

## SUMMARIES

**Part 1: Book 1, Chapters 1–7**

Iris Marle reminisces about her older sister, Rosemary, who died almost a year earlier. Rosemary was a rich woman, having inherited money from a family friend. She lived a glamorous, romantic life before she married George – a safe, older man.

Iris moved in with Rosemary and George after the death of the girls' mother. Rosemary is acting strangely, and her death – by cyanide poisoning in a restaurant on her birthday – is treated as suicide.

Iris inherits Rosemary's money, and continues to live with George and her Aunt Lucilla, her chaperone. Lucilla worries about her son, Victor. He is always in trouble and asks her for money.

George seems preoccupied, then shows Iris anonymous letters, saying that Rosemary was murdered.

Several other characters are introduced. Ruth Lessing, George's secretary, is an efficient woman on whom George depends completely. She helps him get rid of Victor by sending him to South America.

Anthony Browne had a brief affair with Rosemary, but soon got bored. When Rosemary discovers his secret, he decides to leave the country – but not before he sees and falls in love with Iris.

Stephen Farraday is an ambitious politician who wants to advance his social standing. He meets Sandra Kidderminster, from a powerful family, and marries her. But when he sees Rosemary, he falls in love at first sight. They have an affair, and Rosemary wants to leave George and marry him. Then Stephen realizes how much he loves Sandra.

Sandra loves Stephen deeply. She knows about the affair, but doesn't want to break up. George knew Rosemary was having a serious affair, and was hurt. However, all he thinks of now is how to discover who murdered her. He arranges a party at the same restaurant with the same guests for Iris's birthday – almost a year after Rosemary's death there.

**Part 2: Book 2, Chapters 1–6**

Lucilla is increasingly worried about Iris, who appears to be ill.

Sandra and Stephen are worried about the party. Sandra reveals that she knew about the affair. They share their fears about what could happen at the restaurant.

Iris meets Anthony Browne, and he asks her to come away and marry him. Iris is too young to do this, and she wouldn't marry without her family's permission.

George meets Colonel Race, a friend who works in the Secret Service, and tells him what he knows about Rosemary's death. Race advises against trying to catch the murderer on his own. Instead he tries to analyse the events of the evening, and suggests that George should go to the police.

Lucilla receives another desperate letter from Victor, which George and Ruth deal with. Then in the evening, it's the party at the Luxembourg, just as George planned. At first, everyone is nervous but soon they relax – only George seems worried. They dance, and watch the cabaret. Then tragedy strikes – George dies, after drinking cyanide.

**Part 3: Book 3, Chapters 1–7**

Colonel Race tells the police what he knows about George's plan. Inspector Kemp leads the investigation, and the police question all the guests, the waiters and other witnesses.

A small sachet containing cyanide is found in the restaurant, but there are no fingerprints.

Most of the witnesses don't have any useful information, but the final person they interview, Christine Shannon, noticed lots of details. She saw a waiter pick up a bag and put it on one of the chairs.

Race interviews Ruth Lessing, and decides that she has a motive for murder, but doesn't seem a likely suspect. Then he visits Lucilla and Iris. He discovers that a former parlourmaid now works for his friend, so he decides to visit her. She tells Race how she heard Anthony threaten Rosemary when she discovered his real name – Tony Morelli.

**Part 4: Book 3, Chapters 8–14**

Kemp interviews the waiter who picked up the bag – he did it quickly as he hurried past the table.

An actress, Chloe West, tells the police how George had asked her to dress like Rosemary and appear in the Luxembourg. She was getting ready when she received a phone call saying the party had been cancelled.

Stephen is interviewed by the police, who know about his affair with Rosemary.

Colonel Race meets Anthony, and accuses him of wanting to marry Iris for her money. But Anthony explains that he has been working undercover for the Secret Service. They start to work together on the case.

Iris is worried, and tells Anthony that she found the cyanide sachet in her handbag, and dropped it. They go to the police, then Anthony goes to a café with Race and Inspector Kemp. As they talk, he realizes how the glass could have been poisoned. If possessions move around the table, people go back to their belongings, not their own place. The cyanide was intended for Iris! They race back to Elvaston Square, and find Iris unconscious, and Ruth escaping . . .

**CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES**

**Part 1 (Book 1, Chapters 1–7)**

*Before reading*

**1 Guess**

Talk about the title of the book with the class. Ask the class what they know about poisons in general, and if anyone has heard of a poison called cyanide.

Tell the class that in this story, poison will play an important part as a cause of death. Ask students if they can name any poisons, and ask how poison can be taken by or given to a person.

Explain to the class that Agatha Christie worked as a pharmacist in England during the First and Second World Wars, so she knew a lot about poisons and their effects. Refer students to the relevant passage in the Cultural notes.

Then discuss the word ‘sparkling’. Ask if anyone can explain what it means, and why it might be used in this context.

Refer students to the Glossary or their dictionaries.

**2 Research**

Another important part of this story is the money that Rosemary inherits. Refer students to the **Wills and inheritance** section of the Cultural notes, then ask them to answer the following questions:

What does a will do?

Why were wills important to people from the upper classes at the time of this story?

Why was life different for women at this time?

How was property and land usually passed on?

Can a person make special conditions in their will?

*After reading*

**3 Comprehension**

Answer the questions about *Sparkling Cyanide*.

1 Did Rosemary marry George because she loved him?

2 What was the purpose of the note Rosemary was writing in her sitting room (page 3)?

3 Why does Iris inherit Rosemary’s money instead of George?

4 Why is Aunt Lucilla invited to live with George and Iris?

5 When Iris finds Rosemary’s letter in the attic, what does she discover?

6 In what way does Ruth Lessing change George’s life?

7 Who did Rosemary have affairs with when she was married to George?

8 How does Rosemary discover Anthony Browne’s real name?

**4 Playing detective**

This section of the story introduces all of the main characters.

Tell students that it will be useful for them to keep notes on each character, explaining their involvement in the story, how

they are connected to Rosemary, and how they feel about events as they unfold. Write the following table with the partially completed information on the board. Ask students to copy and complete it. If they copy it into a suitable place in their notebooks, they can add to it as the story progresses.

Name	Who?	Significant actions
<b>Rosemary Barton</b>	Dies before the start of the story	Is rich, beautiful, and has affairs
<b>George Barton</b>		
<b>Iris Marle</b>	Rosemary’s younger sister	
<b>Anthony Browne</b>		
<b>Stephen Farraday</b>		
<b>Sandra Farraday</b>		Offers Stephen a solid and respectable marriage
<b>Ruth Lessing</b>	George’s secretary	
<b>Aunt Lucilla</b>		
<b>Victor Drake</b>		Asks his mother for money to get himself out of trouble

**5 Speaking**

Two important characters in this section are Stephen and Sandra Farraday. Read the following passage from page 20 to the class:

*However, he soon realized that he was a very unimportant member of the government. How could he rise to a higher position? People didn’t trust young politicians, so he needed something more than his own talents to help him. He needed the help of a powerful political family.*

*Marriage was the answer, he decided. Marriage to a well-connected woman, who would share his life and his ambitions; who would give him children and be proud of his success.*

Ask the class what this shows about Stephen, and his view of the world. How does he use marriage to help him? How does this change when he sees Rosemary? Ask the class for their opinions about the way Stephen gets to know Sandra. Then discuss how Sandra feels about the relationship. Why does she stay with Stephen? What does she think about Rosemary? Ask the class for their ideas about this kind of relationship.

**CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES**

**Part 2 (Book 2, Chapters 1–6)**

*Before reading*

**1 Research**

At the end of the previous section, we learn that George is planning a second party. Ask students to recap the place, the date, and the guests of this party, and why it is significant. Refer students to the Glossary and ask them what All Souls' Day is, and what it remembers. Ask if students celebrate this day or anything similar in their own country. If students are interested, they could do further research online to find out what people do on this day, and what beliefs they have about it.

Discuss as a class what has motivated George to plan the night at the Luxembourg, and what he is hoping to discover. Ask the class why he has chosen this day to do it. You could keep a note of their ideas to come back to later in the story.

**2 Playing detective**

In Part 1, Stephen thinks:

*'It's a pity we don't live in the days of the Borgias.' ... A glass of poisoned champagne was about the only thing that would keep Rosemary quiet.*

Ask the class what they think this shows about Stephen, and how he might be involved in Rosemary's death.

Divide the class into six groups and give each one a character: Sandra, Stephen, Ruth, George, Iris or Anthony. Explain that all these people could have killed Rosemary, and ask them to think of reasons why their character could be the murderer. They should try to answer the following questions:

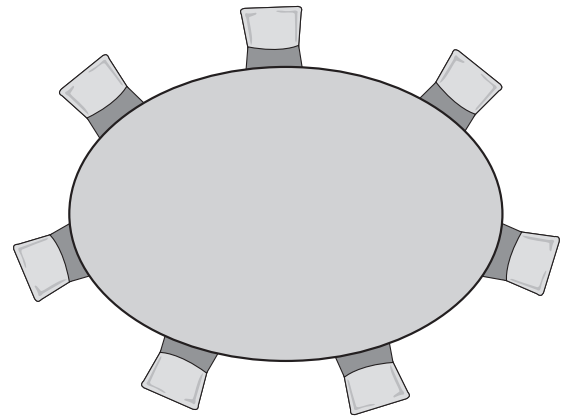
- How would they benefit from Rosemary's death – either materially or emotionally?
- Are there any quotes in the text, such as the one above, that they can use to support their case?

When students have prepared their ideas in groups, mix the class up into new groups so that each group has a person representing each character. Ask students to present their arguments in their new groups, and allow them time to talk. At the end, share ideas about who can put forward the most convincing case against their character, and what reasons they can give.

*After reading*

**3 Comprehension**

Ask students to label each place at the table with the name of the guest. What is significant about where each person sits? Which place is empty? Can they remember any comments made by any guests about where they sat?



**4 Language**

In this section, George proposes 'a toast' to Iris. Refer students to the Glossary for a definition of what this means, and ask if they have any similar terms or traditions in their own country. Ask why, in this instance, it is significant that everyone has a drink at the same time.

**5 Comprehension**

Before the party, different characters express their concerns about it. Recap with the class who these characters are, and ask students to think about why they might be worried about the party. Ask them to complete the following table:

Sandra Farraday	
Stephen Farraday	
Iris	
Colonel Race	

Discuss as a class what the students think about the party – is it a good idea, or does it seem strange? What would they do in George's position?

You can use this section to focus on the new character, Colonel Race. If the students have kept their notes from Part 1, they could use this as an opportunity to note down important details about his character, and how he is involved in the case.

**6 Writing**

Ask students to imagine they are police officers, and to write a short summary of the events on the night at the Luxembourg. They should include as much detail as they can about who was there, where they sat, and what happened on the night.

**CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES**

**Part 3 (Book 3, Chapters 1–7)**

*Before reading*

**1 Speaking**

Say to the class: *Were you surprised by what happened at the end of the last section? Did this change what you thought about the story so far?*

Ask students for their reactions to George’s death, and ask them to think about the following questions, giving reasons for their answers:

- Has George’s plan all along been to commit suicide?
- If it wasn’t suicide, it must have been murder. Who would want to murder George?
- How could the cyanide have got into his glass?

Ask students to discuss their ideas in pairs first, then have a discussion as a class.

**2 Comprehension**

In the previous section, George has a long discussion with Colonel Race about Rosemary’s death. Ask the students the following questions:

- 1 What was Colonel Race’s reaction when George suggests that her death wasn’t suicide?
- 2 Does Race question George in a friendly or a professional way? Why do you think this is?
- 3 Why did George want Race to be involved?
- 4 What details did Race ask about the night of the party?
- 5 Why does Race think that one of the women could have put the cyanide in Rosemary’s glass?
- 6 Why does Race ask George if he is sure he wants to investigate Rosemary’s death?

Students can discuss their ideas in pairs before you have a class discussion.

*After reading*

**3 Playing detective**

Ask the class to work in pairs and list all the minor characters who were in the Luxembourg on the night of George’s death. Refer them back to the table plan on page 51, and ask them to draw a similar one which shows the wider area of the restaurant where the party was held. Which other tables were near George’s, and who was sitting on them? Who was working in this area of the restaurant?

Ask students to make notes about what each character saw, and what they said. They can copy and complete the following table. If they haven’t managed to list all the characters in their pairs, they can copy the list now:

Name	Role and description	Saw ...
<b>Giuseppe Bolsano</b>	Waiter at Luxembourg for 12 years, very good reputation	
<b>Gerald Tollington</b>		Nothing related to the case – only interested in his girlfriend
<b>Patricia Brice-Woodworth</b>		
<b>Pedro Morales</b>		
<b>Christine Shannon</b>		
<b>The junior waiter</b>		A bag on the floor; he picked it up and put it on the chair

**4 Listening**

Play the section of the audio where Colonel Race and Ruth are having lunch and discussing the murders (pages 66–68). Ask the students whether the following sentences are true or false, and ask them to correct the false ones:

- 1 Ruth doesn’t want to talk about George’s death.
- 2 Ruth thinks that George was upset because Victor had asked for money on the morning of the party.
- 3 Ruth knew about the anonymous letters.
- 4 She tells Race that she was in love with George.
- 5 Race is sure that Ruth has told him everything she knows.

**5 Guess**

Say to the class: *If you were Colonel Race, what would you think at this point? Which characters would you want to know more about?*

Put students into groups to discuss what they think about the events. You can refer them back to the notes they made about each character in Part 1 and ask them to expand these now.

Ask: *Why does Race want to speak to Betty Archdale? In what way does he think that servants might be involved in this case?* Ask the class what information Betty gives Race, and why this might be significant.

**6 Writing**

Ask students to work individually and imagine they are Iris or Colonel Race. They should write a short diary extract of the day after George’s death, explaining what happened, how they feel about it, and what they are doing about it.

**CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES**

**Part 4 (Book 3, Chapters 8–14)**

*Before reading*

**1 Speaking**

Go back to the section in Part 2 when Anthony asks Iris to marry him (pages 38–39). Ask students what they think about this action – is Anthony behaving strangely when he does this, or does he have a good reason for wanting to marry Iris? What would he gain from marrying her? How has Anthony’s character been developed up to this point?

Remind students of significant details, such as the fact that Anthony has been in prison, he won’t visit Iris at home, and how he spoke to Rosemary earlier in the story, on page 18:

*‘You had better not. You don’t want your pretty face slashed, do you? There are people around who are very happy to ruin a girl’s beauty.’* What does this show about Anthony’s character? How is he different to George and to Stephen Farraday? Is Iris right to trust him, or should she have listened to George’s concerns about him? Who else has expressed concerns about Anthony? If he is a trustworthy character, what other reasons might he have for acting the way he does?

**2 Comprehension**

Use this opportunity to focus on the character of Victor Drake, if you have not already done so. Ask students to give a brief description of his character and his role in the story so far. Which people in the story have met him in person? Where has he been during this story, and who has he been in contact with? Ask students for their opinions about his behaviour, and about that of his mother, Lucilla. Is she right to treat him the way she does, or should she act differently?

*After reading*

**3 Speaking**

Refer students back to the discussion you had in ‘Before reading’. Were they surprised to discover that Anthony has been working undercover? Ask students to discuss in pairs how Anthony feels about Iris, and why he has acted the way he has. Can they now explain why he threatened Rosemary in the way shown in the quotation above?

**4 Comprehension**

Answer the following questions:

- 1 What did the waiter, Pierre, do on the night of the murder?
- 2 Who is Chloe West, and what was she supposed to do at the Luxembourg that night?
- 3 Why is Stephen invited to a private interview at the police station?

- 4 Why doesn’t he tell them that Sandra knew about his affair with Rosemary?
- 5 Who does Anthony think is the most likely person to have killed Rosemary and George? What is wrong with this idea?
- 6 What did Iris find in her handbag on the night of the murder?
- 7 In the café, what does Race realize about what happens when people sit at a table?
- 8 Why is Iris’s life now in danger?

**5 Research**

Ask students to find out more information about the following topics:

- 1 Colonel Race and Anthony Browne discuss the ghost of Banquo in Shakespeare’s play *Macbeth*. Refer students to the Cultural notes for information, then ask them to research the story line in more detail. Why is this a fitting comparison for Race to use, in the light of what he now knows about George’s plan to bring Chloe West to the restaurant?
- 2 Anthony and Race both work for the Secret Service. Ask students to find out information online about the kind of activities they might have done, and why they might have to work undercover at times.

**6 Writing**

Ask students to write a summary of the story from Ruth or Victor Drake’s point of view. They can use the following ideas to help them:

Ruth  
always worked hard for George / hated Rosemary / fell in love with Victor / knew he wanted money / killed George by mistake / tried to kill Iris

Victor  
sent away by family / did many different things / spent time in prison / can always get money from family / good at disguises and acting

Suggest an appropriate word limit.



**ANSWER KEY (CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES)**

**Part 1 (Book 1, Chapters 1–7)**

**1 Guess**

*Answers will vary.*

**2 Research**

A will says how money and property should be passed on; they were important to the upper classes because they didn't work and relied on inheritance for an income. Women were dependent on their husband's income. Property and land usually went to the eldest son. It is possible to make special conditions in a will.

**3 Comprehension**

- No, she married him because he was safe.
- To say how she wanted her possessions to be passed on.
- Because of special terms set out in Paul Bennett's will.
- To act as a chaperone to Iris – it would have been inappropriate for a widower to live with an unmarried young girl.
- That Rosemary was having a serious affair, and had planned to go away.
- She organizes his affairs, his time, his friends and his business.
- Anthony Browne and Stephen Farraday.
- Her cousin Victor Drake was in prison with him, and he tells her.

**4 Playing detective**

Name	Who?	Significant actions
<b>Rosemary Barton</b>	Iris's sister, George's wife	Dies before start of the story. She is rich, beautiful, and has affairs
<b>George Barton</b>	Rosemary's husband	A safe older man who gives Rosemary a good home
<b>Iris Marle</b>	Rosemary's younger sister	Goes to live with Rosemary and George when her mother dies. She is going out with Anthony
<b>Anthony Browne</b>	Went dancing with Rosemary but never fell in love with her	Now involved with Iris; he is also known as Tony Morelli but is very angry when Rosemary reveals that she knows this
<b>Stephen Farraday</b>	A young, ambitious politician, who had an affair with Rosemary	Arranges a marriage with Sandra to meet his political aims

<b>Sandra Farraday</b>	From a powerful political family, married to Stephen	Offers Stephen a solid and respectable marriage
<b>Ruth Lessing</b>	George's secretary	A very efficient, organized woman, who dislikes Rosemary
<b>Aunt Lucilla</b>	Chaperone to Iris, has one son, Victor Drake	Looks after Iris and will do anything for her son. Is described as 'rather silly'
<b>Victor Drake</b>	Iris and Rosemary's cousin, Lucilla's only son, he is living abroad when the story starts	Asks his mother for money to get himself out of trouble

**5 Speaking**

*Answers will vary.*

**Part 2 (Book 2, Chapters 1–6)**

**1 Research**

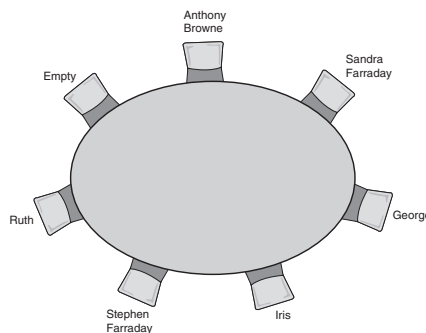
*Answers will vary.*

**2 Playing detective**

*Answers will vary.*

**3 Comprehension**

Sandra is on George's right and Iris is on his left. Iris wants to sit next to Anthony, but thinks George has deliberately separated them. Anthony is curious about the empty chair between him and Ruth.



**4 Language**

*Answers will vary.*

**5 Comprehension**

<b>Sandra Farraday</b>	Thinks it is a 'horrible' idea, bad publicity, doesn't want to go. Says 'I think it's a trap.'
<b>Stephen Farraday</b>	Agrees with Sandra – offers to go but to let her cancel at the last minute
<b>Iris</b>	Isn't happy about it; 'I suppose George knows what he's doing, but it seems madness to me.' (page 48)
<b>Colonel Race</b>	Advises George against taking this action and advises him to go to the police with what he knows about the letters

**6 Writing**

*Answers will vary.*

**Part 3 (Book 3, Chapters 1–7)**

**1 Speaking**

*Answers will vary.*

**2 Comprehension**

- He is shocked and surprised.
- In a professional way, because of his experience in the Secret Service.
- Because he knew he would be able to help him in this way.
- He asks about everything: who was there, who poured the wine, where they all sat, whether Iris had drunk champagne, and who might have had a motive.
- Because there were four women and three men, so there will always be one woman sitting down at the table on her own.
- Because the details about Rosemary's affairs will become public.

**3 Playing detective**

Name	Role and description	Saw...
<b>Giuseppe Bolsano</b>	Waiter at Luxembourg for 12 years, very good reputation	The guests drank the first bottle of champagne quickly, then he filled up the glasses and left the bottle in the ice bucket. After the cabaret they drank a toast, then went to dance. After that, they had another toast, then George died

## Sparkling Cyanide

*Agatha Christie*

<b>Gerald Tollington</b>	Guest at restaurant, sitting nearby with his girlfriend Patricia	Nothing related to the case – only interested in his girlfriend
<b>Patricia Brice-Woodworth</b>	Guest at restaurant, sitting nearby with her boyfriend Gerald	Annoyed that she missed a murder happening in front of her
<b>Pedro Morales</b>	A Mexican businessman who was very drunk, sitting nearby with Christine Shannon	Nothing related to the case – noticed Ruth dancing and saw George die
<b>Christine Shannon</b>	Sitting nearby with Mr Morales	Noticed lots of useful details about how people acted and what they all did
<b>The junior waiter</b>	Working in this area of the restaurant but not specifically at this table	A bag on the floor; he picked it up and put it on the chair

- 3 Because they want to discuss his affair with Rosemary in private.
- 4 To avoid revealing that she might have had a motive for killing Rosemary.
- 5 Ruth, but she wasn't sitting anywhere near them.
- 6 A sachet that had contained cyanide.
- 7 People go back to where their belongings are, rather than their original seat.
- 8 The murderer had meant to kill her in order to get her money, so there might be another attack.

### 5 Research

*Answers will vary.*

### 6 Writing

*Answers will vary.*

### 4 Listening

- 1 False. Ruth does want to talk about it.
- 2 True
- 3 False. She says she didn't know about them.
- 4 True
- 5 False. He is sure there is something she hasn't told him.

### 5 Guess

*Answers will vary.*

### 6 Writing

*Answers will vary.*

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## Part 4 (Book 3, Chapters 8–14)

### 1 Speaking

*Answers will vary.*

### 2 Comprehension

*Answers will vary.*

### 3 Speaking

*Answers will vary.*

### 4 Comprehension

- 1 He saw a bag on the floor as he hurried past. He picked it up and put it back on the table.
- 2 She is an actress who was supposed to dress as Rosemary and come to the restaurant at a certain time.