

# Movies & Languages 2018-2019

## *Murder on the Orient Express*

**About the movie** (subtitled version)

<b>DIRECTOR</b>	Sidney Lumet
<b>YEAR/COUNTRY</b>	1974 / GB
<b>GENRE</b>	Thriller
<b>ACTORS</b>	A. Finney, L. Bacall, I. Bergman, J. Bisset, S. Connery, A. Perkins, V. Redgrave, R. Widmark, M. York



### PLOT

The film begins with scenes from a famous kidnapping case, which eventually proves to have been the motive for the murder, and then follows detective Hercule Poirot's journey from Istanbul on the Orient Express until when the train is broken out of the deep snow in Yugoslavia.

In December 1935, Poirot is returning to England. The morning after the train's departure from Istanbul, an American business tycoon, Samuel Ratchett, tries to secure Poirot's services for \$15,000 since he has received many death threats, but Poirot finds the case of little interest and turns it down. The train proceeds to Yugoslavia, where it is stopped by snow. Ratchett is found stabbed in his carriage the following morning and Poirot is called upon to solve the murder. They enlist the help of Dr. Constantine, a Greek medical doctor, who is travelling in another coach with non-suspect Signor Bianchi (a director of the train company). Pierre Michel, the French conductor of the car, also assists in the investigation, as well as being a suspect.

Discovered at the scene of the crime are a pipe cleaner, a woman's handkerchief with the initial "H" and a fragment of a burned letter. Upon examining the letter, Poirot discovers that Ratchett's real name was Lanfranco Cassetti - a Mafia gangster responsible for many crimes. This is just the beginning of the interesting information which emerges, enabling Poirot to solve the case and find an explanation which will satisfy both the authorities and all the passengers.

### LANGUAGE

Many varied accents and degrees of fluency in English (and other languages), as many of the passengers are foreigners. Moreover, several of them are pretending to be someone else, who would have better or worse English. We have various American and British accents, together with French, Swedish, German, Russian, Hungarian and Italian versions.

### GRAMMAR

The film gives many good examples of use of the passive without an agent. The plot lends itself to this structure as we do not know who carried out the actions mentioned until the very end of the film. "He has been fatally stabbed"; "But something was added" (to Ratchett's bedtime Valerian

drops); "He was drugged"; "God's own laws have been broken"; "The door was chained from within"; "A repulsive murderer has himself been murdered."

There is also use of the passive without the agent to avoid mentioning who carried out the action: "It was found in the ashtray in his room" (the pipe cleaner), where Poirot does not want to say that *he* found it.

Finally, we have two cases where BY + AGENT is used to emphasize the importance of the agent: "Poirot has been appointed **by me** to investigate", showing the great authority the train company director has on his company's own train, and "The murder was committed **by someone on this coach**". In this last sentence, even though we do not know the exact identity of the murderer, it is obviously very important to narrow down the identity of the possible suspect(s).

## VOCABULARY

<b>A Frog:</b> a derogatory term for a Frenchman	<b>A low down:</b> in this case, a nasty person, worth very little
<b>To incommode:</b> an antiquated term for "to inconvenience"	<b>To yarn:</b> to tell long stories, usually about the past, and give opinions on them, generally in informal situations
<b>To undertake:</b> to commit yourself to doing something and to start doing it	<b>An ordeal:</b> a long, unpleasant experience
<b>To dwindle:</b> decrease gradually in size, strength or intensity	<b>COLLOQUIAL PHRASES AND IDIOMATIC ENGLISH</b>
<b>To tap</b> (wires): to bug, listen secretly by an inserted connection to another's voice device	<b>Let's get things straight!:</b> Now we/I explain things better, so that there is no confusion
<b>To stab:</b> viciously push a pointed instrument into another person, generally with the hope of killing them	<b>Shoot!:</b> Tell me immediately. You can talk now!
<b>Deceased:</b> dead	<b>To get around to</b> (doing) <b>something:</b> to do something after you have been intending to do it for a long time
<b>Shallow:</b> not deep	<b>How does that strike you?:</b> What is your immediate impression after hearing that? What is your gut reaction? How do you feel about that?
<b>Scratch:</b> a long, narrow, superficial cut on the outer surface of someone or something	<b>I'll be around:</b> If you want to communicate with me again, you can contact me and I agree to communicate with you.
<b>Ransom:</b> money demanded or paid to let a "stolen" person go.	<b>That is the extent of</b> (my Swedish/knowledge): I can only understand/say this much; I know nothing more on this subject.
<b>To summon:</b> order to be present or come	<b>To plant evidence:</b> to put incriminating things or words or pictures in particular places, usually to make other people think that a pre-selected person committed a crime
<b>To incriminate:</b> make someone appear guilty	<b>Rotten show!:</b> antiquated, colloquial, upper-class expletive, meaning that something done was very unpleasant, terribly bad in quality or morally unacceptable
<b>To mutter:</b> speak in a low voice and not very understandably	<b>To be of</b> (German) <b>extraction:</b> my family came from there
<b>To figure out:</b> to succeed in understanding an argument or situation	
<b>To yammer</b> (on): talk loudly and continuously, usually in a repetitive fashion	