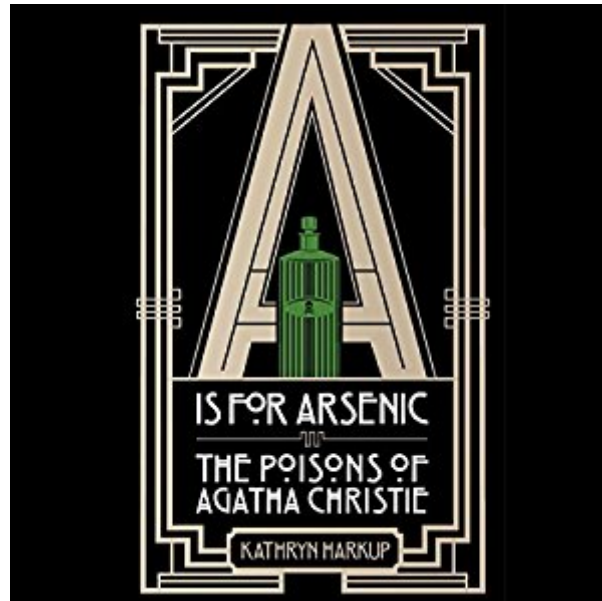




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# A Is For Arsenic: The Poisons Of Agatha Christie



## Synopsis

Agatha Christie's detailed plotting is what makes her books so compelling. Christie used poison to kill her characters more often than any other murder method, with the poison itself being a central part of the novel, and her choice of deadly substances was far from random; the chemical and physiological characteristics of each poison provide vital clues to the discovery of the murderer. With gunshots or stabbings the cause of death is obvious, but not so with poisons. How is it that some compounds prove so deadly and in such tiny amounts? Christie demonstrated her extensive chemical knowledge (much of it gleaned from her working in a chemists during both world wars) in many of her novels, but this is rarely appreciated by the reader. *A is for Arsenic* celebrates the use of science in Christie's work. Written by Christie fan and research chemist Kathryn Harkup, each chapter takes a different novel and investigates the poison (or poisons) the murderer used. *A is for Arsenic* looks at why certain chemicals kill, how they interact with the body, and the feasibility of obtaining, administering and detecting these poisons both at the time the novel was written and today. This book is published as part of the 125th anniversary celebration of Christie's birth.

## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 9 hours 50 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Audible Studios for Bloomsbury

Audible.com Release Date: September 10, 2015

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B0147NOMMC

Best Sellers Rank: #24 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Science > Chemistry #114

in Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Genres & Styles > Mystery & Detective

#117 in Books > Mystery, Thriller & Suspense > Mystery > Reference

## Customer Reviews

I was amazed at all the information in this book. Concentrating on the types of poisons used by Agatha Christie in her novels had to be pretty much a labor of love for British chemist Kathryn Harkup because you can tell immediately that she is also a fan of this great icon of crime fiction. The book is written from the British point of view with changes in book titles noted for the American

market. I really had my doubts that this subject matter could be presented in such a way that it held my attention for the time it took to read the book, but by the end I found myself wishing there was just one more chapter. But then I would have wanted another and another. The book is very stylishly presented with artwork which is wonderfully evocative of the 1930s art deco style that I somehow assign to the Christie novels even though they were not all written during, or for, that time period. Maybe the really good television series has something to do with that. Each chapter deals with one specific poison beginning with arsenic, then belladonna, cyanide, digitalis, eserine, hemlock, monkshood, nicotine, opium, phosphorus, ricin, strychnine, thallium, and veronal. Each chapter leads off with a brief synopsis of the major novel, or in one instance a short story, the author will be using as an example of the use of that specific poison, then moves on to the story (history) of the poison, how the poison works in the body to kill, whether there is an antidote, some real-life cases, and then how Christie used the poison. I had been afraid the chemistry associated with where the poison comes from and how it works within the body would have been either too technical or too boring for me to enjoy. Wow, was I ever wrong. I discovered all kinds of wonderful facts. This book is wonderfully readable by those of us who aren't trained in the science of chemicals. Plus Kathryn Harkup has a very wry sense of humor which caused me to get some strange looks when I was sitting in a doctor's waiting room laughing out loud while reading a book about poisons. Let's just say the chairs on each side of me became vacant when someone asked what book I was reading. This is the type of book Agatha Christie fans will keep right on the shelf with all their copies of the novels for reference during future re-readings of the novels. Because let's face it, if you love Agatha Christie novels you don't read them just once. Another fascinating section of the book is Appendix 1: Christie's Causes of Death. This is a chart listing each novel and short story written by Agatha Christie and the method of the murder in that story. Sometimes, with multiple victims there are multiple murder methods. I found this absolutely fascinating and used the list to make sure I do own each story Christie wrote. Actually I own them multiple times over, but there is no need to go into my personal addiction here. In discussing how Christie used the poisons the author has revealed some spoilers, but she always warns the reader to skip ahead to another section if they aren't familiar with the story and don't want to know who and how. I really appreciated how Harkup complimented Christie on her thoroughness and knowledge when it was warranted, but she didn't hesitate on several occasions to point out that Christie had gotten some things wrong. Interesting for me was how seldom Christie made mistakes in her information. This book is most definitely aimed at the devoted Agatha Christie fan. I found it fascinating and if you didn't, well.....I challenge you to a duel with the infamous Calabar bean! Added Sept. 10, 2015: I received this book as an ARC through

the Vine Voices program. Often ARC copies don't hold up very well over time and they will have portions omitted because it is not the shelf-ready book. I enjoyed this one so much I purchased the finished copy in hard cover to keep on my shelf for reference material when I'm reading mysteries.

If you are a huge Agatha Christie fan this is the perfect book for your collection. I have loved Agatha Christie mysteries for many moons and I A IS FOR ARSENIC THE POISONS OF AGATHA CHRISTIE BY KATHRYN HARKUP is a great addition to my collection. It takes every poison Christie used ( and she used plenty. It was her favorite method of killing) and not only gives you the run down on the poison but the novel or short story it was used in. Dont miss this one. Its more of a reference book but as a Christie fan you will enjoy, I did

A fun examination of the various poisons Agatha Christie used in her novels. I bought this as a gift for my girlfriend for Valentine's Day. She's not a fan of the consumerism, but loved receiving a book about poisons. As a fan of Christie, she enjoyed this analysis.

An interesting mixture of the science of poisons in A. Christies works. Historic info about murder over time, some descriptions of cases which paralleled Christie characters, plus a fair amount of chemistry, which can be studied or skimmed. A book club read. One of these topical interests is a good reason for this read. Well presented. If not interested in these topics, skip this one.

Awesome gift!

Great book!

This is a great book for fans of Agatha Christie. Even though her books are more sedate and lack high speed chases and the like, they still used very complex and subtle methods for crime. Poison was one of her favorite methods. And she researched her facts well when she used her poisons. The more complex the effects the more involved the plot.

This is a fun resource for Agatha Christie fans. I loved getting a peek at the poisons Agatha used in her books, how they worked, and famous cases involving them. I will definitely be adding this to books on Christie and look forward to reading the chapters with Christie's corresponding books. Full Review: <http://iwishilivedinalibrary.blogspot.com/2015/09/a-is-for-arsenic-review.html>

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