

# Doctor Who: Mummy on the Orient Express

Based on the screenplay by Jamie Mathieson.



## About the writer

Jamie Mathieson has written for the UK TV programmes *Being Human* and *Dirk Gently* and for series 8, 9 and 10 of *Doctor Who*. In series 8 he wrote *Mummy on the Orient Express* and *Flatline*.

## About the programme

*Mummy on the Orient Express* is episode 8 of the eighth *Doctor Who* series. The Doctor is played by Peter Capaldi, and his companion, Clara, by Jenna Coleman. The background to the story comes from Agatha Christie's 1934 novel, *Murder on the Orient Express*.

## Summary

The story takes place on the Orient Express, not headed to Istanbul but flying through space because this is a replica of the original train. The Doctor has chosen it for his last journey with Clara. The passengers are wearing clothes from the 1920s. But also on the train is a mummy with a mission to kill them. Nothing seems to be able to stop it. The Doctor must find a way and save the lives of the passengers. He does so, but only after the mummy has killed again and again, each time unseen by anyone except his victim, always after a countdown from 66 seconds.

**Chapter 1:** An old lady in a wheelchair, Mrs Pitt, eating with a younger lady, Maisie Pitt, sees the mummy approaching. The younger woman can see nothing. The mummy comes closer and then it kills Mrs Pitt. Inside the baggage carriage, the TARDIS materialises and the Doctor steps out, followed by Clara.

**Chapter 2:** The Doctor and Clara enter the dining carriage. He says Clara has a sad smile, and he doesn't

understand because she seems to be showing two emotions at the same time. Clara is sad and conflicted because this is her final journey with the Doctor – and she loves travelling with him! She feels she can't travel with him anymore because they have different ideas about what is important in life. Later, the Doctor and Clara learn about Mrs Pitt's death.

**Chapter 3:** From her room, Clara phones her boyfriend, Danny. He advises her to enjoy her train journey with the Doctor. In the next room, the Doctor is pacing up and down. He decides to leave his room – he has a mystery to solve. In the engineer's workshop carriage, the Doctor meets Perkins, the Chief Engineer, who makes it clear that he too has suspicions about Mrs Pitt's death.

**Chapter 4:** As Clara leaves her room, Maisie walks past. Clara follows her. There is a computer lock on the end carriage door. Maisie Pitt tries a verbal command. The computer, who has a friendly voice and wants to be called Gus, refuses to open the door. Maisie tells Clara that they wouldn't let her see the old lady's body. She then hits the lock with her shoe and the door opens. They enter the carriage and the door locks shut behind them. Meanwhile, in the dining carriage, the Doctor is talking to Professor Moorhouse about the legend of the Foretold, a mummy that has stayed alive for thousands of years. It kills people, and nobody has managed to kill it. Then, in the kitchen, the mummy appears and kills Stumpy, one of the chefs.

**Chapter 5:** Captain Quell tells the staff that Stumpy's death was a heart attack, nothing more. Meanwhile, in the end carriage, Maisie tells Clara that the old lady was really her grandmother, not her mother. The old lady's body isn't in the end carriage but they see a large box, perhaps for a mummy. Meanwhile, in Quell's office, the Doctor challenges him to try to stop the killings. As he leaves, Perkins gives the Doctor a set of documents relating to the train and passengers.

**Chapter 6:** The Doctor calls Clara, who says that she's trapped. He runs to the end carriage door and uses the sonic screwdriver on the lock, but it doesn't work. On the phone, Clara tells him that there is a large box in the carriage. It is beginning to open, glowing red as smoke pours out of it. Once again, the countdown starts. In the bar, the mummy kills an armed guard. The Doctor tells the assembled passengers that they are all experts on aliens and his theory that not only has somebody picked them to analyse the mummy, but they are listening in.

## Doctor Who: Mummy on the Orient Express

**Chapter 7:** The engines stop and the carriage turns into a lab. Gus says that their purpose is to capture the mummy. There is an ancient cloth, which Gus put on the train because the mummy always follows it. Then the Professor sees the mummy and gives some details on it before he dies. Clara phones the Doctor to say that previous spaceships have disappeared because of the mummy. Gus tells them to end the call and return to work. He grows impatient, decompresses the kitchen and the staff die and float off into space. The Doctor asks for full histories of the mummy's victims.

**Chapter 8:** The Doctor and Perkins speculate about the health of the victims. Mrs Pitt was over a hundred years old but it seems the other victims had medical problems as well. Then Quell confesses to suffering from sleeplessness and headaches since losing his men in battle. The mummy appears once more. Quell tries to escape but the mummy teleports behind him and kills him. The Doctor wonders why it takes the mummy 66 seconds to kill. He realises that it needs energy. Perkins says that it takes about a minute for energy to move from one place in time or space to another and the Doctor concludes the mummy is in a different time or space.

**Chapter 9:** The Doctor phones Clara because they realise that Maisie Pitt will be the next victim. He tells Clara to bring her to the lab. Then the countdown begins and Maisie sees the mummy. The Doctor holds a scanner in front of her and then to his head. The mummy now thinks he is Maisie. The Doctor sees something under the mummy's bandages that reminds him of a uniform. He deduces that the cloth is a flag and the mummy is a soldier. It was filled with technology which won't let it die. Then the Doctor says, 'We surrender!'

**Chapter 10:** The mummy becomes visible to all of them. It salutes the Doctor then collapses into fragments. The Doctor picks a teleporter out of the pile of dirty bandages and uses his sonic screwdriver on it. Gus says that survivors are no longer required and air will now be removed from the train. The passengers struggle for breath as the Doctor works on the teleporter. Then the train explodes.

**Chapter 11:** The TARDIS is on a beach near a city. The Doctor tells Clara he managed to teleport everybody into the TARDIS just in time. Then he tried hacking Gus

to find out more about him. Gus didn't like it and blew up the train. He says that although he couldn't save Quell and Moorhouse, his plan worked and that sometimes you have to choose between two bad things, but you still have to choose. Clara decides that he is a good man and that she'll continue to travel with him. Later, in the TARDIS, the Doctor offers Perkins the job of Chief Engineer but he turns it down.

### Background and themes

**Human emotion:** At times in the story, the Doctor seems to show a lack of feelings. When Professor Moorhouse and Captain Quell are about to be killed by the mummy, he talks of them only as research objects. On the other hand, he is trying to save as many lives as possible. Clara wonders whether he cares about their friendship and whether she should continue to travel with him. In Chapter 11, realising that his getting her to lie to Maisie was a ruse, she says, 'So you really do have a heart.' His answer is that he has two. He does have human emotion and cares about others, but has difficulty in showing it. Ask students: *Do you think it was okay for the Doctor to lie to Clara and Maisie? Was he right to show so little emotion when he watched the deaths of Captain Quell and Professor Moorhouse?*

**Luxury train journeys:** Start a discussion about the Orient Express. Talk with students about its history. Do they know where and how railroads started? Why were they revolutionary? Why and when did great train journeys become popular?

**Mummification:** Discuss the history and process of making mummies. Discuss beliefs behind mummification. Which cultures are known for mummifying their dead? Ask if any of the students have seen mummies in a museum and encourage them to talk about their experience there.

**Military obedience:** The Foretold is a soldier who thinks he is still at war, and will not surrender unless ordered to. Captain Quell never gets over the guilt of losing his soldiers in battle. Talk about military obedience and the concept of fighting to the end. Do the students know any real-world examples of extreme military obedience, e.g. World War II Japanese soldiers who surrendered years after the war actually ended?

# Doctor Who: Mummy on the Orient Express

## Discussion activities

### Chapter 1

#### Before reading

- 1 **Discuss:** Put the students in small groups and ask them to discuss the following questions about trains: *The Orient Express is a famous train. Do you know the names of any other famous trains? What are the trains like in your country? Have you ever had an interesting train journey? How do you prefer to travel: by train, plane, bus, car, bike, or walking?*

#### While reading

- 2 **Role play and artwork:** Ask the students to read up to p. 8: 'A train was travelling at high speed. But this was no ordinary train.' Put the students in pairs and tell them they are going to make a poster for a holiday in space on the Orient Express, with a focus on visits to planets, wearing clothes from the 1930s and dining in style. They can also include more ideas. They can then present their holiday to the rest of the class. Ask them to make the presentation as lively and appealing as possible.

### Chapters 2–3

#### After reading

- 3 **Pair work:** Ask the students, in pairs, to prepare a summary of Chapters 2–3. They can take notes if they like but they should practise telling the story. Then ask them to present their summaries to the rest of the class. They can have a vote for the best one.

### Chapter 4

#### While reading

- 4 **Discuss:** Put students in small groups to discuss the following questions: *Why does Maisie say, 'I'm not crazy'? Why does one of the cooks say, 'There's nothing there, Stumpy'? Then ask them to talk about a time when they felt others didn't understand them.*

#### After reading

- 5 **Pair work:** Write, 'How did Maisie open the lock?' on the board and elicit the answer. (She hit it with her shoe.) Now ask students to think of similar questions about Chapter 4. Students then mingle with each other, asking and answering each other's questions.

### Chapters 5–6

#### After reading

- 6 **Pair work:** Ask the students, in pairs, to choose a few lines from Chapters 5–6. Ask them to make changes to these so that they are wrong, either grammatically or factually. Students then read out their texts to the other students who have to identify the mistakes.

### Chapter 7

#### After reading

- 7 **Pair work:** Write these numbers on the board as they appear here: *one, 1.8, a thousand, forty-six, four, three.* Ask the students, in pairs, to find these numbers in the text and write down the phrase they appear in. The pair that finishes first wins.

### Chapter 8

#### Before reading

- 8 **Guess:** So far, the mummy has killed Mrs Pitt, Stumpy, a train guard and Professor Moorhouse. Ask the students, in small groups, to guess why he chose these four. Ask them to choose the next victim from this list: the Doctor, Clara, Captain Quell, Maisie, Perkins, and to discuss their reasons why.

### Chapters 9–10

#### While reading

- 9 **Role play:** Ask the students to stop at p. 40, after 'Clara hit the Doctor angrily with both her hands.' Put the students in pairs and tell them they are going to be television news reporters witnessing the final showdown between the Doctor and the mummy. They have to report this to the other students as if it's a live event. Ask them to make this as interesting as possible. They can begin with these lines:  
**Reporter A:** 'We are here in the laboratory. The Doctor, Clara and Maisie are talking.'  
**Reporter B:** 'Oh... the lights have gone dim. Maisie is staring at something...'

### Chapter 11

#### After reading

- 10 **Research:** One reason the Orient Express is famous is the novel, *Murder on the Orient Express*. This was written by Agatha Christie and came out in 1934. Agatha Christie travelled on the Orient Express in 1928. Two films were made, in 1974 and 2017. Have you ever read the book or seen either of the movies? If not, go to the internet. Find out what happens in the story and about the history of the Orient Express.