

A black and white photograph of a person in a dark, textured costume, possibly a mouse, standing in a room with a white floor and walls. The person is looking slightly to the right.

THE MOUSETRAP DRAMATURGY & CONCEPT PACKET

The play premiered on November 25, 1952, and has been running continuously ever since. It is the longest-running play in HISTORRRYYYY. This play began as a radio play at the request of the BBC for Queen Mary's 80th birthday in 1947. In 1948, she expanded it to a short short. And then in 1952 it was adapted for the stage by Agatha, adding characters and changing the names from Three Blind Mice to The Mousetrap. Three blind mice was loosely based on the real-life murder case of the young foster boy Dennis O'Neil in 1945. Christie donated her earnings from the play to a children's charity, which demonstrates the profound impact the genesis of the story had on her.



World War II devastated England's cities, leading to significant loss of civilian life and infrastructure damage, while its economy was crippled by debt and shortages. The war also brought widespread social upheaval, including mass evacuations and rationing, but also forged a stronger national identity and led to the creation of the modern welfare state. On a global scale, the war marked the end of Britain's status as a global superpower and accelerated the decolonization of its empire.





Berkshire was far more rural but very close to London. "The distance from London to rural Berkshire varies, but it's generally considered to be on London's doorstep. The county starts immediately to the west of Greater London." By Train: The train from London Paddington to Reading, a major hub in Berkshire, can take as little as 24 minutes, while journeys to more rural parts of the county would be longer. The Berkshires are beautiful, quaint, quiet, and in the 1940/50s they had some very harsh and unusually cold winters. In urban areas of Berkshire, there was still damage from World War II, with some vacant bomb sites and unrepainted houses.

THEMES

What can you put your trust in when the infrastructure you relied on has crumbled or can't be trusted?

This is a great connector for us. It is very much true for 1940's England, and it also feels true now as we witness the policies of our administration alongside the rise of AI and the shifting landscape of our global society. Regardless of where anyone may fall politically, we can all feel the tide of change we are in and the destabilizing effect that has on how we meet each other as strangers. This gives me great compassion and understanding for the uncertainty that the people of 1950s Britain faced each morning.

Everyone is so wildly interesting. Don't you agree:

Christopher Wren says this in the first act, and I believe this is Agatha herself speaking to us. She loved to observe and analyze human nature, and she has gifted us eight incredibly rich humans to get gritty with.

FORM

We will honor this play's rich history and evolution by beginning and concluding our production as a radio play. Additionally, this style shift invites our audience to hover above the show as if they are detectives.

STYLE

Brit Noir! It's a style classic to suspense films from the 1950s in England post World War II. Like all good Noir, this style favors suspense, mystery, and shadows, but most importantly, it holds in contrast the beautiful and the grotesque.

NOW VS. THEN

We must highlight and magnify the suspense this world presents. It's been 70 years, and what was suspenseful in 1950s is not quite as shocking to us in 2025. We will honor Agatha's heart and intent and lean into the suspense. This will be represented by a darker set with shadowy corners, featuring suspenseful sound effects, bolder costumes, dramatic lighting, and, of course, carefully calculated character choices. Note on Color: I think we should lean into blues and greens for a scenic look, and do not need to stick to the 1950s colors of yellow, brown, and maroon. We lean towards the feeling rather than a hyper-accurate color palette and dressing.

SCENIC

We will follow a traditional design with at least 4 doors or exits and a big bay window. I'd love to have several sitting areas to play with. The stage should be a beautiful setting, setting us up for it to become menacing when the lights are turned out. The fireplace, practical lamps, and a chandelier would be rad. If the corners, tops, and edges of the set are plunged into darkness we will give the house a feeling of also being in this tension of the now and then.



LIGHTING

I really want to experiment with how the lighting works and create red herrings and suspense. I'd love the murder scene to only have outside light from the big window and snowy night, and perhaps a skylight casting stark shadows. Theatrical noir lighting throughout, maybe long shadows as people are about to come down the stairs.

Sound

We will adhere to time and logic here, but the drama lies in the contrast and volume. A window flies open, and obscures the voices arguing over the gales of wind. It slams shut, and the air is eerily quiet. Localized sound would be amazing. And definitely a step and a door hinge that squeak everytime.



Costumes

Here is a fun place to play. We can stay within the style of 1940-50s, but the color palette can relax into what will pop. The costumes should immediately reveal the archetype we are seeing. Agatha loves to introduce the archetype and then complicate them for us slowly. The color choices, textures, and patterns can be fun and full of life because these people are what is wildly fascinating.



PROPS & SET DRESSING

The house is a character. It should feel very alive and full of intrigue, like an eye spy picture. There are interesting things everywhere. I'm interested in things that can feel beautiful or ornate, and then when the lights are turned down, they look dangerous or menacing. Example: A crystal candy bowl that reflects the light and then we see the sharp, knife-like knob on the top later. Remembering that the house is a relic of old money and family wealth that has spent the war days fading and feeling the lack of upkeep and investment is important.

