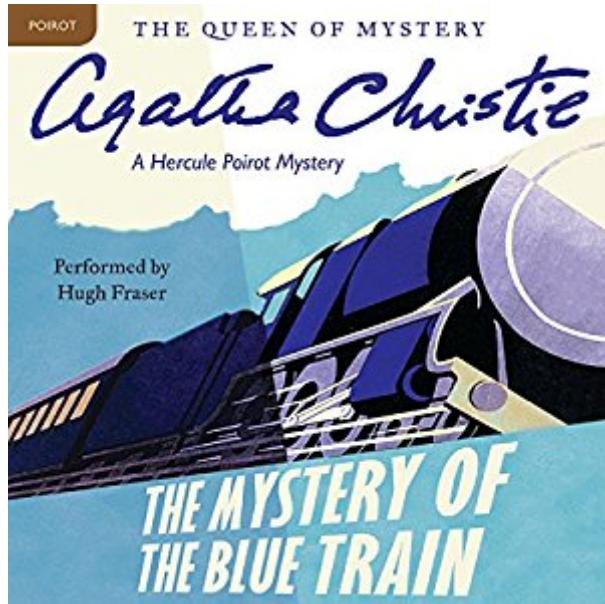


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The Mystery Of The Blue Train: A Hercule Poirot Mystery



Synopsis

When the luxurious Blue Train arrives at Nice, a guard attempts to wake serene Ruth Kettering from her slumbers. But she will never wake again - for a heavy blow has killed her, disfiguring her features almost beyond recognition. What is more, her precious rubies are missing. The prime suspect is Ruth's estranged husband, Derek. Yet Hercule Poirot is not convinced, so he stages an eerie reenactment of the journey, complete with the murderer on board.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In his sixth adventure, Hercule Poirot is on board the famous Blue Train from Calais to Nice. He encounters four different people and groups of people who are all after the Heart of Fire, a spectacular ruby purchased by American tycoon Rufus Van Aldin and presented to his daughter Ruth. Ruth is unhappily married to British aristocrat Derek Kettering, a richly layered character about whom the reader is still trying to decide if he is hero or villain up to the final chapter. This novel is filled with exciting characters: Mirelle, the exotic dancer with a passion for Derek; Armand de la Roche, the attractive but notorious swindler; and most refreshing of all is Katherine Grey, one of Mrs. Christie's best heroines. When Ruth Van Aldin Kettering is found murdered on the Blue Train en route to her annual winter trip to the French Riviera, it is up to Hercule Poirot to discover if she was murdered because the famous jewel was in her possession or was she murdered by her husband or his mistress or was there yet another sinister motive. This excellent tour de force is a landmark book for Christie fans because from this point until sometime in the late 60's every novel she published was brilliantly plotted and never failed to challenge the mystery reader. Agatha

Christie was known for experimenting with plots in short stories before developing them more fully in novels. The Mystery of the Blue Train is a prime example of this, so you might wish to go back and read her earlier short story "The Mystery of the Plymouth Express" if you enjoyed this one.

I first read this book at the age of 13 and loved the story. I was also struck by the great atmosphere of England and the French Riviera created by Christie. I found the characters of Katherine and Derek sympathetic and believeable and that of Lenox, very sad. I also liked the way Poirot is able to bring them together while simulataneously pursuing the killer. My only complaint was that I felt the actual mystery was less complex than some of Christie's other works (like "The Murder of Roger Ackroyd"). However, the overall story was so enjoyable that I don't think anyone would care. Definitely one of my sentimental favorites for its happy ending and the way it leaves you with a feeling of optimism at the end.

This book was published in 1928 and is an expansion of the short story "Mystery of the Plymouth Express". The plot enters around an American heiress, her millionaire father, ne'er do-well husband, shady lover and others she comes into contact with on the famous Blue Train while traveling to the Riveria. The question becomes was she murdered for her jewels or were her jewels taken to cloud the motive of her murder? Katherine Grey (from the soon to be famous St. Mary Mead) was taken into the victims confidence and finds herself entangled in the mystery. Fortunately for her, Hercule Poirot was also a passenger on the train and sorts through the puzzle. Poirot is traveling without Hastings but we are treated to scenes with Georges the valet at the beginning of his career with Hercule. This book has held up surprisingly well considering it is nearing the century mark. It describes a way of life that is long past which could be confusing the 21st century reader who does not understand the stigma that had been attached to divorce, limited opportunities for women or personal servants but the core conflicts of the story remain current to today. The only flaws I see in this story are the number of subplots and secondary characters but this is more than made up for by the ending which has the typical Christie flair.

The Blue Train is an Agatha Christie mystery trying to solve the murder of an heiress on a luxury train traveling to the south of France. It is naturally filled with possible killers-her husband, desperate to not be divorced. Her husband's mistress, who has the idea that if the wife dies before she can divorce her husband, he gets all the money, the charming con man with whom she's in love but whom her father has forbidden. Add to that she had changed her plans at the last minute-leaving

her maid in Paris, and several valuable jewels were stolen from her room. Most of the story is told from the view of Miss. Grey, a 33 year woman who has just come into a lot of money after spending ten weary years as a lady's companion and she wants to see the world. Indeed as so many moving parts all come together on the train, I started to wonder if this was one of those books that didn't have one of Christie's famous detectives but one of those stand alone stories like "Passage to Frankfurt" or "And then there were none." I sort of sucked it up and thought 'well we'll see how it goes.' I was enjoying the story, which picked up from the very slow start and once they were on the train I was going along happily. Miss. Grey had had lunch with the soon to be murdered woman and hoped she would have a different companion for dinner. She and I were not disappointed. Nearly 40% of the way into the book she finds her dinner companion to be a small, fastidious man with a large egg shaped head. On reading that I let out a cheer, literally. I didn't need to read his name. I knew. Dropped into a mystery I was already enjoying, riding on the train was of course, Hercule Poirot. and soon enough he and Miss Grey are involved in solving the murder of a socialite on a luxury train, among the play grounds of the rich and shameless on the Riviera. A splendid Christie adventure she also gets in some sharp jabs at the wastrels of upper class society. As sharp as any Christie mystery it does not have any cheats (think Roger Ackroyd for what I'd call a cheat) and if you're very good, you can figure it out. But more than the mystery this is just fun reading, about a time long gone and for it's sense of grace and elegance, we miss. PS. as an interesting aside Miss Grey leaves for the Blue Train from the town where she'd been in service. St Mary Meade. hmmm, yes nothing EVER happens there.

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