

The following is an excerpt from Agatha Christie's *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* taken from [www.literaturepage.com](http://www.literaturepage.com). Read the story, and then answer the questions.

### CHAPTER 1: I Go to Styles

The intense interest aroused in the public by what was known at the time as "The Styles Case" has now somewhat subsided. Nevertheless, in view of the world-wide notoriety which attended it, I have been asked, both by my friend Poirot and the family themselves, to write an account of the whole story. This, we trust, will effectually silence the sensational rumours which still persist.

I will therefore briefly set down the circumstances which led to my being connected with the affair.

I had been invalided home from the Front; and, after spending some months in a rather depressing Convalescent Home, was given a month's sick leave. Having no near relations or friends, I was trying to make up my mind what to do, when I ran across John Cavendish. I had seen very little of him for some years. Indeed, I had never known him particularly well. He was a good fifteen years my senior, for one thing, though he hardly looked his forty-five years. As a boy, though, I had often stayed at Styles, his mother's place in Essex.

We had a good yarn about old times, and it ended in his inviting me down to Styles to spend my leave there. "The mater will be delighted to see you again--after all those years," he added. "Your mother keeps well?" I asked. "Oh, yes. I suppose you know that she has married again?"

I am afraid I showed my surprise rather plainly. Mrs. Cavendish, who had married John's father when he was a widower with two sons, had been a handsome woman of middle-age as I remembered her. She certainly could not be a day less than seventy now. I recalled her as an energetic, autocratic personality, somewhat inclined to charitable and social notoriety, with a fondness for opening bazaars and playing the Lady Bountiful. She was a most generous woman, and possessed a considerable fortune of her own.

Their country-place, Styles Court, had been purchased by Mr. Cavendish early in their married life. He had been completely under his wife's ascendancy, so much so that, on dying, he left the place to her for her lifetime, as well as the larger part of his income; an arrangement that was distinctly unfair to his two sons. Their step-mother, however, had always been most generous to them; indeed, they were so young at the time of their father's remarriage that they always thought of her as their own mother.

Lawrence, the younger, had been a delicate youth. He had qualified as a doctor but early relinquished the profession of medicine, and lived at home while pursuing literary ambitions; though his verses never had any marked success.

John practiced for some time as a barrister, but had finally settled down to the more congenial life of a country squire. He had married two years ago, and had taken his wife to live at Styles, though I entertained a shrewd suspicion that he would have preferred his mother to increase his allowance, which would have enabled him to have a home of his own. Mrs. Cavendish, however, was a lady who liked to make her own plans, and expected other people to fall in with them, and in this case she certainly had the whip hand, namely: the purse strings. John noticed my surprise at the news of his mother's remarriage and smiled rather ruefully.

"Rotten little bounder too!" he said savagely. "I can tell you, Hastings, it's making life jolly difficult for us. As for Evie--you remember Evie?"

"No."

**Subskill # 2****Recall Information: Sequence Part I**

"Oh, I suppose she was after your time. She's the mater's factotum, companion, Jack of all trades! A great sport--old Evie! Not precisely young and beautiful, but as game as they make them."

**Now answer the following questions.**

1. Why did Hastings write the story about *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*?
  - A. Because Agatha Christie asked him too.
  - B. Because of the intense interest aroused in the public.
  - C. Because of his friend and the Cavendish family.
  - D. Because he wanted to silence the sensational rumours.
2. According to the passage, Hastings and John Cavendish were:
  - A. Best friends
  - B. Old acquaintances
  - C. Relatives
  - D. Strangers
3. Which of these events led Hastings to Styles Court?
  - A. He was an invalid
  - B. He had a month in which to do nothing
  - C. He met John Cavendish
  - D. He loved the country
4. Mrs. Cavendish was:
  - A. Was a wealthy woman in her own right
  - B. Was very young when she married Mr. Cavendish
  - C. Had two sons before she married Mr. Cavendish
  - D. Was a very unattractive woman
5. Which of these events happened first?
  - A. Hastings wrote about Styles Court
  - B. Hastings met his friend Poirot
  - C. Hastings spent time in a convalescent home
  - D. Hastings was wounded in a war
6. What does Hastings know about Mrs. Cavendish?
  - A. She was a widow when she married Mr. Cavendish
  - B. She was a generous woman
  - C. She moved from Styles Court after her husband's death
  - D. She never married again
7. How many people lived at Styles Court?
  - A. 5
  - B. 4
  - C. 3
  - D. 2
8. According to the passage, Lawrence was:
  - A. The oldest son
  - B. A lawyer
  - C. A writer
  - D. A practicing doctor

**Subskill # 2****Recall Information: Sequence Part I**

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| <p>9. According to the passage, John was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A. Unmarried</li><li>B. A doctor</li><li>C. The oldest son</li><li>D. A jack of all trades</li></ul> | <p>10. Why was John unhappy with his stepmother?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A. She was generous to a fault</li><li>B. She loved Lawrence more than John</li><li>C. She paid Evie too much money</li><li>D. She wouldn't give him enough money to move</li></ul> |
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**Answer Key**

1. C
2. B
3. C
4. A
5. D
6. B
7. A
8. C
9. C
10. D