting is to discuss those robberies and to brainstorm anything that could help shed light on those responsible. Father suggests the robberies are being carried out by a big crime syndicate and that there is only one or two masterminds behind it. Then Father suggests everyone tell any unusual stories connected to the



investigation. Father learns that at one of the robberies a man was spotted by his parole officer in the area, but it was later proven that he was in court at the time and could not have been there. It is also reported he was staying at Bertram's Hotel. When Father hears of another link to Bertram's Hotel, he begins to wonder if there is a connection between the crimes and the hotel.

Chapters 1-4 Analysis

The setting of the novel is established in the first two of three pages of the novel. Bertram's is described in detail, allowing the reader to see how old fashioned it is and why American tourists might prefer it to the more expensive, uptown hotels. The manager even admits to a character that they discount the rates for the elderly aristocrats and clergymen because their presence in the hotel adds to the overall allure of the place. This is an interesting admission, but the reader is left wondering if perhaps there is not something more to the managements desire to keep the elderly guests coming to the hotel. At the same time, the reader gets to meet some of the guests of the hotel, including Miss Jane Marple. Miss Marple is a regular character in many of Agatha Christie's novels, and regular readers of her books and short stories will know that Miss Marple is an elderly woman who is something of an amateur detective, which suggests that a mystery will soon develop at Bertram's.

Lady Sedgwick is another of Bertram's guests. Lady Sedgwick is a celebrity of sorts who is well known for her adventures in flying, driving, and war. Lady Sedgwick is also well known for her romantic exploits, including three marriages and her current lover, a race car driver. Miss Marple, who has not recognized many of the people her acquaintance Lady Selina Hazy has pointed out, does know quite a bit about Lady Sedgwick, showing the reader just how famous Lady Sedgwick's exploits must be. Also of note at this point is the number of times Lady Selina mistakes someone for someone else. This is not just old age and will prove to be an important fact later in the novel. Finally, the Honorable Elvira Blake is introduced in these chapters. Elvira is a young woman, a few months short of twenty, who has come to Bertram's in transit to Kent where she is to move in with her guardian's cousin. Elvira asks her guardian a great deal of questions about her financial situation and what might happen to her money should she die, causing the reader to wonder why such a young woman would be concerned with her own death and why she does not know about her own financial situation. Finally, the reader learns that Elvira's mother has never attempted to see her, suggesting an unusual family dynamic for Elvira. When Lady Sedgwick sees Elvira and runs the other way, the reader begins to wonder if Lady Sedgwick, with her many failed marriages, might not know Elvira personally.



Chapters 5-6

Chapters 5-6 Summary

In chapter 5, Miss Marple wakes early and goes through her regular morning routine before calling the chambermaid for breakfast. Miss Marple is pleased with the old fashioned, English breakfast. Down the hall, Lady Sedgwick stands at her door watching for Colonel Luscombe. When he finally arrives, Lady Sedgwick pulls Colonel Luscombe and demands to know why he has brought Elvira to this hotel. Colonel Luscombe apologizes, having not known she would be there, and promises to take Elvira to Kent that day. Colonel Luscombe then attempts to convince Lady Sedgwick to see her daughter, referring to Elvira's questions the day before, but she refuses. Shortly after Canon Pennyfather leaves Bertram's, the commissionaire, Michael Gorman, finds Lady Bess Sedgwick calling to him from a window in Bertram's writing room. Lady Sedgwick accuses Gorman of attempting to blackmail her about a past they share and warns him that she will shoot him if he continues. Lady Sedgwick is unaware that this conversation has been overheard by both Miss Marple and Elvira. Lady Sedgwick storms out of the writing room and confronts Mr. Humfries about Gorman, but backs off when he offers to fire Gorman.

In chapter 6, Elvira visits her friend, Bridget. Elvira tells Bridget she must go to Ireland immediately, but she has no money. Elvira convinces Bridget to both help her get some money and to serve as her alibi. Elvira and Bridget go downtown together where Elvira leaves Bridget on the street while she visits a family jeweler. After giving the jeweler her watch to be repaired, Elvira convinces the man to show her some jewelry that he might suggest Colonel Luscombe could buy her for her birthday. As they look at this jewelry together, Bridget crosses the street in front of a car and causes a commotion. While the jeweler is distracted, Elvira steals a bracelet. Later, Elvira has Bridget pawn the bracelet. At the same time, Miss Marple is shopping in London. Miss Marple goes to the Army and Navy stores she once visited with an aunt. While dining in the store's restaurant, Miss Marple sees Lady Sedgwick with the race car driver, Lanislaus Malinowski. Miss Marple schemes to overhear their conversation, but does not hear enough to make sense of it.

Chapters 5-6 Analysis

The reader discovers in these chapters that Lady Sedgwick is indeed Elvira Blake's mother. The reader is curious why Lady Sedgwick has never been in Elvira's life, but her lifestyle seems to imply a motive for Lady Sedgwick to stay away. Her continued desire to stay away, however, leaves the reader a little more curious what Lady Sedgwick's opinion of her daughter and herself might be, touching on the theme of mother-daughter relationships. At the same time, Elvira learns a little about her mother when she hears her discussing a past relationship with Michael Gorman, the commissionaire who works for Bertram's. Immediately after overhearing this conversation, Elvira decides to fly to



Ireland for unknown reasons, but implying to her friend Bridget that it is a matter of life or death. Elvira's insistence leaves the reader wondering if this scheme is connected to Lady Sedgwick, or if Elvira is running off to meet Malinowski whom she called secretly the night before.

Miss Marple later sees Lady Sedgwick with Malinowski. Again the reader is confused because it seems that Malinowski is involved with the daughter, based on the phone call Elvira made to him the night before after an elaborate ruse he used to give her the appropriate phone number. However, the reader is reminded that the Press seems to think that Malinowski is Lady Sedgwick's lover. It appears to be a lover's triangle that is sure to lead to some tension later in the novel.



Chapters 7-11

Chapters 7-11 Summary

In chapter 7, Canon Pennyfather's goes to Kensington Air Station to catch a plane to Lucerne, but learns that his ticket was bought for a flight that left the night before. Pennyfather decides to have some dinner on his way home, but he has already eaten and therefore is not hungry. Pennyfather then decides to see a movie, stopping to see Walls of Jericho because it sounds biblical. Pennyfather then becomes lost on the way back to Bertram's and arrives after midnight. Thankfully, Pennyfather had forgotten to turn over his key before leaving, so he is able to go straight to his room. When Pennyfather opens the door, he is hit over the head by an unseen assailant. In chapter 8, the Irish Mail train is robbed by several assailants, including one man who looks a lot like Canon Pennyfather. In chapter 9, Elvira calls Bridget to let her know she has returned from Ireland only to learn the alibi they constructed failed. Elvira quickly calls her cousin in Kent and tells another lie to cover the failed alibi. Afterward, Elvira returns the bracelet to the jeweler after taking it out of pawn, telling the jeweler that she accidentally put it in her pocket and forgot about it until that morning. The jeweler does not believe her, but never had any intention of calling the police because of her family name.

In chapter 10, Elvira visits her family lawyer, asking him the same questions she asked Colonel Luscombe in the lobby of Bertram's. The lawyer tells her that if she dies her money, which is substantial and which she will get when she is twenty-one unless she marries first, will go to her next of kin upon her death. This means her mother or her husband. Elvira also asks why her mother never came to see her and is told that her mother has avoided her in order to keep her own life's mistakes from injuring Elvira. As soon as Elvira leaves his office, the lawyer calls Colonel Luscombe and warns him that Elvira might be on the verge of marrying some unknown boy. In chapter 11, Canon Pennyfather's housekeeper becomes concerned when he does not return at the appointed time. At first the housekeeper is not upset, but the longer he is gone, the more her concern grows. When a house guest, whom Pennyfather has been looking forward to seeing, arrives, the housekeeper tells him of the missing man and how a phone call to Bertram's offered little information. The houseguest begins making phone calls, growing more and more concerned as he learns Pennyfather missed the conference in Lucerne and has not been seen by any of his friends or family in days. Together the house guest and housekeeper decide to call the police.

Chapters 7-11 Analysis

Canon Pennyfather is so absentminded that he arrives at the airport the night after his flight, having missed his conference all together. Instead of going home or returning to the airport, Pennyfather goes to a movie. When he finally arrives at Bertram's, he is attacked by someone in his room. The reader wonders who might be in Pennyfather's



room that late at night and why they would injure an old man. It is possible that the attackers are related to the robberies Father has been investigating, but the reader is unclear about that at this point. What is clear, however, is that the longer Pennyfather is missing, the more likely he might be dead.

Elvira makes her trip to Ireland and returns amidst the mess of her failed alibi. Lying comes easily to Elvira and she is able to fix the mess, before returning the bracelet she stole and visiting her lawyer. Elvira asks the same questions of the lawyer she asked of Colonel Luscombe, suggesting to the reader that Elvira is either concerned about her own safety, or planning a way to get to her money much faster than intended in her father's will, touching on the theme of greed. This conversation also reveals something of her mother and father, suggesting a child who was just unlucky to be born into a loveless marriage and to a mother with a reckless streak. Perhaps this parentage should tell the reader something about Elvira's character and her hidden motives.



Chapters 12-15

Chapters 12-15 Summary

In chapter 12, Miss Marple continues her vacation by visiting Battersea Park, a favorite spot from her childhood. While there, Miss Marple stops to have some tea and spots Malinowski with Elvira Blake. Again Miss Marple attempts to overhear their conversation, but they speak too low for her to hear. Miss Marple does notice, however, a racing car parked out front with the license tag, FAN2266. In chapter 13, Chief Inspector Davy learns of Canon Pennyfather's disappearance from Bertram's. Due to the apparent connection between Bertram's and the robberies, Father suggests he go with Inspector Campbell to interview the employees of Bertram's, pretending to be Campbell's subordinate. They interview Miss Gorringer first, but she has little new information for them except for the names of two guests who appeared to be friendly with Canon Pennyfather. Mr. Humfries comes in on the discussion and supports Miss Gorringer's statements, as well as agreeing to Father's request to speak to the chambermaid. Miss Gorringer arranges for Father and Campbell to have tea, leaving her alone with Mr. Humfries. Humfries warns Miss Gorringer to be careful because he knows Father to be Chief Inspector Davy, not the subordinate he was pretending to be.

In chapter 14, Father sends Campbell back to the office while he remains behind to speak to the guests and the chambermaid. The first guest is an old man who is deaf, so Father gets little from him. Father then speaks to Miss Marple whom Miss Gorringer saw speaking to Canon Pennyfather once. Miss Marple tells Father that she saw Canon Pennyfather leave his room at three in the morning on the night he disappeared, making her the last one to see him and confirming that he did return to Bertram's that night. In chapter 15, Father interviews the chambermaid who gives him a rehearsed story he has already heard from Miss Gorringer and Mr. Humfries. However, when Father asks about the bag that Pennyfather took with him for his trip to Lucerne, she becomes flustered, making Father believe she is lying. Father then goes downstairs where he watches as an American couple packs their luggage in a taxi and leaves for France. Father also speaks to the commissionaire and learns that a Mercedes-Otto with the tag number FAN 2266 that is parked in front of the hotel belongs to Lanislau Malinowski. Father finds this curious because similar cars have been seen in the vicinity of the robberies, including the recent robbery of the Irish Mail train.

Chapters 12-15 Analysis

Miss Marple sees Malinowski having lunch with Elvira Blake and is left with the impression that Elvira is in love with this man, the same man who is reportedly having an affair with Elvira's mother, Lady Sedgwick. This creates an interesting love triangle that the reader is anxious to follow to its conclusion. At the same time, Miss Marple makes note of Malinowski's sports car. Father later makes note of this same car, connecting it to a similar car with a similar tag that was spotted near the Irish Mail train



robbery. The reader begins to wonder if Malinowski is one of the robbers, but wonders who the mastermind might be because a man who would have an affair with a mother and daughter does not appear to be terribly bright, at least not bright enough to pull off this robberies.

Father begins to investigate the disappearance of Canon Pennyfather because it is connected to Bertram's and Father believes Bertram's is somehow connected to the robberies. Father learns little of use, except that Miss Marple saw Canon Pennyfather leave his room in the middle of the night after he supposedly disappeared. Father is also curious why the chambermaid appears to be lying to him about what she found in Pennyfather's room the day after his disappearance. It seems that someone at the hotel is hiding something. The reader already knows this is true because of an earlier chapter in which the reader saw Pennyfather hit over the head, but what this might be and how it connects to the hotel is not quite clear at this point.



Chapters 16-20

Chapters 16-20 Summary

In chapter 16, Canon Pennyfather wakes in a strange room. After a while, a woman comes into the room and explains that she and her husband found him lying in the street and assumed he had been hit by a car. Afraid he had been drinking and calling the police would ruin his reputation, they decided against calling the police. They did, however, call a local man who was once a doctor to check his wounds and he diagnosed a concussion. In chapter 17, Father speaks with his boss, the Assistant Commissioner of Scotland Yard. Father outlines his case thus far, emphasizing the appearance of the sports car at all the crimes and its possible connection to Malinowski and Bertram's. Father also mentions Miss Marple's testimony regarding Pennyfather. Father then requests that he be allowed to speak to a high official who might be able to tell him who really owns Bertram's. The AC agrees. At this meeting, Father is very polite and able to establish that Bertram's is owned by Richard and Wilhelm Hoffman. Upon returning to his office, Father receives a message that Pennyfather has been returned home safely.

In chapter 18, Father interviews Canon Pennyfather, but discovers he remembers nothing from the moment he arrived at the Kensington Air Station due to the concussion. However, as Father is leaving, he hears Pennyfather mumble Walls of Jericho. In chapter 19, Father visits Mr. Richard Hoffman. Mr. Hoffman is not happy that Father has learned he is the owner of Bertram's and attempts subtly to learn who told him. Father does not reveal the source of his information, but neither does he learn much more about Hoffman. Father does leave Hoffman, however, with the impression that he and his brother are simply the financial part of the crimes. In chapter 20, Father spends a foggy evening walking around Bertram's, attempting to see the building from every angle. After a time, Father goes into Bertram's and takes another look at the guestbook. Father then speaks with Miss Marple in a quiet corner of the lounge. Miss Marple tells Father about seeing Elvira with Malinowski, expressing her concern that a young girl would get messed up with a man like Malinowski. Miss Marple also helps Father reason out why Canon Pennyfather might not have returned to the hotel until after midnight. As they talk, they hear gunfire outside. Father rushes outside and finds a hysterical Elvira standing over Michael Gorman's body. When the police arrive, a police officer escorts Elvira inside where she rushes into the arms of her mother, Lady Sedgwick.

Chapters 16-20 Analysis

Pennyfather wakes in a strange room and learns that his rescuers believe he was hit by a car and now suffers a concussion. The reader is somewhat surprised Pennyfather is still alive and disappointed that he cannot tell anyone what he saw in his room and what



happened to him. However, Pennyfather's fate suggests that the masterminds behind the robberies is not willing to murder when it is not absolutely necessary.

Father continues his investigation in Bertram's, establishing who really owns Bertram's. Father is not surprised to find that known criminals own the hotel, but suspects these brothers only provide the financial backing for the crime syndicate, but are not the masterminds. Father also interviews Canon Pennyfather, learning nothing, and Miss Marple again. Father learns about Elvira's relationship with Malinowski, though Father does not know its implications at this point. The reader is screaming at Miss Marple to tell Father all she knows, but Miss Marple is embarrassed at having eavesdropped, so she only tells Father what she feels he needs to know. Finally, Father hears gunshots and runs outside to find Elvira standing over the commissionaire's dead body. This death is the first in the novel, but the fact that it happened at Bertram's suggests that it is connected to all the other crimes connected to the hotel.



Chapters 21-24

Chapters 21-24 Summary

In chapter 21, Father sits down with Elvira and Lady Sedgwick. Father asks Elvira what happened and learns that she came to the hotel to get a room for the night because the fog was too thick for her to drive to Kent. Elvira parked her car and was walking to the hotel when someone fired a gun, the bullet passing close to her face. The commissioner came over and pushed her behind him, taking the second bullet. Father asks Elvira then about a statement she made when Father first approached her about this being the second attempt on her life. Elvira tries not to answer the question at first, but finally tells a story of how someone sent chocolates to her room in Italy and how her favorite ones were apparently poisoned. Elvira then tells Father how she got a note when she was staying at Bertram's warning that someone wanted to kill her. Finally Elvira says that someone attempted to push her under the train a few days ago. Father then asks Elvira if she knows Malinowski and she denies it. Father knows she is lying, but both Elvira and Lady Sedgwick continue to deny the connection.

In chapter 22, Father speaks to both Elvira's guardian and his cousin, but neither believes Elvira capable of the lies and subterfuge he claims she has committed. Father then interviews Bridget. Bridget tells Father about Elvira's trip to Ireland, leaving out the story of the stolen bracelet, and explains that she believed Elvira was in trouble. However, Bridget denies Elvira's story about the chocolates in Italy. In chapter 23, Father visits Elvira's lawyer to ask what she saw him about. The lawyer outlines the meeting, stressing that he thought Elvira might be on the verge of getting married to some unknown man. In chapter 24, Father brings Malinowski to the police station and questions him about the murder. Father shows Malinowski the murder weapon, an automatic pistol that belongs to Malinowski. Malinowski denies having anything to do with Michael Gorman's death, but does admit to having an affair with Lady Sedgwick and a desire to marry Elvira Blake.

Chapters 21-24 Analysis

Elvira claims that her life is in danger, a scenario that could explain her prior obsession in learning who would get her money if she should die. This claim also explains what happened to the commissioner. However, Elvira lies about knowing Malinowski even though both the reader and Father knows she does know him. If Elvira can lie so easily about this detail, the reader must wonder if she can also lie about the supposed death threat against her. This doubt is increased when Bridget fails to back up Elvira's story about the poisoned chocolates.

Father continues his investigation, including the murder in the scope of his investigation. Father has trouble learning the things he wants to know, but does manage to learn of Elvira's obsession with her money as well as the trip she took to Ireland which might



have an impact on her motives. Father also brings Malinowski into the police station and accuses him of murder. As Malinowski is denying any involvement in the murders, he admits to an affair with Lady Sedgwick and a desire to marry Elvira. The way he presents this information, the reader finds themselves wondering if Malinowski is not in love with either woman and simply wants the money marriage to either woman might offer.



Chapters 25-27

Chapters 25-27 Summary

In chapter 25, Miss Marple returns to London to help Father. Father tells her about a trip to Ireland in which he learned the nature of Gorman's relationship with Lady Sedgwick. At Bertram's, Father takes Miss Marple to the room she had while staying at Bertram's and then goes down to bring Pennyfather upstairs. Father has Miss Marple and Pennyfather reenact the night Miss Marple saw Pennyfather leave. When it is over, Miss Marple realizes that it was not Pennyfather she saw that night, but someone younger. At about that same time, Pennyfather's memory came back and he told them how he came into his room that night and saw someone who looked exactly like him. In chapter 26, Father sends Pennyfather to the British Museum and takes Miss Marple with him to speak to Lady Sedgwick. Father confronts Lady Sedgwick with everything he has been able to establish at this point, including the idea that Malinowski killed Gorman. Lady Sedgwick hotly denies this despite the fact that Father has learned that Gorman was her legal husband.

Lady Sedgwick admits that she was married to Gorman for a short week when she was a young girl. Lady Sedgwick's family paid Gorman off and told Bess that her marriage was illegal. It was not until later that Lady Sedgwick realized her marriage to Gorman was legal, thus making her marriages to her other three husbands invalid. Father insists this is a motive for murder, but Lady Sedgwick again denies it. Father then tells lady Sedgwick that Elvira is aware of her relationship to Gorman. As Lady Sedgwick is reeling from this information, Father announces that he knows Lady Sedgwick is the mastermind behind the crime syndicate. In chapter 27, Father explains his theory, how lady Sedgwick organizes the robberies using actors to pretend to be guests of the hotel and use their luggage to get the proceeds out of the country. Lady Sedgwick admits to being the mastermind, telling Father that she enjoys the thrill of the theft. Then Lady Sedgwick confesses to murdering Gorman, making a point of including Miss Marple in the conversation and pointing out that Miss Marple is a witness to Lady Sedgwick's threat to shoot Gorman. Then Lady Sedgwick jumps out the window and makes her way to a car she has parked on the street. Lady Sedgwick speeds away, causing a crash that results in her death. Father then tells Miss Marple that he believes Lady Sedgwick lied because she knew Elvira killed Gorman. Father theorizes that Elvira killed Gorman to prevent his relationship to Lady Sedgwick keeping her from inheriting her father's money. However, Father cannot prove this theory and therefore cannot arrest Elvira.

Chapters 25-27 Analysis

Miss Marple returns to help Father, showing the reader how devoted she is to solving mysteries. Father, Miss Marple, and Pennyfather are able to establish that the robbers used a Doppelganger to impersonate Pennyfather during the robbery of the Irish Mail train, like they did in previous robberies. Father has also been able to establish



Gorman's relationship to Lady Sedgwick and her role in the robberies. It is at this point that Lady Sedgwick admits to killing Gorman after denying it and denying that Malinowski did it as well. This seems contrary to what the reader knows about Lady Sedgwick. Lady Sedgwick has gone out of her way to protect people from her lifestyle, even walking away from her daughter. It seems that murder goes against what she might do especially since she allowed Pennyfather to live even though his death might have been beneficial.

Lady Sedgwick escapes the hotel and dies in a car crash. When Elvira is told, she does not appear upset. This could be because she does not know her mother well, but it could also show Elvira's lack of compassion for other people. The reader also realizes along with Father that Elvira killed Gorman because he might have stood as an obstacle against her getting the money her father left her. While the reader and Father know this would not have happened, it appears that Elvira is so greedy, a theme of the novel, that she could not take the chance. This shows an Elvira the reader only suspected existed. Elvira is not arrested, but the final page of the novel suggests Father will chase her until he can find the evidence he needs to charge her. This goes not only to Father's character, but to the darkness of the crime.



Characters

Lady Bess Sedgwick

Lady Bess Sedgwick is an English woman who is the equivalent of the modern day extreme sports athlete. Lady Sedgwick has flown a plane solo over the Atlantic, was a member of the French Resistance during the war, and has been said to have saved two children from a burning building. Lady Sedgwick thrives on danger and has been known to almost anything to feed this thrill. It is even rumored that Lady Sedgwick is having an affair with a race car driver several years younger than herself, a young man who is spotted numerous times hanging around the hotel where Lady Sedgwick is staying.

Lady Sedgwick's thrill seeking has also entered her personal life. Lady Sedgwick has been married three times. The first marriage ended when Lady Sedgwick had an affair and ran away with her lover, a man who would become her second husband. Lady Sedgwick then married a rich American when her second husband passed away. Through all this, Lady Sedgwick had only one child, a daughter with her first husband. When her first marriage failed, Lady Sedgwick left the child behind to be cared for by her husband. Upon her first husband's death a few short years later, the child was then raised by trustees appointed in her husband's will.

As this novel progresses, Lady Sedgwick appears to only be a minor character. Lady Sedgwick's relationship with the car driver and with Elvira Blake seem to be the only things that keep her on the forefront of the developing plot. However, when Chief Inspector Davy solves the robbery case he has been working on, it is revealed that Lady Sedgwick is the master mind behind it all. Lady Sedgwick has always gotten a thrill from breaking the law and this crime syndicate appealed to her thrill seeking instincts. Getting caught is not something Lady Sedgwick ever planned on doing, however, and she manages to escape after making a startling confession. Sadly, this escape only ends in Lady Sedgwick's death.

The Honorable Elvira Blake

Elvira Blake is the daughter of Lady Sedgwick and her first husband. Elvira has arrived in London after attending school in Italy to move in with a cousin of her guardian. Elvira stays overnight at Bertram's, where her mother just happens to be staying as well. Elvira has never met her mother because Lady Sedgwick has always avoided her daughter to keep her wild ways from hurting the child. However, now Elvira is showing a great deal of interest in her mother, going so far as asking if the woman has even attempted to meet her once.

Elvira returns to London after going to Kent to live with her cousin in order to elicit her friend's help in collecting money for a trip to Ireland. Elvira refuses to tell anyone why she is going to Ireland, but the reader is aware that Elvira has overheard her mother



talking about a past relationship with the Irish commissioner of Bertram's Hotel. Later, when Elvira returns to London, she is involved in a shooting that ends the commissioner's life in his attempt to protect Elvira. Elvira tells everyone that several attempts have been made on her life recently and she believes that someone is out to get her. Father, however, soon realizes that Elvira has killed the commissioner herself to prevent him from revealing his relationship to her mother and causing Elvira to lose out on the money she is to inherit from her father's estate.

Ladislaus Malinowski

Ladislaus Malinowski is the half French, half Polish race car driver who is rumored to be having an affair with Lady Sedgwick. Malinowski appears at Bertram's Hotel in London shortly after Elvira arrives, supposedly to leave a message for Lady Sedgwick. However, the visit is a clever ruse to contact Elvira and tell her where she can call him. Elvira and Malinowski met in Italy and have been seeing each other ever since. Malinowski will later tell the police that he intends to marry Elvira.

Malinowski owns an expensive race car that is often seen on the streets of London, specifically in front of Bertram's Hotel. Father also notices that the car has been seen during the commission of many of the robberies he is investigating, though the tags always read a slightly different number. Due to this, Father begins to suspect that Malinowski is involved in the robberies. When the commissioner is shot, a gun belonging to Malinowski is discovered and proven to be the murder weapon. Malinowski claims no knowledge of this, and Lady Sedgwick backs his story by confessing to the murder.

Chief Inspector Fred Davy or Father

Chief Inspector Fred Davy, or Father, is an investigator with the London police. Father is a large man who is quickly approaching his retirement date, explaining the nickname. Father is investigating a number of robberies that have taken place in and around London. Father notices a connection between eye witness accounts of people seen at the scene of the crimes who were later proved to be elsewhere and Bertram's Hotel. When Canon Pennyfather goes missing, Father uses it as an excuse to begin investigating Bertram's Hotel. It is through this investigation that Father meets Miss Marple and is able to piece together several missing pieces that help him figure out who is the mastermind behind the robberies as well as the true identity of the killer of the commissioner of Bertram's.

Canon Pennyfather

Canon Pennyfather is an absentminded cleric who is a regular guest at Bertram's Hotel. Canon Pennyfather comes to Bertram's Hotel during a stay in London. Canon Pennyfather plans to fly to Lucerne from London, but wants to keep his room at Bertram's in order to have a secure place to stay upon his return. However, Pennyfather



has mixed up his dates and arrives at the airport a day late for his trip to Lucerne. Pennyfather decides to see a movie before returning to Bertram's. Upon his return to Bertram's, Pennyfather walks into his room and discovers someone there who looks just like him. Pennyfather is hit over the head and wakes several days later in a strange house, suffering a concussion and having no memory of the past four or five days. When Pennyfather returns to Bertram's to help Father and Miss Marple investigate the robberies, he suddenly remembers what happened to him and is able to add testimony that confirms what Father already suspects.

Michael Gorman

Michael Gorman is the Irish commissionaire at Bertram's Hotel. Gorman got the job mostly because he has his own medals after having served in the Irish army. Gorman knows Bess Sedgwick. The two of them were once lovers as young adults and were even married for a time. Bess Sedgwick's people tracked them down and convinced Bess that the marriage was a rouse on Gorman's part to get her into bed. Bess believes them, especially after Gorman takes money to let her go. However, several years later Bess realizes the marriage was real and her three subsequent marriages were therefore illegal. Gorman threatens to blackmail Bess and both Elvira and Miss Marple hear her threaten him should he do that. Gorman is later killed, supposedly protecting Elvira from an assassin, but it is later believed that Elvira killed him herself.

Miss Jane Marple

Miss Jane Marple is an elderly woman who appears in many of Agatha Christie's novels and short stories. Miss Marple, in this novel, has come to London on a vacation provided by a niece and nephew who have grown concern about Miss Marple living alone without the opportunity to travel. On this visit, Miss Marple has requested to stay at Bertram's Hotel because she once stayed there as a young child. Miss Marple finds the hotel much like it was in her childhood, but as her stay progresses she begins to notice unusual things about the hotel, including the guests and staff. Miss Marple meets Father as he investigates the disappearance of her acquaintance, Canon Pennyfather. Together Miss Marple and Father put together what they each know about the case and are able to come to a satisfactory conclusion.

Colonel Luscombe

Colonel Luscombe is Elvira Blake's guardian and one of three trustees of her inheritance from her father. Colonel Luscombe is uncomfortable around Elvira as he never had children of his own and does not know what to do with a young woman. Luscombe raised Elvira from early childhood through her teens, but his sister was always the one who did most of the work. Now Luscombe has shipped Elvira to live with a cousin in Kent, unaware that Elvira is telling lies and coming to London more often than anyone knows.



Bridget

Bridget is Elvira's friend. Bridget and Elvira went to school together in Italy. When Elvira decides she must go to Ireland, she enlists Bridget's help in raising the money for the plane ticket. Elvira has Bridget run out in the street and cause a scene in which it appears she has almost been hit by a car in order to distract a jeweler long enough for Elvira to steal a bracelet. Elvira then asks Bridget to pawn the bracelet. Bridget takes Elvira to the airport and provides her alibi to the cousin of Elvira's guardian with whom she is living. Later, when Father comes to speak to Bridget, she tells him that Elvira's chocolate was not poisoned in Italy as Elvira claims, but that she believed Elvira to be in danger when she went to Ireland.

Henry, Mr. Humfries, and Miss Gorringe

Henry is the waiter at Bertram's Hotel. Henry is very efficient in his job, always aware of what is going on around him and knowledgeable of what the regular customers might want with their tea. Later it is established that Henry is a mastermind, alongside Lady Sedgwick, in the crime syndicate. Mr. Humfries is the manager of Bertram's Hotel and many seem to think he is also the owner, but he is not. Mr. Humfries is most likely the person who hit Canon Pennyfather over the head when he surprised them by coming back to his room earlier. Miss Gorringe is the desk clerk at Bertram's Hotel. Miss Gorringe is very efficient and always goes out of her way to give her customers what they want, including remembering which rooms they prefer. It is also revealed later in the book that Miss Gorringe is aware of the crime syndicate using Bertram's Hotel as a cover and is most likely a part of it.



Objects/Places

Linens

Miss Marple shops for various household linens while on vacation in London.

Knitting

Miss Marple often knits. Miss Marple knits upon waking to ease the arthritis from her hands and later in the day while relaxing in front of a hot fire.

Bracelet

Elvira steals a bracelet from the family jeweler in order to pay for a flight to London. Later, Elvira returns the bracelet, claiming she slipped it into her pocket and forgot about it.

Muffins and Tea

Guests often remark that Bertram's offers the best tea hour in London. This tea hour often includes muffins, real muffins that people can rarely get anymore.

Chocolates

Elvira claims that she received chocolates while living in Italy from an anonymous admirer that made her ill. Elvira says that she saw puncture marks in the chocolates and believes that this was the first attempt made on her life.

Walls of Jericho

Walls of Jericho is a movie about a woman's struggles with marriage that Canon Pennyfather went to see after learning he had missed his conference in Lucerne. Pennyfather had originally thought the movie was a religious one.

Automatic Pistol

An automatic pistol belonging to Ladislous Malinowski is used to murder Michael Gorman, linking Malinowski to the crime.



Mercedes-Otto

The race car with the tag number FAN 2266 belongs to Ladislaus Malinowski. This car is spotted around Bertram's Hotel many times by both Father and Miss Marple. The car is also spotted near several of the robberies, but with different tag numbers.

Kensington Air Station

Kensington Air Station is the airport from which Canon Pennyfather was to fly if he had not mixed up his dates.

Ballygowlan, Ireland

Ballygowlan, Ireland is where Michael Gorman is from. It is also in Ballygowlan where Lady Bess Sedgwick married Michael Gorman and where Elvira goes to verify the marriage is still legal.

Lucerne

Canon Pennyfather was supposed to attend a conference in Lucerne, Switzerland, but he mixed up his dates and arrived at the airport on the wrong day.

Milton St. John

Milton St. John is a small village where Canon Pennyfather wakes after having been hit over the head as he stumbled on the robbers preparing to rob the Irish Mail, one of these men made up to look exactly like Pennyfather.

Bedhampton

Bedhampton is the town near which the Irish Mail was robbed. Bedhampton is also close to Milton St. John where Pennyfather was found.

Bertram's Hotel

Bertram's Hotel is a hotel hidden in the heart of London where many of England's aristocrats and clergymen stay while in London. The hotel is decorated and the staff serves tea that is reminiscent of the Edwardian period in England. Many rich Americans seek out Bertram's to get the full English experience on their vacations. Bertram's is also the front for a criminal syndicate who uses the cover of the hotel's guests to rob banks and businesses and to move the money out of the country.

Themes

Extreme Adventure

Lady Bess Sedgwick likes doing things that today would be called extreme sports. Lady Sedgwick flies planes solo over the ocean, drives race cars, and enjoys doing just about anything a lady of her generation should not do, including breaking the law. Lady Bess Sedgwick's reputation is that of a woman who likes to create scandal. Lady Sedgwick has been married three times. The first marriage ended when Lady Sedgwick had an affair and ran away to be with her lover. This caused Lady Sedgwick to leave behind her only child, a daughter, who was then raised by her father until his death a few years later. The child then went to a family friend. Lady Bess Sedgwick never went out of her way to see or care for the child, deciding she was better off without a reckless mother such as her.

Lady Sedgwick is well known and most of her escapades are reported in the newspapers. Everyone is aware, for instance, that Lady Sedgwick is having an affair with the famous race car driver, Lanislaus Malinowski. What no one knows, however, is that Lady Sedgwick is the head of a crime syndicate that works out of the Bertram's Hotel, using actors to dress up like the guests at the hotel in order to keep suspicion off the real criminals. These crimes have taken place over the stretch of a year and have resulted in millions of pounds stolen.

Lady Sedgwick has come to Bertram's Hotel to oversee the latest robbery with her lover, Malinowski. However, Lady Sedgwick is shocked to discover that her daughter is staying at the same hotel. At the same time, Lady Sedgwick learns that an ex-boyfriend, a man that she has discovered she is still legally married to, is working as the hotel's commissionaire. Despite these difficulties, Lady Sedgwick continues with the robbery as planned. However, Lady Sedgwick is discovered when her daughter kills the commissionaire, mistakenly believing that if he reveals the truth of the marriage that she will not inherit the thousands of pounds she is set to get from her father's will.

Mother-Daughter Relationships

Lady Sedgwick walked away from her daughter when the child was only two. Lady Sedgwick believed at the time that she was protecting the child from her life of extreme adventure. However, Lady Sedgwick has since changed her mind. Lady Sedgwick now believes her daughter needs a female influence in her life, someone who can see through the lies she frequently tells to get her own way.

Elvira Blake knows who her mother is even though her guardians have attempted to protect her from everything, including this information. Elvira asks if her mother has ever tried to see her and is understandably hurt when she learns this is not the case, although she does not allow her feelings to show. When Elvira finds herself in the same



hotel with her mother, she attempts to find a way to get closer to her, to speak to her. Instead, Elvira overhears her mother threatening the commissioner should he continue to attempt to blackmail her about their past. Elvira investigates, going to Ireland, and learns that her mother is legally married to the commissioner, making her marriage to Elvira's father illegal. This makes Elvira worried, not for her mother's sake, but for her own inheritance. Elvira kills the commissioner, committing the crime in such a way that it makes either her mother or her lover look responsible.

Despite having ignored her daughter for most of her life, Lady Sedgwick takes Elvira under her wing after the death of the commissioner. Lady Sedgwick realizes what has happened and wants to protect her child. Lady Sedgwick, faced with serving many years in jail for the robberies she masterminded, confesses to the murder of the commissioner and then kills herself in a car accident. This act appears selfless, an act that proves to her daughter that there was some affection there despite all the evidence to the contrary, making mother-daughter relationships a theme of the novel.

Greed

Lady Sedgwick is a wealthy woman, thanks to the inheritance she received upon the death of her third husband. However, Lady Sedgwick has a lover who is very poor and a lover of anything dangerous. Lady Sedgwick becomes the mastermind behind a rash of robberies in and around London, using the guests at Bertram's Hotel as cover. Lady Sedgwick and her partners gain a large amount of money in these robberies.

Lady Sedgwick's daughter has not fallen far from the tree. Elvira Blake has recently learned that she is worth a great deal of money. Elvira has also learned that should she die, her money would go to her mother, unless she marries and then it will go to her husband. Elvira wants this money for herself, but when she learns that her mother and father's marriage was not legal, Elvira begins to worry that her mother's legal husband will tell someone and cause Elvira to be ineligible to inherit her father's money. Due to this, Elvira kills the husband, using a gun belonging to her mother's lover. This makes the lover look responsible, so Elvira's mother takes the fall by confessing before killing herself in a car accident.



Style

Point of View

The novel is written in the third person point of view. There is no one narrator, but the narration moves from character to character, often telling the story from the point of view of a minor character or a character central to the action being discussed. There are sections of the narration that come from a disembodied voice, suggesting an authorial voice giving the reader an overview of a setting or event, allowing the reader to better understand the plot without utilizing a character's point of view.

The point of view of this novel is broad, moving from character to character and occasionally using simply the voice of the author. This point of view works because it allows the reader to see all events that are important to the overall plot and not just events that one character has access to. This allows the plot to be shown in a broader view, giving the reader full access to every aspect of the crimes taking place, the people committing the crimes, and the detectives attempting to solve the crimes. The point of view is appropriate to this plot and its genre, presenting a well rounded story that is both entertaining and surprising.

Setting

The novel is set in London. A large portion of the novel takes place at Bertram's Hotel, a small hotel hidden off of West End. The hotel is old fashioned, styled from the Edwardian era hotels. The hotel caters to the older aristocrats and clergymen of England, as well as American tourists who want to get a true taste of England on their visits, but also enjoy the more modern conveniences of life. There are also portions of the novel that explore outlying areas of London, including some smaller towns and villages where crimes have taken place during the development of the plot. These smaller places are rarely described and not dealt with on a large scale as they are simply background to the crimes taking place.

The setting of the novel is fascinating as it is a hotel that is designed to be more old fashioned. The novel is written in the early sixties; therefore it already might appear old fashioned to some modern readers. The added emphasis on the antiquity of the hotel is amusing, but serves a purpose. The hotel is meant to attract older people, people who enjoy the customs of an earlier period of time. The reader will come to realize that the hotel has been designed this way in order to attract these older people so that the robbers can use them in their robberies to take the attention from the real criminals. In this way, the setting actually becomes a character in the book, playing a part much like Miss Marple or Lady Sedgwick.



Language and Meaning

The novel is written in a language that reflects its setting and the time period in which it was written. The language is not overly formal, but lacks some of the slang that modern readers have become accustomed to seeing in bestselling novels. Miss Christie has written her book using her native language, the proper English of an England bred woman. There are also a few French phrases used in the novel that are not clearly explained, phrases that Miss Christie clearly believed the reader would recognize and understand. The modern reader, however, may not be familiar with these phrases, showing how language can change with the passing of time.

The language of this novel is appropriate to its subject and characters. The language is formal to the modern ear, but not so formal that the reader feels a degree in English is necessary to understand the plot. The novel is well written, using little slang but enough familiarity with language that the reader comes to understand that many of the characters are well educated and therefore would properly speak as they appear to do in the novel. The foreign phrases are not explained in the text, but the reader who understands the overall meaning of the passage will understand what is meant by the phrase even if not the phrase itself. Therefore, the foreign phrases do not impede the flow or comprehension of the novel. It is for these reasons that the language of the novel works.

Structure

The novel is divided into twenty-seven chapters of varying length. The novel follows several weeks in the lives of half a dozen characters, often shifting narrator from chapter to chapter. The novel is told in both exposition and dialogue, utilizing occasional passages of internal dialogue through which the characters attempt to reason out the actions they have seen or participated in during the development of the plot. The novel is written in a linear fashion, flowing through time in an appropriate time line.

The novel has only one main plot, but several subplots. The main plot follows along as Chief Inspector Davy, or Father, attempts to make a connection between Bertram's Hotel and many robberies that have taken place in the past year or so. Father finds himself talking with Miss Marple who has also noticed many unusual things about the hotel and strives to help Father discover the truth about the hotel. One of the subplots follows Elvira Blake, a young woman who appears to believe her life is in danger and is in fact involved in a shooting that ends in the death of the hotel's commissionaire. Another subplot follows Elvira's absentee mother who turns out to be the mastermind behind the robberies Father is investigating. All the subplots come to a satisfying conclusion at the same time as the main plot.



Quotes

"Inside, if this was the first time you had visited Bertram's, you felt, almost with alarm, that you had re-entered a vanished world. Time had gone back. You were in Edwardian England once more." Chapter 1, pg. 8

"Mr. Humfries was often taken by the uninitiated to be Mr. Bertram in person. Who the actual Mr. Bertram was, or indeed, if there ever had been a Mr. Bertram was no lost in the mists of antiquity. Bertram's had existed since about 1840, but nobody had taken any interest in tracing its past history. It was just there, solid, a fact." Chapter 1, pg. 13

"Bess Sedgwick was a name that everyone in England knew. For over thirty years now, Bess Sedgwick had been reported by the Press as doing this or that outrageous or extraordinary thing. For a good part of the war she had been a member of the French Resistance, and was said to have six notches on her gun representing dead Germans. She had flown solo across the Atlantic years ago, had ridden on horseback across Europe and fetched up at Lake Van. She had drives racing cars, had once saved two children from a burning house, had several marriages to her credit and discredit and was said to be the second best-dressed woman in Europe. It was also said that she had successfully smuggled herself aboard a nuclear submarine on its test voyage." Chapter 2, pg. 23

"Even at Bertram's, thought Miss Marple, happily, interesting things could happen..." Chapter 2, pg. 28

"The man addressed as 'Father' was Chief Inspector Fred Davy. His retirement lay not long ahead and he appeared to be even more elderly than he was. Hence his nickname of 'Father'. He had a comfortable spreading presence, and such a benign and kindly manner that many criminals had been disagreeably surprised to find him a less genial and gullible man than he had seemed to be." Chapter 4, pg. 41

"The movement of Elvira's hand on the counter in front of her and then to the pocket of her neat tailor-made coat and skirt was so rapid and unobtrusive as to be almost unnoticeable, even if anybody had been looking." Chapter 6, pg. 69

"Miss Marple seldom gave anyone the benefit of the doubt; she invariably thought the worst, and nine times out of ten, so she insisted, she was right in so doing." Chapter 12, pg. 116

"'Miss Marple,' he said, 'why haven't you told anyone this before?'
'Nobody asked me,' said Miss Marple simply." Chapter 14, pg. 140

"The fog had come down over London suddenly that evening. Chief Inspector Davy



pulled up his coat collar and turned into Pond Street. Walking slowly like a man who was thinking of something else, he did not look particularly purposeful but anyone who knew him well would realize that his mind was wholly alert. He was prowling as a cat prowls before the moment comes for it to pounce on its prey." Chapter 20, pg. 175

"At that moment it struck Canon Pennyfather that Miss Gorringle also was different. He peered at her, trying to analyze where the difference lay. Her hair? That was the same as usual. Perhaps even a little frizzier. Black dress, large locket, cameo brooch. All there as usual. But there was a difference. Was she perhaps a little thinner? Or was it—yes, surely, she looked worried." Chapter 25, pg. 227

"Bertram's Hotel. So many memories...The past fused itself with the present. A French phrase came back to her Plus ca change, plus c'est la meme chose. She reversed the working. Plus c'est la meme chose, plus ca change. Both true, she thought." Chapter 26, pg. 234

"'I know,' said Miss Marple. 'She impressed it on me, didn't she? She chose death for herself, at the price of her daughter going free. She forced it on me as a dying request...'"

Chapter 27, pg. 255

"'Well,' said Miss Marple. 'Are you going to let her get away with it?'"

There was a pause, then Father brought down his fist with a crash on the table.

'No,' he roared—'No, by God I'm not!'"

Miss Marple nodded her head slowly and gravely.

'May God have mercy on her soul,' she said."

Chapter 27, pg. 256



Topics for Discussion

Discuss Bertram's Hotel. What about Bertram's makes it unusual? Who are the majority of Bertram's guests? How do these people afford Bertram's? Why does Bertram's encourage these people to stay at the hotel? What are some reasons they people give for staying at Bertram's? How is Bertram's involved in the rash of robberies that have been taking place in and around London? Why did the robbers chose Bertram's?

Who is Miss Jane Marple? Why has she chosen Bertram's Hotel as the location of a vacation? What about Bertram's is important to Miss Marple? What does Miss Marple do, for the most part, on her vacation? What does Miss Marple immediately notice about Lady Sedgwick and Elvira Blake? Is this assumption true? What else does Miss Marple notice about Lady Sedgwick and Elvira Blake? How does this help Miss Marple aid Father in solving the robberies?

Who is Lady Sedgwick? What is her reputation? Why does Lady Sedgwick participate in this behavior? What do people think of Lady Sedgwick? Why? What does Father come to believe Lady Sedgwick does while at Bertram's Hotel? Why does Father believe it is Lady Sedgwick who is behind these actions? How does Lady Sedgwick attempt to defend herself from these allegations?

Who is Elvira Blake? Why has she come to Bertram's Hotel? Who comes to Bertram's to give Elvira a secret message? What is their relationship? How does Elvira feel about this person? Why does Elvira sneak off to Ireland? What is the purpose of this visit? Does Elvira learn what she wanted to know? What does Elvira do with this information?

Who is Canon Pennyfather? What is unusual about Canon Pennyfather? What mistake does Canon Pennyfather make? How does this lead to Canon Pennyfather getting injured? Where does Canon Pennyfather wake after his injury? How did he get here? How does Father believe Canon Pennyfather got to this place? Why can Canon Pennyfather not remember what happened to him? Does he eventually remember?

Who is the commissionaire? What is his job? What might his title be in America? Why did Michael Gorman get this job? What is significant about his relationship to Lady Sedgwick? Who kills Michael Gorman? Why? Did Michael Gorman do anything to cause himself to be murdered? Explain.

Who is Father? How does Father begin to investigate Bertram's Hotel? What connection does Father believe this hotel has to the robberies he has been investigating? Is he correct? What case brings Father to Bertram's first? How does Father meet Miss Marple? Why does Father bring Miss Marple back to Bertram's? What does Father hope to prove with Miss Marple's help? Does Father solve the case sufficiently?