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## ***Just What Is A Cozy Mystery?***

The *cozy*, also known as a *village, domestic*, or *traditional* mystery, is one which employs the characteristics popularized by the Grand Dame of Detection, Agatha Christie. This formula is still a bestseller today, with many talented contemporary practitioners successfully entertaining cozy fans with their modern version of this classic form.

The main features of a cozy are:

\* *There is always at least one death by unnatural causes*; indeed, it sometimes seems as if no one could possibly still be alive in Joan Hess's Ozarks town of Maggody or the sleepy Scottish village of Lochdubh policed by Constable Hamish Macbeth. But the violence is always kept "off-screen", in deference to the reader's sensibility. Likewise, the language is genteel, with little or no profanity. And while there is often a romantic element, steamy sex is virtually non-existent.

\* *The victim and the murderer are usually well-known to each other*, members of the same family, village, or social circle (usually of the "better" classes). Indeed, the entire action is usually confined to a country estate, small town, or similar setting. Even those stories with more exotic locales, such as Christie's "Murder on the Orient Express", tend to focus exclusively on a small group of people who, when thrown together by fate, quickly come to love and hate each other as thoroughly as if they were long-time family or neighbors. The classic cozies took place in small English

villages like Miss Marple's St. Mary Meade, but contemporary American writers have managed to convey a similar claustrophobic atmosphere in small towns in New England, the South, and elsewhere.

\* *The sleuth is most often an amateur*, like the prototypical nosy little old lady, Miss Marple. He or she brings personal resources such as keen curiosity and a knowledge of human nature to their detection, rather than the more technical skills and tools of the professional detective. When "pros", such as "consulting detective" Hercule Poirot or CID Inspector Alleyn, appear in a cozy, the focus is on the quirks of their character and their relationship to the community under investigation rather than on advanced crime-fighting techniques.

\* *The murderer in a cozy is generally an amateur as well*, killing for love, an inheritance, or to hide a secret transgression which would "ruin" him or her. The choice of weapon reflects this amateur status, with poison or a nearby blunt object (the ubiquitous poker) far outranking more "professional" methods such as shooting or strangling.

\* *Good always wins out over evil in a cozy*, the culprit is always found out, and generally, love triumphs over all. While domestic murder is hardly an advertisement for "family values", the cozy generally reinforces an old-fashioned belief in the rightness of the social structure and the essential goodness, if weakness, of most people.

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# The Cozy Mystery

Classic &  
Contemporary  
Favorites  
in the  
Traditional Style

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## Contemporary British Masters

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### Marian Babson

*Trixie Dolan & Evangeline Sinclair*, aging ex-movie stars, who find the roles of their lives as amateur sleuths

### M.C. Beaton

*Agatha Raisin*, romance-hungry Cotswold retiree

*Hamish Macbeth*, unambitious Scottish village constable

### Michael Bond

*M. Pamplemousse*, undercover food critic, and his faithful canine companion Pommes Frites

### Simon Brett

*Mrs. Pargeter*, irrepressible widow

### Rhys Bowen

*Evan Evans*, village constable in the mountains of North Wales

### Dorothy Cannell

*"The Thin Woman"*, the formerly fat Ellie Haskell, along with her handsome husband Ben, a chef, and the other denizens of the suitably gothic Merlin's Court

### Caroline Graham

*Tom Barnaby*, mild-mannered chief inspector in a small English town

### Martha Grimes

*Inspector Richard Jury* & a village pub full of eccentric characters

### Anne Morice

*Tessa Crichton*, actress & wife of Scotland Yard inspector Robin Price

### John Mortimer

*Horace Rumpole*, grumpy but lovable barrister, who gets to the bottom of many a crime despite the nagging of She Who Must Be Obeyed — his wife Hilda

### Patricia Moyes

*Henry Tibbett*, globe-trotting Scotland Yard inspector, & his wife Emmy

### Elizabeth Peters

*Amelia Peabody Emerson*, turn-of-the-century Egyptologist & feminist

### Dorothy Simpson

*Luke Thanet*, police inspector & amiable family man in Kent

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## The Classic Cozy

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### Margery Allingham

*Albert Campion*, upper-class amateur sleuth who is aided in his detection by the somewhat dubious talents and connections of his manservant Lugg, a reformed crook

### Agatha Christie

*Miss Jane Marple*, the elderly marvel of St. Mary Meade, whose keen eyes and warm heart help her to uncover crimes that baffle the experts

*Hercule Poirot*, Belgian detective whose "little grey cells" enable him to solve any mystery, ably assisted by his friend Captain Hastings and the long-suffering Inspector Jappe of Scotland Yard

*Tommy & Tuppence Beresford*, "Partners in Crime", a British version of Hollywood's Nick and Nora Charles

### John Creasy

*"The Toff"*, an elegant and roguish young man "down from Cambridge with half a million and a hatred of dullness" which involves him in many a crime caper

### Ngaio Marsh

*Inspector Roderick Alleyn*, who has forsaken his upper-class upbringing to become a policeman tasked with investigating murder in his former social circle

### Dorothy L. Sayers

*Lord Peter Wimsey*, the quintessential "upper class wit", whose foolish appearance masks a cunning mind and a heroic spirit

### Josephine Tey

*Inspector Alan Grant*, who enjoys being a policeman despite a sizable inheritance because it keeps him mentally active

### Patricia Wentworth

*Miss Maud Silver*, former governess & private detective

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*Titles by these authors may be found in the Mystery section of the Fiction Room on the second floor of the Library.*

*Please ask the staff for assistance in finding these or other books for your leisure reading enjoyment.*

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## Malice Domestic, American Style

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### Lilian Jackson Braun

*Jim Qwilleran*, newspaper columnist & the wealthiest man in Pickax County, and his uncanny Siamese cats Koko & Yum Yum

### Jill Churchill

*Jane Jeffrey*, Chicago homemaker

### Diane Mott Davidson

*Goldy Bear*, Aspen Meadow, CO caterer

### Earlene Fowler

*Bennie Harper*, ex-cowgirl & quilter

### Sarah Graves

*Jacobia Tiptree*, former NYC financial whiz, now restoring an old house & solving murders in Down East Maine

### Carolyn Hart

*Annie Darling*, owner of the SC island mystery bookstore, "Death on Demand"

*Henrietta O'Dwyer Collins* (Henrie O.) retired newshound

### Joan Hess

*Arly Hanks*, chief of police in Maggody, Arkansas (pop. 755)

### Jane Langton

*Homer Kelly*, Harvard lecturer & former Boston police detective

### Charlotte MacLeod

*Max Bittersohn*, art detective, his wife *Sarah Kelling*, and her loony if blue-blooded Boston family

*Professor Peter Shandy*, Maine college botany professor & his librarian wife

### Margaret Maron

*Deborah Knott*, North Carolina district judge

### Sharyn McCrumb

*Elizabeth MacPherson*, forensic anthropologist & enthusiastic fan of all things Scottish

### Katherine Hall Page

*Faith Sibley*, minister's wife & gourmet cook

### Nancy Pickard

*Jenny Cain*, seacoast New England civic foundation director

### Virginia Rich

*Eugenia Potter*, world-class cook (series continued by Nancy Pickard after Rich's death)