

The Full Cupboard of Life

1. There are many references in *The Full Cupboard of Life* to "the old Botswana morality." Outline these virtues. In what ways is Mma Ramotswe a traditional, old-fashioned Botswanan woman? In what ways is she modern? According to Mma Ramotswe, what is "the right sort of woman?" How does she and Mr. J.T.B. Matekoni embody the "old Botswana morality?"
2. What is Mma Ramotswe's general opinion of men? Is it a stereotypical view? Do you agree with her assessment? Is her fiancé, Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni, a "typical" male? What does she think are the characteristic differences between the sexes? And how does she interact and deal with males and females differently?
3. For Mma Ramotswe's clients, how is visiting with her like talking with a therapist? What psychological tactics does she employ with her clients and in solving their cases? What is Mma Ramotswe's approach to being a detective?
4. Describe the importance of tea in *The Full Cupboard of Life*. Note that there's even a chapter called "Tea is always the solution."
5. What do you learn about Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni in *The Full Cupboard of Life* that adds to your picture of him portrayed in the first four *No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* books? How about Mma Ramotswe? Is she fairly consistent throughout the series? How about the other principal characters in the books—Mma Makutsi, Mma Potokwani, the apprentices? Have they grown fuller as characters, and matured over the course of the series?
6. More so than in the first four novels, Mma Ramotswe comments on love in *The Full Cupboard of Life*. What are her views on love and romantic relationships and marriage? Do you agree with her? How is forgiveness connected to love in Mma Ramotswe's view? How is timing tied to love in her opinion? What determines her love for Mr. J.T.B. Matekoni? What threatens to undermine their relationship and their engagement?
7. What is the significance of the title? What are some other suitable titles for this book? Discuss the importance of the chapter headings to the novel as a whole. Why does Alexander McCall Smith give the chapters

title-like headings?

8. Mma Potokwani and Mma Makutsi both think of titles for books they may someday write—How to Run an Orphan Farm; How to Get 97%. What are some titles for books you or other members of your book group could write?
9. Discuss the abundant imagery of the Botswanan landscape in this novel. Compare Mochudi village life with the busier world of Gaborone. Compare both with your hometown. Could these books have taken place anywhere other than in southern Africa? How has the landscape influenced Mma Ramotswe? Do you think the landscape has influenced the author as well? Through his descriptions, has it influenced you?
10. Describe the advice of Clovis Andersen's *The Principles of Private Detection*. What sort of advice is it? Why does Mma Ramotswe admire Andersen so much?
11. Does Mma Ramotswe actually solve any mysteries in *The Full Cupboard of Life*? What does she do in this book? Compare and contrast the No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency books to other mystery series you've read and enjoyed. Are these books mysteries in the traditional sense? Do you think they are mysteries at all? How would you classify them?
12. How does the author refer to Mma Ramotswe's history and past from the other novels? Why does he do this? Do you think you can read *The Full Cupboard of Life* without having read the first four books?
13. Describe the author's writing style. What is so compelling about the voice and description in the novel? How do you think Alexander McCall Smith's background as a Scottish medical law professor who grew up in southern Africa has affected these books?

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