

# **Crocodile on the Sandbank Study Guide**

**Crocodile on the Sandbank by Elizabeth Peters**

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## Plot Summary

*Crocodile on the Sandbank* by Barbara Mertz, (whose pseudonym is Elizabeth Peters) is the first of her Amelia Peabody series of a Victorian era woman learning the science of Egyptology. Amelia Peabody had no intention of becoming an Egyptologist. Rather, she is much more interested in doing the things that she would like to do. She spent most of her youth caring for her aging father, who eschewed the mores of his time and taught Amelia scholarship. With the inheritance she receives after her father's death, Amelia wishes to see the world that she and her father had studied for so many years, starting with Rome, Italy. In Rome, Amelia meets Evelyn Barton-Forbes, a gentlewoman who is destitute and dispossessed. In true Amelia Peabody style, Amelia takes Evelyn under her wing and installs her as her new traveling companion. Amelia and Evelyn are as different as night from the day, yet their friendship flourishes into a sisterly fondness for one another.

The next portion of Amelia's itinerary takes them up the Nile to Cairo, where the two women stay at Shepherd's Hotel for the time it takes for Amelia to make arrangements for a more private tour of the Nile. While in Cairo, Evelyn's ebullient cousin, Lucas, manages to track Evelyn down and attempts to sweep Evelyn off her feet with offers of marriage and a share in the inheritance her grandfather denied her before his death. Knowing her cousin as she does, Evelyn has no wish to marry him and also believes she deserves to have been disinherited because of her behavior. Doing the right thing is important to Evelyn, even at this late stage in the game, and she repeatedly turns down her cousin's proposals. He is not deterred. He manages to secure a boat and follows Amelia and Evelyn up the Nile to Armana, where the Emerson brothers are excavating. Radcliffe, the older of the two brothers is in dire need of medical attention, and Amelia, having earned the name "Sitt Hakim," meaning lady doctor, from the Egyptians, gathers her medical supplies and hikes across miles of desert to the archaeological dig.

At the site, Amelia finds Emerson (as he prefers to be called) incoherent with fever. She nurses him until his fever breaks and she is certain he will live. During the time of his convalescence, she and Evelyn decide to stay and lend a hand with the excavation. Evelyn is pleased with this arrangement because she has developed an instantaneous fondness for Walter, the younger of the Emerson brothers, which he reciprocates with interest. Lucas is not to be forgotten. He arrives in Amarna shortly after the two women to find the four explorers embroiled in a situation of animated mummies haunting the night and the villagers terrorized to the point of refusing to work, despite their abject poverty. The story becomes more complex as they are unable to determine why the mummy is haunting them. Emerson and Peabody both believe that the mummy wishes for them to stop excavating there, until it becomes totally clear that the mummy is after Evelyn.

A trap set for the resurrected mummy results in Emerson and Amelia declaring their love for one another, just in case they do not survive the event. Walter has declared his love for Evelyn, which is reciprocated because Walter does not consider her name besmirched. They manage to apprehend the criminals, which are Lucas and the



drawing instructor, who had initially seduced Evelyn, and take them to Cairo. Two years later Emerson and Peabody are married and expecting their first child. Walter and Evelyn are similarly married and are expecting their second child. The description of late 1800's Egypt give the country all the attributes of being an actual character itself. The love Elizabeth Peters obviously has for the country comes through in the beautiful descriptions of the arid and historic land. The tales of Amelia Peabody continue in a series that covers one of the most exciting periods of Egyptian Archeology.



# Chapter 1

## Chapter 1 Summary

Amelia Peabody is in Rome in 1884, where she meets the woman who is to become her companion and eventually her sister-in-law, Evelyn Barton-Forbes. Through their friendship, they enjoy a trip up the Nile, where they meet the Emerson brothers, Radcliffe and Walter, who are archaeologists specializing in Egyptian culture. The lives of the four become inextricably entwined through events ranging from missing wills, rejected lovers, and reanimated mummies. Once everything is solved to the general satisfaction of most involved, Radcliffe and Amelia are married and Walter and Evelyn, too, marry.

Elizabeth Peters, author of *Crocodile on the Sandbank*, is an Egyptologist by training and has a great love of the Victorian era and the gothic tradition in storytelling. The combination of these interests results in the first of the Amelia Peabody series. Amelia Peabody is introduced as a thirty-two year old spinster, who has dedicated her life to caring for her father. His greatest interest is in the study of the past, a passion Amelia learned to share in an era when scholarship in women is frowned upon. In this and in many other conventions, Amelia disagrees vehemently. In her humble opinion, a woman is easily as capable as a man of learning languages and of studying history. Upon her father's death, Amelia becomes a very wealthy heiress and chooses to go see the countries she has studied for so many years. Her journey begins in Rome where her companion, Miss Pritchett, falls ill with typhoid, "like the weak-minded female she was" (Page 6, Chapter 1). Just as Amelia is wondering how to continue her journey solo, she meets Evelyn on the ground in the Forum in Rome. After hearing Evelyn's story of seduction and betrayal, Amelia determines that Evelyn will be her new companion for the rest of the journey. The only question Amelia has startles Evelyn and the reader alike. Amelia, believing herself to be relegated to spinsterhood, asks Evelyn if the joys of sex are hideous or wondrous. With that question, Amelia and Evelyn become fast friends.

Still in Rome, Amelia outfits Evelyn in attractive gowns and undergarments of the finest batiste. Somewhat to Amelia's surprise, Evelyn manages to talk Amelia into a few dresses and undergarments herself that make the most of Amelia's desirable features. Prior to leaving Rome, Amelia investigates the story Evelyn's seductor told Evelyn regarding her grandfather's death. She discovers the Earl is not yet dead but has suffered a debilitating stroke. Amelia leaves her forwarding address with the consul should any of Evelyn's family try to find her.

## Chapter 1 Analysis

Amelia Peabody is a surprising character to be found in a Victorian era novel. She is an intrepid female, who believes in equal rights for women before it had become a



movement. She sees Evelyn's tarnished reputation as nothing more than a young woman taken advantage of by one man because of the rules in a man's world. She sees Evelyn as the person she truly is, and finds that she likes and admires her. Their friendship is based on full disclosure of truth with each other and a determination to make the best of a life as spinsters together. Amelia has difficulty accepting tradition merely for tradition's sake. She does not suffer fools well and will not hesitate to use her parasol as a weapon if necessary. Amelia is not someone who needs a man in her life. If she chooses a man, it will be for very good reasons.



# Chapter 2

## Chapter 2 Summary

Staying at Shepherd's Hotel in Cairo is a common event for European travelers coming to Egypt, where it is said that one may meet all of one's acquaintances if one sits there long enough. Amelia has the means to travel in style, and she sees no need to stint on matters of comfort. Once in Cairo, Amelia determines that they will hire a boat and travel up the Nile for the remaining four months of the winter season. The country is narrow, and all the antiquities she desires to see are in close proximity to the river. Once Amelia hires Michael as their dragoman, she sets about selecting a boat of an appropriate size and minimum cleanliness standards. She especially wishes to find an appropriate piano to take on the trip, for she understands that Evelyn is a gifted musician. Hiring a dahabeeyah and outfitting it as required will take the women some time. In addition to shopping for supplies, Amelia and Evelyn entertain themselves with excursions that are within easy reach of Cairo. One such trip takes the two women to Gizeh, where Amelia begins her life-long love affair with pyramids.

The sight of the Great Pyramids of Gizeh takes Amelia's breath away. While she has studied extensively about them, the real life experience far exceeds her expectations. Once at the top of the largest of the three, the tomb of Khufu, Amelia is lost in a mesmerizing experience that is only broken when Evelyn begs to descend. Now Amelia is not in such a hurry to leave Cairo, and she stops pestering Hassan, her boat captain, for she returns time and again to all the pyramids in the area. One day, Evelyn prefers to visit the museum of Boulaq rather than another visit to the pyramids. At the museum they meet M. Maspero, the French director of antiquities, who knew Amelia's father. During their tour of the museum, Amelia tries to clean a statuette, the dirt an affront to her English sensibilities. Such an innocent act raises the ire of a huge, black-haired man, who howls in protest. "Madam! Do me the favor of leaving those priceless relics alone. It is bad enough to see that incompetent ass, Maspero, jumble them about; will you complete his idiocy by destroying the fragments he has left?" (Page 34, Chapter 2). Amelia stands her ground and argues with the man. Such is the meeting with the Emerson brothers, sparks flying between Amelia and Radcliffe; more tender and affectionate feelings between Evelyn and Walter.

After the museum, Amelia shops for necessary medical supplies, at which time they discover that Michael's daughter is sick. Amelia demands he take them to the girl, where Amelia ascertains a very infected cut is the cause of the toddler's illness. "Careless of her dainty gingham skirts, Evelyn was already seated on the floor by the pallet where the child lay. Gently she brushed the tangled black curls from its face and dislodged a cluster of flies swarming around its eyes. The mother made a gesture of protest, but subsided after a frightened glance at me. Evelyn and I had already had cause to be horrified at the way these people allow insects to infest the eyes of the children; I had seen pitiful infants to beset by flies that they looked as if they were wearing black goggles. If they attempted to brush the stinging, filthy creatures away, the mothers



slapped their hands. One sees tiny children who have already lost the sight of one or both eyes through this dreadful custom; and, of course, infant mortality is extremely high. One authority claims that three children out of five die young." (Page 40, Chapter 1). After lancing the wound and cleaning it Amelia gives instructions to Michael and his young wife to keep it clean.

Later that night at the hotel, Walter and Radcliffe Emerson come to the hotel. Walter wishes to see Evelyn again, their mutual attraction quite evident to all viewers. Amelia enjoys forcing Radcliffe Emerson into a social conversation situation; something that makes the big man squirm with discomfort. The evening is ruined with the very unexpected appearance of Signor Alberto. Evelyn faints dead away at the sight of the man and must be taken to her room.

## Chapter 2 Analysis

Amelia has studied about Egypt for years and yet for her, nothing she studied even remotely prepared her for the fascination and intense emotion she feels when she contemplates the greatness of the now-lost societies of ancient Egypt. As a female, her chances of becoming a great archaeologist are slim, and yet she has discovered a passion for a country and a people so very different from what she has ever known. Her passion is only matched by that of Radcliffe, who she meets at the museum, where she learns firsthand the reasons for the proper recording and handling of antiquities. The plot is further complicated by Evelyn's obvious interest in Walter and with the completely unexpected appearance of Signor Alberto.





# Chapter 3

## Chapter 3 Summary

Signor Alberto's appearance at the hotel is a terrible shock for Evelyn, but she manages to spurn his repeated protestations of love. Amelia threatens him with Egyptian jail if he does not leave, and to emphasize the threat, she intends to summon a hall porter, but instead finds Michael outside their room. Michael escorts Signor Alberto from the hotel. Michael's unexpected presence outside their hotel room is due to his gratitude; his daughter is better and is eating again. Amelia and Evelyn now have his undying devotion. After the scene with Signor Alberto, Evelyn breaks down and admits she had begun to think of a life of love, possibly with Walter, but Alberto has reminded her that she is ruined and has no hope of a decent marriage. Amelia is suspicious of Alberto's appearance, wondering if perhaps Evelyn's grandfather might still be alive. They decide to leave Cairo as soon as possible. Evelyn mentions that Walter and Radcliffe leave in a few days as well for Amarna, the site of the city of the heretic king.

That night, the women are visited by an apparition of a ghost of an Egyptian god. He lifts his arm in a threatening gesture. Struggling with her voluminous nightclothes and yards of mosquito netting, Amelia is detained for long enough for their ghost to disappear. Evelyn, at first, believes Amelia has suffered a nightmare, until she steps on an object on the floor. It is a small Egyptian carving of the hawk god, Horsus. Though she does not believe in ghosts, Amelia determines they will leave Cairo. Their intruder may have merely been an ingenious burglar, but perhaps not.

Even though Amelia pushes for an accelerated departure date, there really is no rushing a reluctant Egyptian. It is for this reason the two women are still at Shepherd's when Evelyn's cousin Lucas appears. He claims to merely want to assure himself of Evelyn's safety, but Amelia astutely determines he has recently been granted the title "Lordship." Evelyn's grandfather has died, and Evelyn is grief stricken that she will never be able to be reconciled to him. Evelyn is desperate for some message of forgiveness. Lucas implies their grandfather must have meant to forgive Evelyn, but never actually states it. He knows how much it would mean to Evelyn and yet withholds it to further manipulate her. He reveals the stroke Evelyn's leaving caused, and during his recovery, her grandfather wrote a new will disowning Evelyn and giving everything to Lucas. Lucas further reveals that during a brief absence from the castle, their grandfather had the servants pack all of Evelyn's belongings and ship them out of the castle. Amelia is suspicious of Lucas. Lucas goes out of his way to be disarming and actually proposes marriage to Evelyn; a proposal she refuses. He proclaims he promises to pursue her and to give her half of the inheritance once they go home. He indicates that he, too, will spend the winter in Egypt.



## Chapter 3 Analysis

Sooner or later Evelyn has to face her past. The appearance first of Signor Alberto and then her cousin cruelly remind Evelyn that she is not free to marry a respectable man such as Walter. She greatly grieves that loss, but is not so distraught that she is willing to accept her cousin's offer of marriage merely to save her reputation. Though he appears to discount it, Lucas refers to Evelyn's indiscretion several times, enough to make Amelia suspicious and the reader wonder at his true intention. Evelyn longs for just a hint that her grandfather had softened toward her, but Lucas only tells her in very vague terms that Grandfather must have wanted to, but Lucas does not even do Evelyn the kindness of lying and saying she had been forgiven. Lucas' appearance has not changed the women's plans. Evelyn has given her word to Amelia to be her companion for the winter and she intends to keep it.



# Chapter 4

## Chapter 4 Summary

Amelia and Evelyn leave early the next morning on their trip up the Nile with Lucas wishing them bon voyage with an armload of flowers. Once on the water, Peters describes the sight as it truly may have been in 1884, the first day's excursion is a memory Amelia holds dear for years. Their first stop is at Beni Hassan to visit the tombs from the time of Usertsen of the Twelfth Dynasty. The accompanying village is typical, with its mud huts and filthy living conditions and the ubiquitous begging and attempts to sell antiquities, both real and manufactured. Amelia begins to see why Emerson's tirade against the practice was so passionate. Unconsciously, Amelia takes up the cause and becomes a rabid protector of the priceless objects destined to be lost to science and scholarship for years. "Some years later these same splendid tombs were savagely mutilated by native Egyptians extracting fragments of the paintings for sale to antiquities dealers. But even when we saw them I was aware of some of the abuses Emerson had talked about. Fragments of paint and plaster were constantly flaking off the walls, which were dulled by the smoke from the candles carried by the guides. Visiting travelers were no more careful than the uninformed Egyptians; as we stood in one tomb I watched an American gentleman calmly walk away with a fallen bit of stone that bore a pretty picture of a child. I shouted at him but Evelyn prevented me when I would have pursued him to retrieve the fragment. As she pointed out someone else would have taken it anyway." (Page 74, Chapter 4). Amelia's other cause is the conversion of the women of Egypt. She earns the name Sitt Hakim, or lady doctor for all the care she gives by patching scrapes and cuts and administering eye ointment to babies threatened with blindness. Her personal opinion is that if the plight of the women being forced into marriage and motherhood long before they are ready is not addressed, Egypt will never realize her full potential.

Taking every opportunity to instruct Evelyn, Amelia lectures on the heretic king, Khuenaten and presents her opinion that the monotheist idea might even have given rise to the idea of Yahweh. Amelia suggests a stop at Armana to view the drawings of the tombs, as they have a very different style, knowing full well that the Emerson brothers are excavating there. Amelia would argue with the reader, but at heart Amelia Peabody is a matchmaker. At Amarna they find a medical crisis; Emerson is delirious with fever. Amelia's skills as Sitt Hakim come into full play as she fights to save the life of a man she barely knows and believes she despises. Nursing Emerson tirelessly, Amelia virtually wills him back to consciousness, never leaving his side throughout the entire crisis. Once it is over, Amelia and Evelyn decide to stay and lend a hand with the excavation—a dream come true for Amelia. For her efforts in saving Emerson's life, she is granted the opportunity to lie under the hot Egyptian sun and paint a mixture of tapioca and water with her finger as the brush, to preserve the glorious colors of the pavement of Khuenaten's royal palace. Emerson's blustering does not affect Amelia. She loves to be in charge, and with Emerson still weak and bedridden, she gives instructions to the cook to stew a chicken, an activity that eventually prompts her to put



Michael in charge of future cooking. Under her direction, Michael accomplishes miracles of both food and creature comforts in the middle of the desert, where their sleeping chambers are in previously-emptied tombs. Emerson, not one to be ordered about by a woman, attempts to put in an appearance at dinner only to fall to the ground in a dead faint.

## Chapter 4 Analysis

Chapter Four starts with numerous pages of expository description of the true beauty of Egypt as experienced aboard a ship traveling up the Nile River. Peters' love of the country and people shows through with illuminating clarity. Her purpose in writing *Crocodile on the Sandbank* is to raise the consciousness of the reader to the importance of preserving as much of the past as possible for future study. She uses her character, Amelia Peabody, to make this point eminently clear. Once the women reach Amarna, Amelia is presented with an opportunity no Victorian era feminist can resist. The great and powerful Emerson is laid low with a dangerous fever, which can easily be fatal without the benefit of modern medicine. With Emerson in bed, Amelia is able to take charge of the camp, its cooking and comforts, and she has designs on joining in the preservation of the ancient painted pavement. Amelia Peabody is in her element. She loves to be in charge.



# Chapter 5

## Chapter 5 Summary

With the decision to stay and see to Emerson's recovery, Amelia gives Michael orders that they will remain in Amarna for approximately one week. Amelia immediately turns to Emerson's pavement but in typical Amelia style, chooses to improve his concoction of tapioca and water by adding bismuth to it. As Amelia preserves the pavement, Evelyn uses her artistic talent to create a color copy with such skill that all in the camp are amazed. In the days before color photography, a true artist is a welcome addition to an excavation. By the end of the second day, Evelyn forcibly removes Amelia from the painting. The process of covering the painting with the tapioca mixture has caused her every finger to bleed. Amelia could not be happier. Emerson, on the other hand, is applying himself to his convalescence with grim determination. He hates the fact that a woman has taken charge of his dig. When Emerson joins the group for dinner that night, his heavy black beard is shaved off, giving Amelia her first glimpse of his adorable chin dimple, the very reason he chooses to wear a beard. As they argue about Walter taking over the pavement the next day, it is revealed to Emerson a fact that has stealthily become apparent; the village workers are not their usual cheerful selves. Walter attributes it to their superstition about the great and powerful Emerson falling ill.

The next morning there is great excitement as a tomb has been found up in the cliffs with an intact mummy. Walter is even more reassured about the workers because they shared the information rather than keeping quiet and robbing the tomb. Amelia joins Walter on the journey to the newly-discovered Royal Tomb, despite the rough terrain of the journey. Once at the tomb, Amelia sees a change come over Walter. The gentle man attempting to woo Evelyn turns into the trained scholar that he is. Walter and Amelia are both struck by how clean the tomb is. For being so newly discovered, it should be filled with massive amounts of detritus that would have to be cleared. Once he observes the mummy, Walter is disappointed. It is from a much later period than that which they are searching. One of the village men, Mohammed, tells Walter that the mummy is a prince, or a princely magician. Walter discounts the claim believing that Mohammed is trying to extort more money for the find. To prevent possible theft of the mummy, Walter arranges for its removal to their current site, where they might analyze it in more comfortable surroundings.

Emerson is granted permission to evaluate the mummy by Amelia, and despite his initial excitement he, too, is disappointed and is frankly puzzled that the mummy has even been found in that location. That night Amelia is awakened by a sound outside the tomb she and Evelyn use as a bedchamber. What she sees defies logical explanation; it appears to be a mummy. It disappears quickly, and by dawn Amelia has talked herself into believing she had seen an animal of some sort until she finds bits of the mummy's bindings on the ledge outside the tomb she and Evelyn share.

## Chapter 5 Analysis

Amelia's dream of doing the work of an archaeologist comes true and she takes to it with exuberance. Her tendency to take charge comes to the fore with Emerson's illness. She is truly in her element. Because she lacks the experience, Amelia does not notice the change in the workmen, nor does she grasp the meaning behind the intact mummy found in a seemingly-cleared tomb. Her inability to process these inconsistencies allow her to have the vision of the mummy by night without calling for help. She believes she has allowed her imagination to run away with her and she would hate to have Emerson ridicule her. She convinces herself that it was simply an animal in the night. She could not know the horrors that are in store for them.



# Chapter 6

## Chapter 6 Summary

The following morning Emerson discovers that his mummy is missing and immediately blames Amelia. "My mummy! You have stolen my mummy! By Gad, Peabody, this time you have gone too far! I've watched you; don't think I have been unwitting of your machinations! My pavement, my expedition, my brother's loyalty, even my poor, helpless carcass have fallen victim to your meddling; but this—this is too much! You disapprove of my work, you want to keep me feeble and helpless in bed, so you steal my mummy! Where is it? Produce it at once, Peabody, or—" (Page 111, Chapter 6). His ire alerts the workers to the mummy's disappearance and their demeanor while working that day is sullen and silent, a stark contrast to their usual cheerful singing. Amelia keeps the vision of the previous night to herself until she wakes the following night to Evelyn's fear; Evelyn, too, has seen the mummy. The women decide to share their sightings of the reanimated mummy with Emerson and Walter. The next morning brings new concerns, for the Egyptian men have refused to come to work. They are a superstitious lot and have no desire to be associated with excavators who have roused the magician mummy's anger.

"The workers had been disturbed by the mummy Mohammed had found. The man repeated his absurd claim—that the mummy was that of a princely priest-magician, a servant of the great god Amon whom Pharaoh Khuenaten had toppled from his spiritual throne. The deposed god's wrath found a vessel in his priest; thought him, Amon had cursed the heretic city and anyone who set foot on its soil to resurrect it, forever. The villagers knew that none of them had made off with the mummy. Its disappearance could only be accounted for in only one way; restored to the light of day and animated by its discovery that new heretics were at work to uncover the accursed city, it had taken to its feet and left the camp. But it had not left the city—no, indeed. It walked by night, and on the previous midnight it had visited the village. Its moans had awakened the sleepers, and a dozen men had seen its ghostly form pacing the streets. The villagers were too wise not to heed the warning, which Mohammed helpfully interpreted: no more work for the infidels. They must leave Khuenaten's unholy city to the desolation of the sands, and take themselves off. Unless they did so, the curse would be visited on them and all those who assisted them in the slightest way." (Page 118-119, Chapter 6). Walter, Emerson, and Amelia go to town to the mayor's house, a two-room dirt and mud hut to try to bargain with him. Mohammed is there and says the mummy wants the strangers to go, but it would like for the English women to stay. This remark infuriates Emerson, who attempts to throttle Mohammed. He is restrained by Walter and Amelia, but Mohammed's look of hatred toward Emerson frightens Amelia.

Leaving the village, Emerson decides to try to find workers from the two neighboring villages. Amelia prevails by advising Walter to let Emerson walk through the desert until he faints, then they will be able to manage him. Amelia's sarcasm has the desired effect. Emerson returns with Walter and Amelia in a surly mood. They hold a council of war as



Amelia calls it. It is decided they will either all go or all stay. Actually, Amelia decides that they will all stay; she just makes them think they all made the decision. This renders Emerson nearly incoherent. He howls at her, asking how she came to be in charge of his expedition, but he is powerless against the woman. Calmly, she waits until he has exhausted his protests and then announces that the six of them will lay a trap for the mummy, a plan Emerson finds to be hysterically funny. Walter and Abdullah go to the village after dark to lie in wait for Mohammed, who they believe is the culprit behind the mummy prank. Michael is to guard Evelyn, and Emerson and Amelia wait in Emerson's tomb because the mummy must pass by them to find the English women. They spend the day normally and Emerson does not extinguish his light that night until the usual time to diminish suspicion should anyone be watching. The mummy does appear, but at a distance and when he makes a threatening gesture toward Emerson's tomb. Emerson loses control and rushes headlong down the hill to apprehend the apparition. A foolish decision, for all he manages to do is trip and fall in the darkness and the mummy runs away. Amelia has the presence of mind to order Michael not to leave Evelyn's side; by now Amelia suspects the mummy desires more than to merely frighten the group. When Walter and Abdullah return they report Mohammed never left the village, it is impossible for Mohammed to be the mummy.

## Chapter 6 Analysis

The disappearance of the mummy and the reappearance of it as if it has come to life frighten the excavation crew and totally terrorizes the native population. Amelia's propensity for taking control is ever more evident, for even Emerson cannot stop her. Amelia decides that they will all stay to face the mummy, and she even comes up with a plan to apprehend it, much to Emerson's amusement. The plan is a good one—if Mohammed is the mummy. But, when they discover the next day that Mohammed never left the village, the implications become more dire. The purpose behind the mummy's appearance seems to be more than simply to frighten them. Amelia is beginning to feel very real concern, particularly for Evelyn's safety.





# Chapter 7

## Chapter 7 Summary

Once the realization hits that the mummy's antics are a distraction, Emerson rushes to check on his pavement. As he feared, it has been destroyed; pulverized in some areas. The question then arises as to Mohammed's motives. Why he would desecrate such a beautiful finding, why, too, he would wish his people loss of badly needed money that Emerson generously pays. The next event is the arrival of Lord Lucas Ellesmere, cheerful to a fault. Emerson is not happy with the visitor, but Amelia strives to make him welcome. At the very moment of Lord Ellesmere's arrival, Amelia realizes that Walter and Evelyn are meant to be together, that they are ideally suited. "I experienced a revelation in that moment. I wanted Walter for Evelyn. They were ideally suited; he was an honorable, lovable young fellow, who would treat her well. If I had to give her up, I would not repine seeing her in the tender care of a man like Walter. I determined, in that instant, that it should come to pass. But I foresaw that it would take some effort, even for me." (Page 138, Chapter 7). The appearance of Lucas causes Evelyn's previous joy of living to diminish; she fears Walter's regard for her will disappear, but she refuses to consider Walter an appropriate suitor, believing he deserves so much better.

Emerson's reaction to Ellesmere's arrival is one of suspicion and disdain, especially when Lucas boasts of his antiquities collection at Ellesmere Castle. Even Evelyn supports Emerson's position. "She did not return the smile; instead she said seriously, 'Mr. Emerson's feelings are more than justified, Lucas. It is vital that excavations should be carried out only by trained archaeologists. Some objects are fragile and can be damaged by unskilled hands. More important, the provenance of an object can sometimes tell us a great deal—where it was found, with what other objects, and so on. If visitors would not buy from dealers and peasants, they would stop their illicit digging.'" (Page 141, Chapter 7). As a gift of contrition, Lucas offers a papyrus scroll to the brothers, something they are eager to see. Amelia is astonished that Emerson lets Lucas off so easily but then wonders if Emerson is looking to Lucas for financial support for his dig. This angers Amelia. She did not expect Emerson to be so base. The only argument Emerson makes is when Lucas questions Michael's trustworthiness, which Evelyn also defends vehemently. Lucas drops the subject; however his aversion to Michael is unchanged.

That afternoon, Emerson invites Amelia to join him at the Royal Tomb, which Amelia desperately wishes to see. She also suspects that Emerson wishes to have a private conversation with her. He does. Emerson questions Amelia about Lucas, his fortune, and his interest in Evelyn. Amelia's suspicions about Emerson's motives increase. She does not allow her feelings about the discussion alter her enjoyment of the tomb. One of her favorite rooms has a crumbling relief showing the death and burial of one of Khuenaten's very young daughters, and the parents holding hands as if to comfort one another. At the height of her enjoyment, a landslide covers the entrance to the tomb, trapping the two inside. Amelia and Emerson work with bare hands by candlelight to try



and clear the debris from the inside. Before very long, Abdullah's voice is heard, then Lucas joins him and the two men hasten to rescue Amelia and Emerson. In their haste, Abdullah and Lucas send an additional rockslide down the stairs, and one boulder dislocates Emerson's shoulder. Amelia gamely offers to help relocate his shoulder, which she does, but is somewhat faint afterward, an unusual reaction for her. Back at camp, Amelia is further disturbed by Evelyn. Lucas has proposed yet again, and it troubles Evelyn. Her happiness has flown with Lucas' presence.

## Chapter 7 Analysis

The addition of Lucas to the excavation crew causes suspicion and a division among a group previously united. Amelia becomes suspicious of Emerson's interest in Lord Ellesmere's fortune and Ellesmere's interest in Evelyn. Evelyn fears showing affection toward Walter. Michael is ostracized by Lucas merely for his Egyptian heritage. Walter is lovesick and believes he has nothing to offer Evelyn in view of Lucas' ostentatious offerings. In addition, Emerson and Amelia are trapped by a landslide in a tomb where the rubble had previously been secured. Lucas seems to be a fly in the ointment and yet has absolutely no intention of leaving. He is enjoying himself far too much to leave.



# Chapter 8

## Chapter 8 Summary

That evening Amelia is puzzled by Emerson's inclination to allow Lucas to play the part of host, a role Lucas enjoys and lords over everyone, especially Walter and Michael. Lucas has created a luxurious dinner atmosphere; complete with flowers, silverware, crystal, whiskey, and wine. Amelia expresses concern about drinking when the evening requires them all to be sharp, but Lucas claims that alcohol makes his senses even sharper. Walter is derisive and the two men are acrimonious throughout dinner. Lucas is at the top of his game, claiming to have tried to bring Evelyn's boxes packed by their grandfather to her, but Baring in Cairo refused to release them to Lucas as they were addressed to Amelia. The proprietary manner Lucas adopts toward Evelyn is designed to anger Walter and fluster Evelyn. He appears not to see that his behavior is caddish. His crowning offering is to present the promised papyrus to the Emerson brothers, who both are appalled that Lucas had attempted to unroll it, but their excitement supersedes all else. Walter even ignores Lucas' jibes when he refers to him by the juvenile title of Master Walter once Walter lays eyes on the ancient writing. Emerson informs Lucas that "Master" Walter is a leading expert on ancient languages. The writing is revealed to be a love poem that compares the trials lovers must bear to a crocodile on the sandbank—giving the book its title. Lucas scoffs at the lover willing to risk the crocodile, stating that such a lover deserves to be eaten by the crocodile. "It seems to me not so much noble as foolhardy," said Lucas lazily. "Any man who jumps into a river inhabited by crocodiles deserves to be eaten up." (Page 161, Chapter 8).

Michael attempts to talk to Amelia during dinner, but Lucas rudely dismisses the man, somewhat offending Amelia. After dinner Lucas reveals that his men tell him that Michael is responsible for warning Mohammed of their previous plans, that is why they were unable to apprehend the mummy. No one really believes Lucas, but Michael has disappeared. Lucas proposes a new trap, using Evelyn as bait; a plan that makes the gentle Walter incensed. Lucas has a pistol and promises to be within ten feet of Evelyn at all times. They all go along with the plan Lucas has devised, but no one believes it is a wise one; they simply do not have a better idea. Amelia wants Lucas to be the villain—even for all his looks and charm and protestations of devotion toward Evelyn. Amelia's role is to pretend to fight with Evelyn and gives the appearance of intending to sleep in Michael's deserted tent. When Amelia finds Michael's crucifix and broken neck chain she knows that the man did not leave of his own free will. By the time Amelia makes this discovery, the stage has been set, and when she looks out the mummy is there, only thirty feet away. She watches in terror as Evelyn emerges from their tomb bedchamber and is trapped by the mummy. As promised, Lucas appears and shoots the mummy twice. The mummy does not fall. Walter can no longer contain himself and manually attacks the mummy. Lucas' gun fires one more time, this time hitting Walter, who falls to the ground. The mummy runs off laughing with a ghostly sound.



## Chapter 8 Analysis

Lucas takes charge of the group of excavators to the point that he dismisses Amelia's dragoman. He acts as host for dinner. He behaves in a patronizing manner toward Evelyn, and he refers to Walter as "master," which implies that Walter is a juvenile and inferior to the speaker. Lucas' manner is lordly and autocratic and the reader has to wonder why the entire group, including Emerson, allows their manners to rule over common sense. Amelia believes Lucas to be the villain and yet she has no solid proof. Lucas does as he promises, yet his gun has no effect on the mummy. Yet, the bullet that hits Walter is real enough. The questions to be asked are whether the first bullets were real, whether the apparition is supernatural or something else entirely.



# Chapter 9

## Chapter 9 Summary

Emerson reaches Walter before Amelia does and quickly determines that the gunshot wound is not fatal; it has passed through the fleshy portion of Walter's shoulder. After a brief moment of faintness, Amelia and Evelyn clean and dress Walter's wound. Afterward they try to make sense of the events of the evening. Abdullah had followed the mummy into the wadi, in the direction of the royal tomb. Lucas claims to have been terrorized when the two shots from his pistol fail to stop the mummy. His dramatic effort to discharge the last remaining bullet is stopped by Emerson grabbing his wrist and taking the pistol away from Lucas. Later Emerson and Amelia discuss the events between themselves, and Emerson discounts the claim Lucas made, that the bullets had no effect on the mummy. He suspects a sort of protective padding that deflected the bullets. Emerson flatly states that the mummy is not Mohammed because it is taller than Walter. Emerson asks Amelia to try one more trap, that of getting Evelyn back to the dahabeeyah and keeping her there overnight by some pretext. Emerson tells Amelia that she (Amelia) alone will be responsible for Evelyn's safety.

It is difficult to persuade Evelyn to leave Walter at camp for a quick trip to the boat, but she finally agrees. They must walk as all the donkeys have been reclaimed by the villages. Emerson questions the captain, Hassan, about the missing Michael, but gets no satisfactory answer. The dragoman has disappeared. Emerson gives Amelia one last pep talk, begging her to do exactly as he has instructed, then he leaves to return to his injured brother back at camp. Evelyn sees Emerson leave and Amelia must feign illness in order to keep Evelyn from returning with Emerson. That night Lucas brings several bottles of champagne to diner, where he proceeds to drink far too much. Both Evelyn and Amelia disapprove. Lucas criticizes Evelyn's choice of gown and laments that he was prevented from bringing her boxes to her. Evelyn says she needs little of what is in the boxes; whereupon, Lucas boldly declares they will burn them unopened. Evelyn disagrees; she wishes to go through them alone to find treasured mementos of her grandfather. Amelia discovers Lucas has given her crew whiskey without her permission, unfortunate because she was counting on the crew to help her protect Evelyn. After retiring, Amelia stays awake, on watch, and the mummy appears on schedule. Amelia calls to Lucas, who is sleeping on their boat, for help. This time Lucas has a rifle, but the mummy lowers its right arm in Lucas' direction and causes Lucas to fall to the ground as if struck. He remains unconscious long enough to terrorize Evelyn into believing that she probably ought to marry Lucas and preserve the lives of her new friends. Amelia finds it interesting that Evelyn does not appear to worry about the affect her company will have on Lucas.



## Chapter 9 Analysis

Emerson proposes that the women spend the night aboard the dahabeeyah, partly as a test to see if the mummy is really interested in Evelyn. By trickery, they are able to get Evelyn to the boat and keep her there overnight. As Emerson suspected, the mummy is interested in Evelyn, not in chasing the Emerson brothers from the dig site. The mummy's apparent ability to strike a man down into a lengthy bout of unconsciousness is a new and terrifying development. Evelyn is smart enough to realize it is her presence that is the precipitating factor, and the guilt she feels is nearly enough to cause her to agree to marry Lucas and leave her friends in peace. Amelia manages to prevent her from making such an error, but Amelia does not know what to do next. The mummy's apparent supernatural ability to find Evelyn is either frightening or suspicious, but the attack on Lucas appears to put the Lord of Ellesmere in the clear. It is Evelyn's determination to take responsibility for the mummy's threat and what she might do because of that belief is most terrifying.



# Chapter 10

## Chapter 10 Summary

Back at the camp Walter is stunned to hear of the events of the previous night, though Emerson had gotten word of it first hand on his pre-dawn visit to Hassan. Amelia, functioning on a lack of sleep several nights running, determines she must take a nap. Before she retires to her tomb, the group decides they had best remain together for the next mummy appearance. If it is really after Evelyn, her departure will accomplish nothing. That decided, Amelia falls into a fitful sleep. She has an overpowering sense of danger when she awakens. Emerson is in her room and is standing stock still, begging her not to move, for at the foot of her bed is a coiled hooded cobra, the most poisonous snake in Egypt. "I did not need that injunction. I could not have moved, even if waking intelligence had not warned me that the slightest movement might rouse the serpent to strike. The small obsidian eyes held me. I had read that snakes paralyze their intended prey thus; and I knew how the trembling rabbit must feel when its murderer glides toward it." (Page 216, Chapter 10). Emerson has the pistol with one shot in it he had taken from Lucas. He aims carefully, knowing that if he misses the snake will strike Amelia. After an interminable interval, he successfully shoots the snake and Amelia faints, much to Emerson's delight. "'Not wounded, not dying, merely enjoying a ladylike swoon,' said Emerson's familiar, detestable voice. 'Allow me to congratulate you, Peabody; it is the first time I have seen you behave as a lady is supposed to do. I must make a note of it in my journal.'" (Page 217, Chapter 10).

After tea and brandy as a restorative, Amelia wants to plan for the night. Evelyn says she has decided. She will accept Lucas' offer of marriage and will leave Amarna with him tomorrow. Everyone, except Lucas, tries to dissuade her. Emerson's argument makes the impression he intends. He does not try to talk Evelyn out of marriage to Lucas, but wants her to make the choice with all the facts. He challenges her to use her brain. Evelyn walks some distance away to think and Lucas follows immediately. Amelia is disgusted and she tells Walter so. Her behavior and words give Walter all the encouragement he needs. He joins the two lovers and from a distance Amelia and Emerson see a physical fight ensue. Lucas has violated all rules of being a gentleman and has informed Walter of Evelyn's ruined reputation. Walter's response is to kneel in front of Evelyn and declare his love. "'You are the noblest girls I have ever met,' he cried, raising his eyes to Evelyn's astonished face. 'The truest, the most courageous, the loveliest. . . . I don't know many men who would have the strength to do what you have just done! But my dearest, sweetest girl. . . .' he rose, still holding her hand and looking down at her with tender reproach. 'Do you think so little of me that you suppose I would not understand your tragic story? Evelyn, you might have trusted me!'" (Page 226, Chapter 10). With this passionate declaration, Walter and Evelyn are now engaged, much to Amelia's satisfaction. Lucas is outraged and infuriated. His Latin blood is boiling that Evelyn has chosen a penniless archaeologist over his title and wealth. Emerson is the most delighted of all. He has just gained a free laborer. "'Not only penniless,' said Emerson cheerfully, 'but ruined. Although why "ruined," I cannot



make out; she seems to be quite undamaged in all meaningful respects. A capable artist will be a useful addition to the staff. And I shan't have to pay her a salary—just think of the saving!" (Page 227, Chapter 10).

## Chapter 10 Analysis

As far as the personal drama is concerned, Amelia is pleased that her plan to get Evelyn and Walter together is finally achieved. This is satisfying to both Amelia and to the reader. Lucas has given quite a few indications that he is not the gentleman he believes himself to be. A true gentleman would never, ever reveal Evelyn's shame to another, and Lucas has made a number of references to her disgrace. His behavior has been that of a passionate suitor, but one who is likely to become autocratic and commanding after marriage. Walter loves Evelyn for who she is, not for her fortune or position. Amelia feels some sympathy for Lucas, especially as his intentions toward Evelyn seemed genuine. This does not handle the problem of the mummy. At this point, the reader has to query the mummy's real intentions. If the goal is Evelyn, an engagement to Walter will make no difference. If, however, the goal is to frighten the excavation crew, there is work yet to be done. Either way, the mummy will have to make another appearance to make its intentions clear.





# Chapter 11

## Chapter 11 Summary

After Walter and Evelyn announce their engagement, Lucas goes for a walk and is gone through dinner and into the evening. The disappearance of Lucas' two men prompt Emerson to state, with great satisfaction, that they have seen the last of Lord Ellesmere and of the mummy. He is completely convinced that Lucas has been behind the appearance of the mummy, and now that Evelyn has chosen Walter, Lucas is out of business. Amelia is pleased when Lucas appears just at that moment with a bottle of wine to toast his cousin and her future husband. The perverseness of their relationship allows Amelia to delight in the fact that Emerson is wrong. She joins the festivities, proposing a toast herself until the bottle of wine is gone. Now that Lucas is back, Emerson's theories appear to be incorrect. Lucas is set for the first watch and they all retire. Amelia finds it hard to sleep, though she is exhausted. She steps out to join Lucas on his watch and is not happy to see him still drinking. He blames it on the loss of his cousin's hand. Emerson cannot sleep either, and since he is up, he sends Lucas to bed. Amelia knows Emerson is lying about not being able to sleep. "I knew then that something was badly wrong; and that Emerson was aware of it. His idiotic speech was an unconvincing lie; his lids were half closed, his shoulders drooped; and now that I looked at him more closely, I saw that his thick black hair was damp, as if he had been pouring water on it...to keep awake? I had employed a similar trick myself, the preceding night. All my senses prickled in alarm." (Page 235, Chapter 11). Emerson reveals that they have all been drugged with laudanum and sends Amelia for her smelling salts to help counteract the drug's effect.

Just as she re-emerges from her tomb, they hear a human scream of pain and following it, they locate the missing Michael, his wrists showing evidence of swelling and blood from being bound. Emerson starts to carry the unconscious man up to the camp when a second, more terrifying scream pierces the night. They look up to see the mummy with an unconscious Evelyn in its arms. Lucas runs out of his tent, collides with Emerson, and delays all of them as they fall to the ground in a confused jumble of arms and legs. Walter is the only one who runs off after the mummy. Emerson persuades Amelia to look after Michael while Emerson joins in the pursuit of the mummy. As Emerson reaches the entrance of the tomb, a rifle shot rings out and he falls to the ground.

## Chapter 11 Analysis

Walter and Evelyn are now together, finally. This could be a very satisfying end for their story, but the rest of the story remains to be told. Lucas has disappeared, and at first, this seems to indicate that Lucas is behind the appearances of the mummy, and that Lucas has left, tail between his legs now that Evelyn has chosen Walter. Lucas does not seem to be one who would give up so easily, so the reader is not surprised when he makes his appearance and is prepared to toast the new couple in their happiness. His



words, however, make the reader very suspicious. His toast to Evelyn is cryptic. "'To Evelyn's future!' he cried. 'May it bring all that her closest kinsman could desire!'" (Page 232, Chapter 11). A superficial interpretation of this toast can indicate that he really does wish Evelyn well. But it does not preclude a more ominous wish for her future; after all, it wishes everything that he could desire for her. If Lucas' wish for Evelyn bodes evil, then they have all just toasted to that effect. Amelia is so happy that Emerson is wrong about Lucas disappearing that she does not hear the double meaning behind Lucas' toast. Emerson does not hear it immediately, but once he realizes that they have all been drugged, he also realizes that the only one possibly responsible for the drugging is the one who provided the wine—Lucas. There has to be so much more to the situation than a man who is a spurned lover.



# Chapter 12

## Chapter 12 Summary

Amelia realizes she is not entirely immune to the feelings she has been having about Emerson. After all, being in love is a state she never expected to enter. But with the gunshot and Emerson's drop to the floor, absolutely everything has flown from her head except Emerson's well-being. Her relief, when he tells her he was only hit by a piece of flying rock, is staggering. Testing Lucas, Emerson places a shirt on the end of a walking stick and holds it outside the tomb. Another shot rings out. Emerson and Amelia are trapped. They put the time to good use comparing their ideas and suspicions without the sarcastic and caustic behavior that has typified their relationship so far. Emerson has known for quite some time that Lucas had lied about when he arrived at Amarna. He actually arrived prior to the docking of Amelia's boat, in plenty of time to arrange the appearance of the mummy found in the tomb. It is not the work of an Egyptian, but of a mind that is coldly calculating. Emerson refuses to believe that it is due to frustrated love, that the motive is much more desperate. Emerson is positive that somehow Evelyn is in control of her grandfather's fortune, and Lucas must make her his wife so that as a man, he can then have control of it. Amelia finally remembers all the talk about Evelyn's boxes that her grandfather had packed in such haste during the one time Lucas was away from the castle. There must be a will hidden in the boxes.

The only plan Amelia and Emerson can think of is to have Amelia throw things from the tomb down the embankment to distract Lucas and provide cover for Emerson's escape. Perhaps the ruse will even trick Lucas into emptying his repeater magazine to allow Emerson to sneak up behind Lucas. Prior to his departure, Emerson declares his feelings for Amelia in a very passionate embrace and kiss. This plan works and with the aid of Abdullah, they are able to overcome Lucas. Emerson's fingers around his throat force Lucas to confess. The mummy has taken Evelyn to the Royal Tomb. Once at the tomb it is easy. The mummy fully expects Lucas to be the one returning, so he is surprised to see Emerson and Amelia. Signor Alberto is Lucas Luigi's partner in crime and for the very reason Emerson and Amelia deduce. Evelyn's grandfather had written a new will and had hidden it in her boxes, making her an heiress. The story resumes two years later back in Amarna with Amelia and Emerson expecting their first child and Walter and Evelyn eagerly expecting their second child. Lucas is a lord with no money, and Signor Alberto is enjoying the benefits of the Egyptian prison system.

## Chapter 12 Analysis

Peters gives her readers a very satisfying ending to her mystery. It is satisfying all around that Lucas is behind all the tricks and attacks. Everyone thought they could see through him, and yet his jovial manner kept everyone from really believing in his villainy. His carefully-prepared plan fooled even Amelia Peabody, though she would refuse to admit it. Amelia Peabody is a character who will remain with a reader for a long time.

Her very human foibles make her endearing, and her scathing dialogues with Emerson are realistic. As the first book of a very lengthy series, *Crocodile on the Sandbank* is a phenomenal beginning.



# Characters

## Amelia Peabody

The protagonist in *Crocodile on the Sandbank* is Amelia Peabody. She is the only daughter of a man who spends more time with his books than with people. Because of his reclusive nature, Amelia learns anything she wishes, unlike most women in the late 1800's. Like her father, she has developed a great interest in ancient peoples, their lands, and their languages—interests that were nurtured by her father. Upon her father's death, her brothers were all willing to allow her to take his inheritance until they realize its worth, over five-hundred thousand pounds. In contemporary monetary terms it would equal over thirty million dollars. Amelia is now an heiress, a spinster, and a determined woman, who intends to spend her life in adventure and exploration now that her filial duties are completed. Escaping from money-grubbing relatives, Amelia sets off on a tour of the very classical sites her father so loved, beginning in Rome, Italy. It is in Italy that she meets Evelyn Barton-Forbes, who has been abandoned by her lover. Taking Evelyn under her wing is characteristic of Amelia. She provides food, lodging, and clothing for Evelyn, telling her, rather than asking her, that Evelyn will be her companion for her journey. They move on to Egypt, where Amelia falls absolutely in love with the pyramids. Despite Evelyn's aversion, Amelia spends many a hot and dirty hour exploring the pyramids of Gizeh before they embark on their journey up the Nile toward Armana. Amelia has a very strong and stubborn personality and total belief in her opinions. She is always right. She is a feminist, something scandalous in the Victorian era, believing that women have as much brain power as a man, and that they are as physically and emotionally fit as any man. With the nocturnal antics of the risen mummy, Amelia finds that some of her deductions have been incorrect, and she is then willing to join forces with Emerson, the Egyptologist she has rescued from a terrible fever. Amelia is more than willing to remain to assist in his excavation. She shows more than superficial knowledge of excavation and Egyptology, which wins reluctant admiration from Emerson. Amelia earns the name "Sitt Hakim" or Lady Doctor after she effectively cures the daughter of her dragoman, Michael. She earns such a title of respect because she has a genuine love and respect for the Egyptian people, something she shares with Emerson. Amelia marries Emerson because she says that is the only way she can be involved in excavation in Egypt without causing a scandal. The real reason is that Amelia, believing she was destined to be a spinster all her life, has found her soul-mate. She has found a man who is her equal in every way, promising a relationship filled with love, honor, respect, and admiration.

## Evelyn Barton-Forbes

Evelyn Barton-Forbes is a high-bred English woman, who suffers terribly at the hands of a would-be lover, an Italian drawing instructor, Signor Alberto. Evelyn has always been the love of her grandfather's life. Her grandfather is Earl of Ellesmore, one of the oldest, richest, and most-respected families in England. The Earl's love for his granddaughter



prompts him to protect Evelyn from men so when Signor Alberto is brought onto the scene as her drawing tutor, she is ripe for the picking. He whispers words of love in her ear and in the end convinces her to abandon her grandfather and run away to Europe with him. As soon as all of Evelyn's jewelry and possessions have been sold to aid in their lifestyle, she is then abandoned by Alberto. Amelia finds Evelyn fainted on the floor of Rome's Forum. Evelyn's life changes radically once Amelia appears on the scene. She is taken to Amelia's hotel; a seamstress is hired to sew appropriate gowns for her, and food is prepared to strengthen her. She is to be Amelia's companion despite her failed affair. Evelyn recognizes a truly kind soul in Amelia and believes they can be like sisters. Sadly, Evelyn is unable to put her past totally behind her. Her family name is too well known, and her cousin Lucas puts in an appearance with every intent of wooing her in marriage so they can share in their grandfather's inheritance. Evelyn does not love Lucas; she never has. She is romantic enough to believe that love should be part of any marriage. Because of her soiled reputation, she believes that she and Amelia will live together as spinster sisters for the rest of their lives. Evelyn, however, does help Amelia to put her best qualities forward. When Evelyn meets Walter Emerson, she discovers what it is like to truly be in love, but fears that she will never be able to enjoy such a rapturous state, until Lucas behaves like a cad and tells Walter of her past. This has no effect on Walter other than to wish to protect Evelyn even further. They are immediately engaged, and once the troubling matter of the nocturnal mummy with interest in Evelyn is handled, Walter and Evelyn marry.

## Radcliffe Emerson

Radcliffe Emerson is an Egyptologist excavating in Armana the winter of 1884 - 1885. He is a strong and opinionated man, who believes his excavating skills rival and/or supersede those of all other Egyptologists. He has the firm belief that the study of Egyptian culture should be done in order to better understand the people and their history. The act of stealing artifacts and putting them on private display is most annoying to him. He believes artifacts should be systematically removed from an excavation and drawings and copious notes taken prior to being put on public display, preferably in their country of origin, Egypt. He hates all other excavators, believing that their standards are far below his. The only one he shows any remote admiration for, is Petrie, who is a fictional character in the book, but also a real-life Egyptologist that Peters uses as a model for Radcliffe Emerson. Radcliffe's obvious respect for the culture of the Egyptian people render the people to be more sympathetic toward him than typical Europeans. He is unable to completely assuage their fears and superstitions, but tries hard to respect them and give them logical explanations for strange occurrences. Radcliffe hates his first name and prefers to be called by his last name. He is quick-tempered and touchy, giving vent to great explosions of anger that dissipate just as quickly. He and Amelia have met their match in one another. They are both strong-willed, opinionated, stubborn, and passionate. Emerson believed that he would never find a woman with whom he could share his life. Once he meets Amelia, his life has changed for good. His reaction when he has to shoot the cobra poised to strike on Amelia's bed is as good a description of his affection for her as any. Throughout the book, the reader is led to believe that he has no time for women, especially Amelia, but he does give in to her



demands and wishes, and toward the end of the book, he actually solicits her opinion. His seemingly abrupt change of heart is what gives the book its very satisfying ending.

## Walter Emerson

Radcliffe's younger brother, who is an expert at hieroglyphs and philology. In order to understand the origins of the ancient Egyptian language, Walter joins Radcliffe for the Egyptian excavation, where they meet Amelia Peabody and Evelyn Forbes. Walter falls in love with Evelyn at first sight and believes her to be his one and only true love. He is unaware of her liaison with Signor Alberto, the drawing master, who seduced her and convinced her to leave her grandfather. He is unaware of her loss of fortune. He only knows that he loves her more than anything on earth. His love for her renders him nearly speechless when Lord Lucas Ellesmere appears on the scene making his intention of marrying Evelyn known. Amelia gives Walter a little push by letting him know that Evelyn reciprocates his feelings. As Walter pursues Evelyn in front of Lord Lucas, he is told of Evelyn's shame, which he does not believe at first. Once Evelyn and Amelia tell him that it is true, his only response is to ask Evelyn why she could not have trusted him with the secret and that it does not matter to him. He does not care if she has lost her innocence or her fortune. He merely wishes to be with her. He and Evelyn marry and within two years have a child with a second one on the way.

## Lord Lucas Ellesmere

a.k.a. Lucas Ellis Hayes, a.k.a. Luigi. Lucas is Evelyn's cousin who appears in Egypt looking to take Evelyn's hand in marriage. He tells the tale of their grandfather, who has recently died. He states that the grandfather's fortune has subsequently been bestowed on him, and that he wishes to share half of it with Evelyn, because until the time she eloped with Signor Alberto, she was to have been their grandfather's sole heir. The story is a little thin, but Lucas has a very jovial personality, and even Amelia finds it hard to get her barbs to sting. Being protective of Evelyn, Amelia is suspicious of Lucas, but he has worked his reprehensible plot so well that it is hard for anyone to suspect him of foul play. Every now and then Lucas' true nature shows through, especially the night that Michael wishes to speak with Amelia and Lucas orders him away. Amelia protests but does not discover until too late that Michael has been abducted. Lucas also tells Walter about Evelyn's elopement with Signor Alberto in a vain attempt to turn Walter's desire to disdain. This backfires on Lucas, causing Walter to be even more sympathetic toward Evelyn. Finally, Lucas returns to camp with a drugged bottle of wine. His intention is to abduct Evelyn and kill her in order that he receives the inheritance he believes should be his.

## Signor Alberto

Drawing master who seduces Evelyn away from her grandfather, the Earl of Ellesmere, and is a cohort of Lucas, attempting to take control of Evelyn's fortune.



## **James Peabody**

Amelia's eldest brother, who brings suit against Amelia when the value of their father's fortune is discovered.

## **Mr. Fletcher**

Solicitor to Mr. Peabody, and to Amelia after her father's death, and from whom Amelia gets a proposal of marriage.

## **Miss Pritchett**

Amelia's companion for her journey beginning in Rome. She is clumsy, simple-minded, and completely inadequate for Amelia's needs. After contracting typhoid, Amelia sends her home to England.

## **Travers**

Amelia's maid. Cheerful-looking, round-faced woman, whose personality is more like a sour lemon. Amelia sends Travers home also after becoming acquainted with Evelyn.

## **Piero**

Amelia's Italian guide while in Rome.

## **Conte d-Imbroglio d'Annunciata**

Lucas' father, the Italian who eloped with Lucas' mother.

## **Michael Bedawee**

Egyptian Christian, a Copt, who is Amelia's dragoman.

## **Hassan**

Egyptian of Luxor, the reis or captain of Amelia's boat, the Philae.

## **M. Maspero**

The French director of antiquities at the museum in Boulaq.





## **Herr Emil Brugsch**

Assistant to M. Maspero, first European to see the cache of royal mummies discovered a few years ago.

## **Abd er-Ra-sool Ahmed**

Robber in Thebes who discovered the Royal Tombs near his village of Gurnah.

## **M. Mariette**

M. Maspero's predecessor.

## **William Flinders Petrie**

Egyptologist, excavating in the Delta in the story. In real life, the father of scientific archeology upon whom Emerson's character is remotely built.

## **Critic**

Amelia's internal critic, who insists on changing a turn of phrase or advising Amelia as to which words in her journal are not lady-like.

## **Major Baring**

Now known as Sir Evelyn - consul general and British agent, chief power over Egypt.

## **Habib**

Waiter on the Philae.

## **Abdul**

Waiter on the Philae.

## **Abdullah**

Radcliffe's Egyptian foreman.



## **Mohammed**

Local village man who has been hired by Radcliffe, and who spreads rumors about the recently-discovered mummy. Mohammed is initially suspected of being the mummy.

## **Mayor of Village**

Mohammed's father, who has no control over his son.

## **M. Grebaut**

Newest head of Egyptian antiquities.



## **Objects/Places**

### **Rome, Italy**

Rome - The beginning of Amelia's classical journey where she meets Evelyn.

### **Alexandria, Egypt**

The Egyptian port on the Mediterranean Sea at the mouth of the Nile.

### **Cairo, Egypt**

The capital city of Egypt where Amelia and Evelyn begin their river journey up the Nile.

### **Gizeh - (also spelled Giza)**

The site of the Great Pyramids of Egypt.

### **Dragoman**

Guide or interpreter in Egyptian-speaking countries. Amelia's dragoman is Michael Bedawee.

### **Nile**

River in Egypt upon which Amelia and Evelyn travel by boat.

### **Warves of Boulaq**

On the river Nile at Cairo where Amelia secures the rental of a dahabeeyah.

### **Cairo Bazaar**

Open air market, any store front is really only a tiny cupboard open at the front with a stone platform on which the vendor sits, cross-legged, waiting for customers.



## **Museum of Boulaq**

Museum of Egyptian antiquities where Amelia and Evelyn meet Radcliffe and Walter Emerson

## **Amarna - (also spelled Amarnah)**

Egypt's capital during the reign of Pharaoh Akhenaton. Also the site of the Emerson excavation the winter of 1884.

## **Dahabeeyah**

Flat, shallow-bottomed boat with two masts, an open-air drawing room, kitchen, sleeping quarters, and bathroom.

## **Shepherd's**

Hotel in Cairo frequented by Europeans, and where Amelia and Evelyn stay while in Cairo.

## **Inheritance**

Money left to beneficiaries; in Amelia's case it enables her to be a woman of means; in Evelyn's case, it causes an intrepid suitor to try to trick her out of her wealth.

## **Apparition**

First seen in Cairo as an Egyptian god, then in Amarna as a risen mummy.

## **Parasol**

Amelia's preferred weapon as it is always at hand.

## **Horsus**

The Hawk God, often used as an ornament on necklaces worn by the ancient Egyptian dead. The small figurine Amelia finds on the floor of their hotel room in Cairo after the apparition of the Egyptian god appears.



## Holographic Will

Evelyn's grandfather created one last will that he packed in Evelyn's trunks and shipped to her to prevent Lucas from taking control of the inheritance.

## Hieroglyphs

The ancient Egyptian writings.

## Divided Skirt

The garment Amelia most desires to have, one that allows full freedom of movement for a woman.

## Pavement

Painted pavement from the time of Khuenaten (Akhenaton) that Emerson uncovers and Amelia spends days preserving.

## Mummy

Found in a nearby tomb, appears to have come back to life and terrorizes the villagers and the archaeologists. It appears to have a unworldly interest in Evelyn.

## Crucifix

Michael's good luck charm against evil demons, found on the floor of his tent after his disappearance.

## Papyrus

The bribe that Lucas brings to the Emerson brothers, ancient writings on a scroll. This particular scroll has the words of an ancient Egyptian poem, from which the title of the book comes.

## Cobra

Hooded and highly poisonous pit viper that somehow finds its way onto Amelia's bed.



## **Pistol**

Gun that Lucas shoots the mummy with, to no apparent avail, then shoots Walter Emerson through the shoulder. Emerson later uses the gun to shoot the cobra.

## **Wine**

Device that Lucas uses in a last attempt to obtain his fortune. He brings a bottle of wine to toast Evelyn and Walter's engagement. In fact, he has laced the wine with laudanum so he can have Alberto kidnap Evelyn and take her to the tomb.

## **Crocodile**

The idea for the title from an ancient Egyptian love poem that shows the crocodile to be a symbol of the dangers and difficulties that are experienced by those who are truly in love. A metaphor for the love of Walter and Evelyn, as well as for Amelia and Emerson.



## Themes

### **Archeology Must Be Approached Systematically and Scientifically**

The study of archeology, specifically Egyptology, is a primary theme in the book, *Crocodile on the Sandbank*. The protagonist, Amelia Peabody, has some knowledge of the science, unusual for a woman in Victorian England, but she does not completely understand why it must be approached with such methodical organization. Once she meets Radcliffe Emerson, who has no trouble giving her a piece of his mind about the value of the artifacts that excavators find, she understands more about preservation of artifacts. Emerson has very strong opinions on the sanctity of a burial site and loathes grave robbers and those who intend to make a profit with the sale of relics and artifacts so stolen. Peters creates Radcliffe Emerson in the shoes of true-life William Flinders Petrie, who has been named the father of scientific archeology. Like Petrie, Emerson demands that every site and finding be meticulously recorded and drawn in situ whenever possible. No scrap of evidence is too small for his notice, and his persistence in documenting every scrap of pottery gives credence to his dedication to the science of archeology. Emerson's brother, Walter, is an expert in the ancient language of Egypt, the words of which give clues as to the culture and society of a lost nation. By learning everything possible from the excavation sites, modern society can attain some of the benefits of long-ago ancestors, their triumphs and mistakes. By approaching archaeological sites with respect, the long-dead are not desecrated, rather they are honored and revered. But the sale of mummified body parts only for profit enrages the Emerson brothers. Eventually, Amelia and Evelyn as they learn the importance of properly recording an archaeological dig site.

### **Feminism Creates Opportunities for Women in the Victorian Era**

The world of Amelia Peabody is that of Victorian England, where women are still considered to be the chattel of men. They are not usually so honored with an inheritance simply because of their sex. "Then you will be indignant, but not surprised, to know that although I am the only child of my grandfather's eldest son, I cannot inherit his title or estates. There are few exceptions to the rule that only male descendants may inherit." (Page 14, Chapter 1). Fortunately for Amelia, her father had no such qualms, although her inheritance was merely money and not title and property. For Evelyn, the problem lies in the fact that the title and property cannot be bequeathed to a female but must be passed on down through the male line.

Amelia's determination to not live the life of a shriveled up spinster prompts her to embark on a journey to see the very places she and her father studied for so many years. This allows her to travel to Rome, Italy, and from there to Alexandria, Egypt, up



the Nile to Cairo, Gizeh, and on to Armana. Initially, Amelia has a companion, not to accede to the demands of society, but because she desires the company. Notice that she sends her companion back in the company of a minister and his wife. While Amelia does not believe the rules must apply to her, she does cater to the desires of her companion, who cannot defy society.

An additional problem in Victorian England is the reputation of a woman as opposed to that of a man. Evelyn's elopement with a man to whom she is not married stains her reputation in upper class English society. It is the very threat of exposure that prompts Evelyn to make a number of terrible decisions. Amelia cannot believe that a woman's worth can be based only on whether she is pure or not. She sees great qualities in Evelyn, indeed the very characteristics that make Evelyn a very sympathetic character. To Amelia, such a stain on her reputation does not diminish Evelyn's worth, and Amelia works throughout the entire book to get Evelyn to believe this. She finally does when Walter does not appear to mind that she is "ruined." He loves her for who she is, not for her wealth, status, or position in society, but rather for her kind nature, and strong intelligence.

Amelia caters to the whims of society only when necessary and believes that women are absolutely as capable as men in any capacity, whether physical or scholastically. Her comment at the end of the story that she married Emerson only because she did not want to offend society is sarcastic at best. She does, however, realize that the prejudices of her era could impede her intentions, so she makes the appearance of following the mores of society, when all the while she has plans of her own.

## **Love Can Be Found in Unexpected Places.**

Both Amelia and Evelyn are women who believe they will remain unloved by a man and unmarried for the rest of their lives. This is not an unusual state in Victorian England, for marriage was not an easy affair to arrange. Most marriages were arranged for the profit of one family or the other by name or by fortune. Women past a certain age were considered to be spinsters and therefore not marriageable. Women whose reputation have been ruined were likewise considered tarnished and undesirable. Amelia considers herself a spinster because of her age and unattractive features; Evelyn considers herself a single woman for life because of her tarnished reputation.

Finding love was the last thing on the minds of both women when they set off on their adventure together after meeting in Rome. After hearing Evelyn's story of her elopement and subsequent abandonment by both her lover and her family, Amelia's only question is whether or not sex is pleasurable. Such a question astounds and amuses Evelyn. She has found a friend for life in Amelia because Amelia's judgment of Evelyn does not follow that of society. Both women dream of a future together where they grow old as spinster sisters at heart. They found sisterly love in one another.

Their second opportunity to find love is when they meet the Emerson brothers, first in Cairo at the museum where Emerson shouts at Amelia for handling an artifact. Later,





they meet them again in Armana when Emerson is very sick with a fever, and Walter is looking for medical assistance. Amelia has no problem lending a hand; she feels her capabilities as a physician are only diminished for lack of medical training, not allowed to women in Victorian England. Evelyn, attracted on sight to Walter, does not protest. The lives of the four people become more and more intertwined as events pose a threat to every member of the expedition. Finding romantic love in the middle of the Egyptian desert is the last thing on the minds of all, but two couples emerge blissfully happy at the end of the story.

# Style

## Point of View

The point of view of *Crocodile on the Sandbank* is first person, protagonist. This is a typical storytelling method that gives a strong sense of immediacy to the story, that events, as they happen to the protagonist also happen to the reader. The challenge of writing in first person is finding a specific voice for the protagonist, or main character, that differs from that of the author. Peters has done a phenomenal job in the creation of her character, Amelia Peabody, who has a very specific method of speaking that makes full use of her classical and high-brow education not typically available to women of the Victorian Era. Amelia is also an early feminist and believes women to be equally as capable as men in most ways. Her attitude toward life is that of an independent and capable woman, who chooses to have a companion, not to suit the needs and mores of the time period, but because she is lonely. The personality of Amelia Peabody is carried throughout the book, giving the reader a very clear idea of her thoughts and opinions of everything.

The author uses a section of the book that is also written in first person, to give the back history of the character, Evelyn Barton-Forbes. Again, she uses the first person protagonist point of view to give the reader a full sense of immediacy, with Evelyn explaining her motivation to take steps so foreign to her upbringing and her nature. As the story progresses, the reader is stunned that Evelyn would have eloped in the first place, allowing the reader to see that even people given saintly qualities can still make mistakes.

Every event in the book is thus seen through the eyes of Amelia Peabody, from her cynical assessment of the relatives coming out of the woodwork when her father's fortune is revealed to her uncertainty in determining the identity of the mummy that has come back to life. The author stays very much in character and never allows Amelia to act or think out of character. Amelia's personality is that of a strong, independent, and opinionated woman, who has more concern for the plight of the Egyptian people than her European counterparts. She does not suffer the ignorant and pious hypocrites well, especially when they claim Christian beliefs but cannot move themselves to help one who is in trouble, as when Evelyn fainted on the Forum in Rome. A huge crowd gathered around, but none of them was willing to assist the fallen Englishwoman.

Everything that Amelia does is based on her upbringing and her view of the world. She believes that women are the equal of men and wishes that women were allowed to dress as men, especially when working. There are few who can rule the indomitable Amelia Peabody, as evidenced by how she is able to get Piero, Hassan, Michael, and even Emerson to do her bidding. The only character who seems to have any sort of influence over Amelia is the quiet and sweet Evelyn, who somehow manages to get Amelia to have a few dresses made up for her that flatter her figure, and even agrees to some of the more feminine undergarments she previously eschews. Evelyn's influence



is one of gentle persuasion. Any man who wishes to influence Amelia will learn this lesson.

## Setting

*Crocodile on the Sandbank* begins in Rome, Italy, where Amelia Peabody has chosen as the starting point for her journey through the classic sites about which she and her father loved to study. After her father's death, she uses the trip as a means of escape from her relatives, who chose to allow her to care for her father alone, but once his money surfaces they believe they have new rights. In Rome, at the Forum, Amelia encounters Evelyn Barton-Forbes, the granddaughter of the very wealthy and influential Earl of Ellesmore. Evelyn is destitute and spurned by her family because of a bad decision. Amelia is without her companion, who decided to acquire typhoid rather than continue on as companion to the intrepid Miss Peabody. Together the two women set sail for Alexandria, Egypt, and from there, up the Nile to the city of Cairo, where they stay for a few weeks at the famous Shepherd's hotel, high-class accommodations for visiting Europeans. Having met the Emerson brothers at the museum and learning of their destination as Armana, Amelia includes the site on their itinerary; however, it is not her primary goal. While they are in Cairo, Amelia makes good use of their delay by visiting the Great Pyramids of Gizeh and develops a life-long passion for the hot, dusty, bat-guano-encrusted Egyptian burial structures.

Leaving Cairo aboard their hired boat, the *Philae*, also known as a *dahabeeyah*, the two women have chosen the sites that they wish to visit, despite the disagreement of their captain, Hassan. Amelia always wins. At Armana, they encounter Walter Emerson, who is panicked because his older brother, Radcliffe, is very ill. Rather than trying to get Radcliffe to a doctor, Amelia brings her bag of medicines and, with Evelyn, accompanies Walter back to the excavation site several miles from the river. They have to walk as there is no other form of transportation across the hot sand. At the excavation site, Amelia makes herself very much at home by having Michael, her dragoman, bring necessary items to one of the emptied tombs, creating a bedroom for herself and Evelyn. Having to stay for several days to bring Emerson through his fever and subsequent convalescence, the two women are caught up in the intrigue of a resurrected mummy that terrorizes the villagers and keeps the village men from coming to work on the excavation site. Ignoring their further plans to venture up the river Nile, Amelia and Evelyn stay with the Emerson brothers to help both with the mystery and the excavation. Amelia's studies with her father have made her more knowledgeable about Egyptology than the average woman, and Evelyn's drawing abilities make her a considerable asset to the excavation.

The setting remains in Armana with the events taking place mostly at the excavation site, deep inside tombs that suffer from a landslide, creating a tense period when Emerson and Amelia are trapped inside one of the tombs, to the finding of a mummy in an apparently Royal tomb. All the characters experience the difficulties of life without much water in the middle of an Egyptian desert, made much more comfortable with Amelia's determination. The final scene of the drama takes place in the Royal tomb



where the reanimated mummy has taken Evelyn and intends to bury her and Walter Emerson alive. After the culprits have been apprehended, Emerson and Amelia must take them to Cairo and tell their story, so the journey ends back on the Nile, sailing along the beautiful river in Amelia's beloved sunny Egypt.

## Language and Meaning

Elizabeth Peters has a Ph.D. in Egyptology, and as a result, the archaeological detail in the novel are quite accurate. Her descriptions of the lands of Egypt, the pyramids, the people, the excavations, the tombs, and the painted pavement are filled with details only known by one who has experienced them in person. The novel is set in 1884 and features a proper English woman brought up as a scholar in Victorian England. The time period plays a large role in the very advanced vocabulary Peters uses in her novel. Most Victorian era writers use a cerebral vocabulary that Peters mimics. Amelia, the main character, uses the most sophisticated vocabulary, indicating the extent to which she has been educated by her scholarly father. The other characters also speak in a much more formal manner than characters in novels set in a more contemporary time. The formal and detailed language makes the story very rich and transports the reader from the first paragraph into Amelia Peabody's world. Peters makes some use of Egyptian words, but not so many that the reader is confused—the words merely adds to the local color of the world Peters has created. For the duration of the story, the reader is immersed in the world of late nineteenth-century Egyptian archeology, a mysterious mummy and a satisfying romance, all the while being challenged to expand one's vocabulary.

Additional information as to language and meaning of the story is reflected in the title of the book. Crocodile on the Sandbank is actually an ancient Egyptian love poem found on the piece of papyrus that Lucas gives to the Emerson brothers as a gift. The poem reads:

"The love of the sister is upon the other side;

A stretch of water is between

And a crocodile waiteth upon the sandbank.

But I go down into the water, I walk upon the flood;

My heart is brave upon the water

It is the love of her that makes me strong." (Page 161, Chapter 8)

The use of the poem being reflected in the title of the book is a technique often used by writers to give further meaning to the point of their book. The Egyptian poem likens the crocodile to the difficulties and dangers that one must be willing to endure to find true love. Evelyn and Amelia do not realize it, but they are looking for true love in the story. Evelyn, especially, is looking for the kind of love that is symbolized by the one who is



willing to face the dangers of the crocodile. Interestingly, in that chapter, Lucas is the one who thinks that any man who is willing to jump into a river infested with crocodiles is a fool, an opinion which gives testament to Lucas' feelings about love.

## Structure

The structure of *Crocodile on the Sandbank* by Elizabeth Peters is written in a fashion similar to a journal, the very beginning giving the reader the impression that Amelia Peabody is writing a journal of her travels. This impression is further cemented when the author refers to the Critic reading over the shoulder of her protagonist. "I am informed, by the self-appointed Critic who reads over my shoulder as I write, that I have already committed an error. If those seemingly simple English words do indeed imply that which I am told they imply to the vulgar, I must in justice to Evelyn find other phrasing." (Page 1, Chapter 1).

The first chapter of the book begins in journalistic-style exposition, where the main character, Amelia, gives a history and background of her life explaining why as a single, thirty-two-year-old woman, she is traveling the classical sites of the world alone and wealthy. She has a dialogue with her father's solicitor, who attempts to win her hand in marriage, a feat he has little hope of accomplishing. After she meets Evelyn, there is a short portion of the chapter that is told in first person, from Evelyn's point of view, giving the reader an intimate understanding of the girl's thoughts and feelings and making her explanation much more readily understood and accepted. Once all the history and backstory are explained, the structure of the book continues on in typical story-telling fashion with Amelia as the narrator and protagonist. The story is then told only from Amelia's point of view, with occasional references to the Critic, indicating that Amelia either records the events as they happen or after they were completed. The story begins in Rome, but has the flashback periods telling Amelia's history, then back to present when Amelia meets Evelyn, and one last flashback that tells Evelyn's story. From that point on, the story progresses chronologically, with intermittent references to past events that function as clues to the mystery that is being solved. The reader is allowed freely into the mind of the protagonist and hears her words and her thoughts as they happen. Each event of the story is told with such a sense of immediacy that the reader is swept along with the events of the book. The author makes good use of cliff-hanger chapter endings that require that the reader continue on to the next chapter in order to find out "what happens next." The structure, as indicated in the language and meaning section, is written with advanced vocabulary, indicating the educational level of most of the characters; however, it is not difficult and convoluted writing as is often found in Victorian writers who actually are of the same time frame in which they write.

The author, as an Egyptologist herself, makes full use of her education in that field of study. Her book is written based on true events of the early excavations in Egypt, specifically those of William Flinders Petrie. Although Petrie's findings did not take place for another ten years after the setting of this book, Peters still uses Petrie as the model of Emerson and refers to Petrie several times during the course of the story. Taking information from true life, Peters tells of the painted-plaster painting that Emerson



attempts to save with the use of a water and tapioca mixture applied with a fingertip. Amelia can give testament to this as she bloodied every finger of both hands before she had completed the tedious task. Later the villagers destroyed the pavement in the novel, as they did in real life. The tombs that have already been excavated and emptied are often used as dig sites, or sleeping quarters both in Petrie's life as well as in the escapades of the Emerson brothers. Amelia's obsession with pyramids is taken from the journals of Amelia Edwards, the real-life woman after whom Amelia Peabody takes her first name. Using true bits of history in a work of fiction allows Peters to make the field of Egyptology available and accessible to everyone.



## Quotes

"English or not, I doubted that the lady was dead. That was on Piero's Latin love of the dramatic. But so far as I could see, no one in the crowd was doing anything except stare. I rose to my feet, therefore, and after brushing off my bustle, I approached the group. My parasol proved useful in passing through it; I had to apply the ferrule quite sharply to the backs of several gentlemen before they would move. Eventually I penetrated to the center of the circle. As I had surmised, no one was behaving with sense or compassion. Indeed, several of the ladies were pulling their escorts away, with comments about infection and criticism of the fallen lady's probable character." Page 8, Chapter 1.

"All the more reason for neatness and order. In the early days, when European adventurers took away what they discovered in Egypt, there was no need for a national museum. Then M. Mariette, Maspero's predecessor, insisted that Egypt should keep some of its national treasures. The cooperation between Great Britain and France, to regulate and assist this unfortunate country, has resulted in the French being given control over the antiquities department. I suppose they must have something; after all, we control finance, education, foreign affairs, and other matters. But we could do with a little English neatness here, instead of French nonchalance." Page 33-34, Chapter 2.

"'I had not thought you the sort of lady who worried about propriety,' Lucas said, with a meaningful look. 'However, I shall hire my own dahabeeyah and be on your trail as soon as possible. You shan't escape me so easily ladies. I shall sail where you sail and moor where you moor!'" Page 68, Chapter 3

"I wish I could stop thinking about it. My reflections should dwell on the frailty of the flesh, on human vanity, and the other precepts of Christian faith. . . Instead I shudder at the horror of what it is, after all, only a bit of cast-off flesh—the discarded garment of the soul. Amelia, if it had touched me I should have died!" Page 74, Chapter 4.

"I retreated to my bed, but I did not sleep well the rest of the night. The first pale streaks of dawn found me wide awake, and I was glad to arise and dress. I had managed to convince myself that what I saw was a large animal of some kind, raised on its back legs as a cat or panther will rise; so the full horror of the night did not strike me until I stepped out onto the ledge, which was now illumined by the rising sun. As I did so, something crackled under my foot...It was the rotting bandage which had once wrapped an ancient mummy." Page 108, Chapter 5.

"I stood on the ledge for some time, trying to think sensibly. Emerson had spent some hours with the mummy. Fragments of the fragile cloth, caught on the fabric of his garments, might have been brushed off when he sat down at dinner the night before. But as soon as the idea entered my mind, common sense dismissed it. There was a regular trail of the stuff leading down the ledge as far as I could see. If Emerson's clothes had been so untidy I would have noticed. Further, Emerson's chair was some six feet away from the door of our chamber. He had never approached our door last night;



and the largest heap of fragments was there, as if it had been deposited by a creature who stood for a long time on our threshold." Page 110, Chapter 6.

"For the space of a single heartbeat there was not a sound. Lucas stood frozen, the pistol dangling from his lax hand; his face was a mask of horror. Then, from the mummy, came a sound that froze the blood in my veins. The creature was laughing—howling, rather, with a hideous mirth that resembled the shrieks of a lost soul. Still laughing, it retreated, and none of the horrified watchers moved to prevent it. Even after the thing had vanished from sight around the curve of the cliff, I could hear its ghastly laughter reverberating from the rocky walls." Page 175, Chapter 8.

"Evelyn was bending so close that her unbound hair brushed his cheek. Her face was transformed by pity, and I rather hated to disillusion her, but I was not sure what she might promise in the heat of her innocent enthusiasm. If she made a promise, she would keep it. And I was determined that matters should proceed according to the plan I had conceived. So I said briskly, 'He is coming around now, Evelyn. Are you going to promise to marry him, or shall we try the smelling salts first?'" Page 203, Chapter 9.

"His lordship does not appear to have been particularly useful. His collapse threw the crew into a complete panic. Even Reis Hassan—who is far from being a coward, I assure you—is afraid. I trust his lordship is fully recovered this morning from what Hassan described as a personally delivered curse?" Page 209, Chapter 10.

"On the ledge above us stood the Mummy. The blind, bandaged head was turned toward us; one stubby leg was lifted as if our sudden appearance had stopped it in midstep. To the crumbling, rotting bandages of its breast, the horror clasped the unconscious form of Evelyn." Page 238, Chapter 11.

"'And you,' I said, 'understand that I accept your proposal of marriage because it is the only way in which I can gain my ends. It is so unfair—another example of how women are discriminated against. What a pity I was not born a hundred years from now! Then I would not have to marry a loud, arrogant, rude man in order to be allowed to excavate.'" Page 259, Chapter 12.





## Topics for Discussion

Why does Evelyn elope with Signor Alberto? Why is she such a good target for treasure hunters?

Discuss Amelia's relationship with her family, her father, and her brothers. What does her upbringing have to do with the development of her personality?

Discuss Victorian England and the role of women in that society. Explain how Amelia is one of the first feminists and how her example will help in women's suffrage.

Why is the study of Egyptology so important? What role does Egyptian culture have on the rest of the world?

Discuss the appropriate methods of excavation of archaeological sites and why they are important.

What do you think about the theft and illegal sale of antiquities of ancient people? Is it wrong to make a profit on something that is dead and buried? Why or why not?

Explain Lucas' motivation in his attempts to win Evelyn's hand. Why was he not successful?

Discuss Amelia's character. Why do her characteristics make her a good companion for Emerson?

Compare and contrast the relationship between Emerson and Amelia with Walter and Evelyn.

Compare and contrast the relationship between Amelia and Evelyn. Which woman do you like better? Why?

Do you feel that Evelyn's strength of character is consistent throughout the book? Give specific details from the text to support your position.

Discuss the qualifications Elizabeth Peters has for writing a book about Egypt. Do you feel her advanced language, vocabulary, and topic make the book difficult to read? Why or why not?

Discuss the backgrounds of some secondary characters that are mentioned in the book, specifically those of Petrie, Sir Evelyn Baring, Gaston Maspero and Emil Brugsch. Does the fact that these characters are based on actual people of the era make the book more appealing? Why or why not?

What does the study of ancient human life do for the future?



Compare and contrast the use of good manners with those of plain speaking. What difficulties arise with each? What progress is made with the use of each? Is one preferable over the other?