

## Childrens Books Agatha Christie Loves

by Chazda Albright -

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### [Recommended Reading](#)

- [Recommended Reading: Exclamation Mark](#)
- [Recommended Reading: Dogs Don't Do Ballet](#)
- [Recommended Reading: Sam and Dave Dig a Hole](#)
- [Recommended Reading: The Most Magnificent Thing](#)
- [Recommended Reading: Touch the Brightest Star](#)
- [Recommended Reading: James Marshall](#)
- [Recommended Reading: Cornelia Funke](#)
- [Recommended Reading: The Book With NO Pictures](#)
- [TOP Books for the Local Library 2015](#)
- [The 20 Best Books for Baby](#)
- [20 Best Books for Pre-readers \(3-5 yrs\)](#)
- [The Best Wordless Books](#)
- [Detective Invisible – Kommissar Unsichtbar](#)
- Childrens Books Agatha Christie Loves

*Children's Books [Agatha Christie](#) Loves is an inspired idea I had while reading one of her novels. In the middle of Chapter Two, I realized that she wasn't really writing simply as the protagonist. She was telling us how she feels about certain special books from her childhood. She was using the voice of her protagonist as [an author surrogate](#).*

**Agatha Christie is the most successful fiction writer in history, worldwide. She is rated #3 in terms of sales across *all genres*, beaten only by The Bible and Shakespeare.**

**So maybe we should listen to her. Maybe.**

I'm currently reading [Postern of Fate](#), which is the last book Dame Agatha Christie ever wrote. It's a Tommy and Tuppence mystery, and as Dame Christie was in her 80s while writing this book, Tommy and Tuppence are in their 70s and have moved to a new home in the country for their retirement.

Now, this book has gotten a lot of flack from critical, impatient readers. About their gripes I can only say this: clearly they don't talk much to their grandmothers.

It's widely believed that Christie suffered Alzheimer's, and knowing she passed away only three years after writing this book, I'm amazed that she was able to bring this together. She really is the queen of mystery writing.

This was Christie's last story. It should not be devoured as you would her earlier works. It should be sidled up to with a hot drink and some time. Consideration.

### What Tuppence Thinks and Feels (and the clue)

What I find fascinating about this novel is that Christie mentions a slew of children's books in the first two chapters. In fact, much of the beginning of this novel is really about Tuppence sharing her thoughts on books she loved as a child and how she doesn't understand why more children don't read as much *these days* - which would have been 1972 or so.

As a structural plot point, well - *this doesn't address any plot point*. The point is clearly personal, the author's need to share with us something she thinks and feels. She has every right to do that.

It's sincere. It's clear that Tuppence must be the inner voice of Agatha Christie here. She is divulging her love of reading books from the age of five. About that she says (as Tuppence), "I read at five years old. Everybody could, when I was young."

Again, Christie all but lists the books she loved most as a child. There is no plot reason to do this and it doesn't really help build the Tuppence character, either. It's personal. It's her message to us: "*Read these books.*"

### Childhood Stories and Home

This is really interesting to me. When you realize too that the home in the novel is described to be the home Dame Christie retired into, this underscores the personal import of what are ultimately the woman's last words to her readers.

**Dame Christie wants us to know about her childhood love of books, not just theoretically but practically.** That there are moments in the story that seem to be repeated and a strong theme in the story is that Tommy and Tuppence have grown forgetful is *not* incidental. This is the author's reality, as tangible and specific as the books she names and the favored authors she mentions.

### An Impressive Hot Object

**One of the things I love about this book: a children's book is [the hot object](#)!** What starts as a nostalgic favorite read (which Tuppence can't help but start reading, though she really ought to be organizing her bookshelves (does this sound like something a writer might do? Hm...)) soon becomes the object that flings our retired investigators into a murder mystery.

Tuppence discovers a secret code written inside a children's book: *Mary Jordan did not die naturally. It was one of us. I think I know which.*

This has to be one of the coolest premises of a mystery book ever. The characters are witty and their funny banter is just very enjoyable. I sense that Dame Christie had fun with this story and that makes me happy.

## What Book Was It?

So what book was it, [the book](#) where a secret message was coded? It's a real book, one that Christie must have loved: [The Black Arrow by Robert Louis Stevenson](#).

This is the hot object, the important book that jump-starts the mystery, in Christie's last book. So I'm going to have to read it, naturally. But Christie mentions many other books as worthwhile reads from her childhood. Some of them I also love, but a fair number are unknown to me.

**So I've got some reading to do!**

## Agatha Christie's Children's Book Recommendations

**Here is the list of childhood reading Dame Agatha Christie recommends...**

These are the titles Agatha Christie specifically mentions as wonderful stories - and all just in the first two chapters of her book. (Click on an author name for more information about that person.)

### [Robert Louis Stevenson](#)

- **The Black Arrow (a.k.a. the hot object)**
- **Treasure Island**
- **Kidnapped**
- **Catriona**

### [Lewis Carroll](#)

- **Alice in Wonderland**
- **Alice Through the Looking Glass**

### [Mrs. Molesworth](#)

- **The Cuckoo Clock**

- **Four Winds Farm**
- **The Tapestry Room**

### [Andrew Lang](#)

- **The Red Romance**
- **The Orange Fairy Book**
- **The Pink Fairy Book**
- **The Lilac Fairy Book** (There are many Lang fairy books, but the Orange, Pink and Lilac are probably her favorites, as she mentions them specifically.)

### **An Eton Boy (a.k.a. George Nugent-Bankes)**

- [A Day of My Life: Everyday Experiences at Eton](#)

### [Stanley Weyman](#)

- **Under the Red Robe**
- **The Red Cockade** (Christie writes, “lots and lots of Weymans.”)

### [L. T. Meade \(a.k.a. Elizabeth Thomasina Meade Smith\)](#)

L.T. Meade is mentioned by name in particular, though none of her titles were mentioned. However, she was incredibly prolific - so lots to choose from!

### [A. A. Milne](#)

- **Winnie-the-Pooh**

### [Charlotte Yonge](#)

- **Unknown to History**
- [The Daisy Chain](#)

### [E. Nesbit](#)

- [The New Treasure Seekers](#)
- **The Psamayad / The Psammead** (trilogy, including **Five Children and It**)
- [The Story of the Amulet](#)

### [Anthony Hope](#)

- [The Prisoner of Zenda](#)

**Keep Reading, Keep Writing**

I think we should always be reading, always looking at what others have done and are doing. If one of the greatest writers known should have a list of favorite childhood books, you can bet I'll be adding those to my must-read list. How about you?

What books do you cherish? What do you recommend? Write below, let everyone know!

**Keep creating, no matter what.**

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