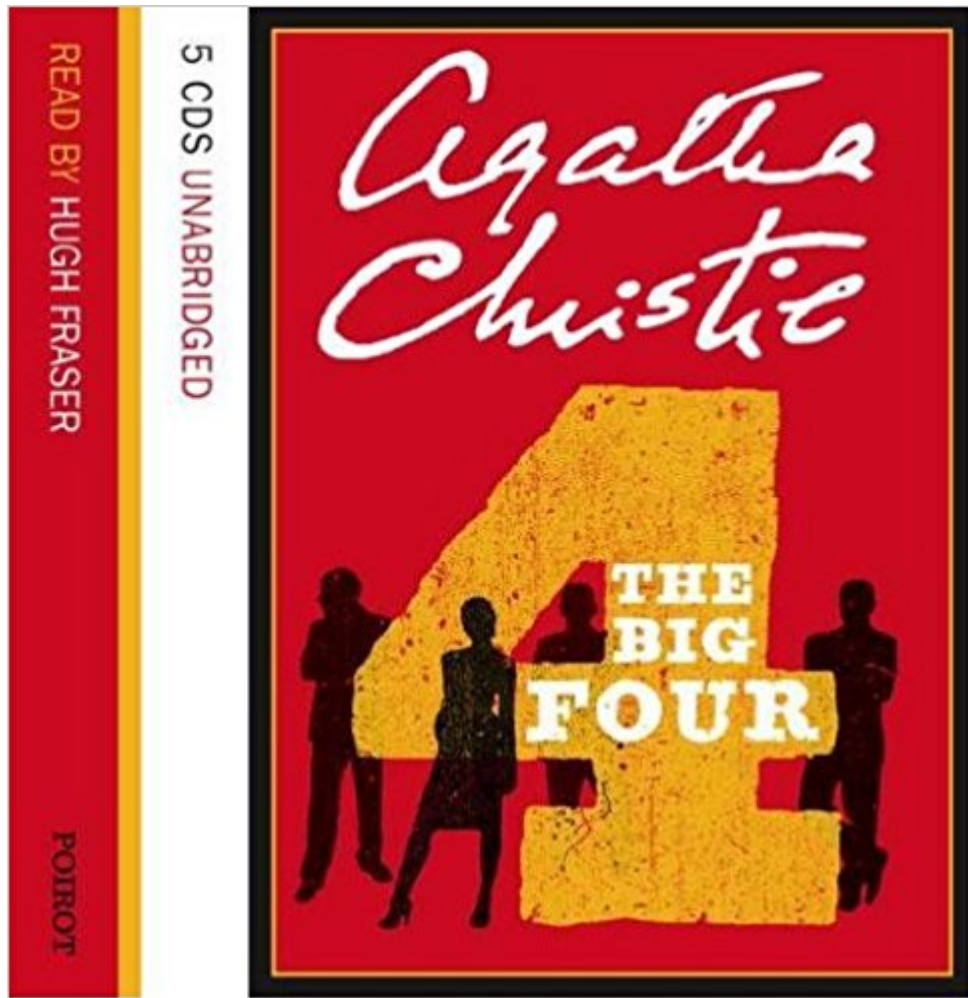




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The Big Four



Synopsis

A Poirot classic superbly read by Hugh Fraser. Beautiful new packaging with stunning cover designs. When put all together these create a fantastic collection of audio spine by spine... Framed in the doorway of Poirot's bedroom stood an uninvited guest, coated from head to foot in dust. The man's gaunt face stared for a moment, then he swayed and fell. Who was he? Was he suffering from shock or just exhaustion? Above all, what was the significance of the figure 4, scribbled over and over again on a sheet of paper? Poirot finds himself plunged into a world of international intrigue, risking his life to uncover the truth about 'Number Four'.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

One of mystery fiction's most beloved heroes, Hercule Poirot, is brought vividly to life in this delightful audio production. Originally published in 1927, this outing thrusts Poirot into one of Christie's most outlandish and melodramatic adventures. It finds her Belgian detective pitted against an international quartet of criminal masterminds bent on world domination. Narrator Fraser is no stranger to Poirot's world, having played the detective's faithful companion, Captain Hastings, in several made-for-TV movies. A gifted reader, he obviously enjoys interpreting this material, and he perfectly captures each of Christie's diverse characters, shifting flawlessly from one to the other. But it is in his portrayal of Poirot that Fraser shines. With a well-tuned accent, Fraser brings out the full range of Christie's eccentric detective. This mystery may not be Christie's best, but with its over-the-top premise and international cast of villains, portrayed with relish by Fraser, it is certainly one of her most entertaining. (Jan.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed

"The acknowledged queen of detective fiction."Observer

I started getting into Poirot last month and love this series. This book took me a long time to read, maybe 10 days as opposed to the usual 2 or 3 days for Poirot mysteries. The reason is that this book was really hard to get into, it had such a long build up time and it was difficult to get invested into the characters since it's not in a closed settings. The underlying premise of this story is that Poirot is up against an extremely powerful, overreaching cabal that operates in the shadows- few government bodies know about this group, yet they are responsible for much of the chaos that is going on in Poirot's universe. I think this story itself progresses in the span of a year, maybe more maybe less it's tough to tell. The neat thing about taking me a long time to read this book as that made this whole ordeal feel drawn out, as it's supposed to. I read before I go to bed, and when I start back up the next night, I find that a few weeks or months have elapsed since I read the last part and it does help me feel the frustration Poirot must feel. Clues are extremely hard to come by, and Poirot seems to be growing increasingly paranoid as time passes. It's frustrating, it's unnerving, it's a massive conspiracy...you don't really know what the mystery you are trying to solve is until you are more than halfway into the book. This book is very different than any other Poirot book that I've read, and I can see it is not for everyone. Like I mentioned, Agatha Christie usually builds a rich environment of complex characters that you start to become invested in, as you learn about their relationships with each other and their lies. In the Big Four, you hardly know who you are dealing with and so you don't get to delve deep into the character psyche as much. Of course, we are invested in Poirot and Hastings but they are not the story here. I know this is intentional because the big four are supposed to be this super secret group of people that no one knows anything about, so I can't really fault Christie here. However, I wish we got to spend more time on the Countess and her story. As always, Poirot's and Hastings' relationship is out in full play. They have a very nuanced friendship that is very difficult to understand. I hope we see more of the two as I love their back and forth.

It's Agatha Christie, of *course* the writing is great! The Big 4, a millionaire, a scientist, a master of disguise, and a Chinaman, are trying to take over the world. Can Poirot stop them, or has the great detective finally met his match? Read the book and find out.

Although the subject matter is not my favorite, this book is much better than Christie's later works (the more recent her books, the more decline in quality of writing, in my experience). The book is good for the most part and I do love Hastings in the mix with Poirot. For me, the theme of the book is preposterous and seems more like an attempt at producing a "spy novel". Perhaps it was an experiment by the author. Nevertheless, I still find it interesting enough to read, mainly because of the Hastings-Poirot interactions. The writing is solid, just not as detailed or believable for me as most of the other work Ms. Christie achieved in the prime of her career.

I have read almost all Christie's books, and loved most. This is by far the worst book she wrote: evil conspiracies to rule the world, etc. Not worth reading, I'm afraid.

If you are a fan of Poirot, you will like this one. He is so involved with each character in mysterious ways, He listens to Hastings, not for input, but to satisfy Hastings. Each new character has a connection and solving that is the entire story. Enjoy.

Agatha Christie's "The Big Four" is a 1927 attempt to put Hercule Poirot into a "take over the world" plot and it works out just about as well as you'd think (i.e., not at all). It's not just that Poirot is a staid little detective whose forte is the intellectual solving of crime and the "take over the world" bit is more suited to an action oriented James Bond type of person. It's also that the "story" really isn't one story. It's really a series of extremely short cases that are tied together by a common set of antagonists ("The Big Four"). So, over the period of about a year, Poirot and Hastings jump from one isolated situation to another and Christie's attempt to link them into one plot doesn't really work. Also, because of the shortness of each "case," the solutions usually consist of Poirot just waving his "little gray cells" in the air and pulling an answer out. Inspector Japp gives a decent summary of this methodology in the book where he says to Poirot: "Who knows, his tie pin may be askew, and that may give you a valuable clue that will solve the mystery." Not a very satisfying bit of Poirot. Thus, I can rate it at only an OK 3 stars out of 5.

If this will be your first A.C. book, pass this one up. You need some back story for it. You will only end up disliking Poirot if you start here. Go for *The Mysterious Affair At Styles* instead. Because Poirot is amazing and you will love him. Ok, that said, is this my favorite book by A.C.? No. If this had been the first story of hers that I read, it would have likely been my last. But it's important. It is important in the life of Poirot, relevant to the time in which it was written, and it's a pretty good read.

I gave it 5 stars because, when you combine all those things, it deserves it.

I've read about a dozen Agatha Christie novels, and I'd easily give five stars to every one... except this one. It was far too predictable. For example, who could not have predicted the results of Poirot's demise? More importantly, it was much more of an adventure story, perhaps like the Sherlock Holmes Moriarty stories, or even 007, than a classic Christie whodunnit. The wonder of her murder mysteries is the feeling that this could actually happen. The biggest disappointment of *The Big Four* is the feeling that it couldn't possibly happen. Of course, it is an early work - 1927, I believe; so it does not dull my enthusiasm for the Queen of Mystery. And it is interesting to compare with her more masterful works. Even with its weaknesses, this is a mediocre novel written by a superior novelist.

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