

# **Desert Queen: The Extraordinary Life of Gertrude Bell, Adventurer, Adviser to Kings, Ally of Lawrence of Arabia Study Guide**

**Desert Queen: The Extraordinary Life of Gertrude Bell, Adventurer, Adviser to Kings, Ally of Lawrence of Arabia by Janet Wallach**

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# Plot Summary

*Desert Queen: The Extraordinary Life of Gertrude Bell: Adventurer, Adviser to Kings, Ally of Lawrence of Arabia* is the life story of noted Englishwoman, Gertrude Bell. Gertrude is born in Washington Hall, County Durham, England, on July 14, 1868, to extremely wealthy parents, Hugh and Mary Bell. The Bell family business of iron and coal manufacturing provides vast opportunities to Gertrude throughout her life.

Tragedy will mark Gertrude's otherwise privileged life with the death of her mother when Gertrude is only three-years-old. Gertrude forms an extraordinarily close bond with her father which will continue until her death. When Mr. Bell remarries, Gertrude forms a cautious and polite relationship with her stepmother but it drastically pales in comparison to the feelings Gertrude has for her father. Gertrude has one brother, Maurice, a stepbrother, Hugo, and two stepsisters, Molly and Elsa.

Gertrude is an exceedingly gifted child and goes away to the all-girl Queen's College in London at the age of seventeen. Gertrude loves her newfound independence but must return home for three years of social seasons with the objective of securing a proper husband. When a suitable match is not secured, Gertrude goes to Oxford University where she excels in her subjects, especially history. In the hopes of finding a husband for Gertrude, the family sends her to a relative in Romania for another social season. Gertrude does fall in love with a young man but her father will not consent to the marriage so Gertrude takes control of her life and decides to travel the world to explore.

On a trip to Jerusalem, Gertrude falls in love with the East and delves head first into the study of the Arabic language which allows her to travel freely throughout the region. Gertrude brazenly launches solitary treks across the Arabian Desert encountering raiding Bedouin tribes as well as sheiks complete with harems. Gertrude's life will take a pattern of extended travel punctuated by trips home to England but she always longs to return to the desert which she feels is her only escape from the binds of Victorian England.

Throughout her life, Gertrude will have a few significant romantic relationships but they all end tragically either through death or rejection so Gertrude remains married to her work of exploration. Eventually Gertrude is employed by the British government to aid their intelligence and map making efforts during World War I and Gertrude thrives in her new environment. For the first time in her life, Gertrude feels like a real "Person" because people value her contributions and her knowledge.

In her experiences in the East, Gertrude meets T.E. Lawrence, who will become known as Lawrence of Arabia, as well as Winston Churchill and other world dignitaries. Gertrude's greatest professional accomplishment is the crafting of the government of an independent Iraq complete with the installation of a carefully chosen king whose friendship and respect she secures. Unfortunately, when Gertrude's professional duties come to an end in her beloved Iraq, she feels that her life no longer has purpose and she commits suicide a few days shy of her fifty-eighth birthday.



# Part 1: A Victorian, Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4

## Part 1: A Victorian, Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4 Summary and Analysis

Gertrude Margaret Lowthian Bell is born to parents, Hugh Bell and Mary Shield Bell, on July 14, 1868, in Washington Hall, County Durham, England. Her family is a wealthy one whose money comes from a prosperous business of iron and coal manufacturing. Gertrude is raised under the watchful eye of her nanny and is groomed to be prim and proper and to, one day, become a dutiful wife as is the fate of all young girls in the Victorian Age in England.

At the age of two, Gertrude moves with her family to a new home called Red Barns located in Middlesbrough. In the winter of 1871, Mary Bell dies from complications giving birth to a son named Maurice. Gertrude and Maurice become constant companions and Hugh and Gertrude's relationship grows extremely close in the years after Mrs. Bell's death. Hugh remarries in August, 1876, to Florence Olliffe, a young playwright. Gertrude is conflicted by this replacement of a mother in her life and also the need to share her father with a new person. Gertrude and Florence's relationship is civil but never close.

Gertrude escapes any discomfort at home by reading books and is sent away to Queen's College, a progressive girls' school in London at the age of seventeen. Gertrude is an excellent student but she prefers her country home to life in the city and learns to maintain family contact through writing many letters.

In the next chapter, Gertrude enters the University of Oxford in 1886 and Gertrude enjoys the company of the male students and delights in competing with them. Gertrude maintains a steady stream of letters to her family but revels in the independence afforded her at the university. By the end of her second year, Gertrude achieves first place in Modern History studies, the first woman to ever have done so. In spite of her academic success, Gertrude has failed the most important test for a young woman in Victorian society: securing a husband.

In 1889, Gertrude is sent to Bucharest to visit Florence's sister, Mary Lascelles, whose husband Frank is the British Minister to Romania. Gertrude is befriended by their son, Billy, in the hopes that Gertrude will develop a social life during a festive winter season.

The next chapter begins with Gertrude's arrival in Bucharest and she spends weeks at parties, dances and special dinner. Gertrude enjoys the events and is particularly taken with customs and a culture that is so different from England. Gertrude and Billy take a trip to Constantinople and Gertrude falls in love both with Turkey and Billy. After their return to London in the summer of 1889, Gertrude's feelings for Billy wane because he is not as bright or passionate as she.



Gertrude is introduced to society that summer and spends the next three years in social seasons but fails to garner any marriage proposals. Having exhausted her societal allotment of time to marry, Gertrude turns to travel and makes a journey to Persia which she considers paradise. Gertrude falls in love with a young man named Henry Cadogan but Hugh Bell refuses to give his consent to the marriage. Henry dies of pneumonia in the summer of 1893.

The next chapter finds Gertrude at twenty-five-years old, mourning for Henry and unsure of a plan for her future. Gertrude jumps at the chance to stay with the Lascelles at their embassy home in Berlin but Gertrude finds Germany boring and returns to England. Gertrude travels for many years and by the time she is thirty, still has no husband and no real purpose to her life.

In the opening chapters of the book, the author establishes the cultural and social mores into which Gertrude is born. Victorian England provides Gertrude the comfort of her family's wealth but also the strict mores and regulations that limit a woman's possibilities in life. This is a challenge for a woman as bright and driven as Gertrude who has no place to channel her energies outside the academic world. The author also shows the reader that Gertrude is more comfortable in the company of men, probably as a result of her extremely close relationship with her father.

The same society which elevates Gertrude's public position in life destroys her private one as evidenced in Gertrude's failed love relationships. Although Billy Lascelles would be a suitable match, Gertrude finds him boring after awhile. Her love for Henry Cadogan is squashed because her father does not deem him to be a fit suitor because of his family's financially embarrassed position in society.



# Part 1: A Victorian, Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8

## Part 1: A Victorian, Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 Summary and Analysis

In November 1899, Gertrude travels to Jerusalem to study Arabic and enter the Arabic world. Gertrude thrives in her new surroundings and conquers the language which will open up new worlds. Before long, Gertrude launches on the first of many excursions into the desert accompanied only by her cook and two muleteers. Gertrude is joined in Turkey by a required Turkish soldier and she marvels at the ancient ruins of palaces and cities she sees along the journey.

On another trip, Gertrude rides her camel through the rocky terrain of mountains and makes the acquaintance of several people of the region who accept her and admire her courage. Gertrude eventually gains the confidence of Bedouin soldiers who agree to accompany her on her journey over desert sands. Gertrude eventually returns to England but knows in her heart that she will return to the East which has become her new love.

The next chapter finds Gertrude at home in England in the summer of 1900 where she remains for nearly a year. Gertrude spends time with her brother, Maurice, stepbrother, Hugo, and stepsisters, Elsa and Molly. Even surrounded by her family, Gertrude feels a deep loneliness so she launches another adventure in August 1901, this time to Switzerland where she conquers her fears to climb mountains leaving one named "Gertrude's Peak."

At the beginning of 1902 Gertrude makes another trip to the East stopping in Algiers, Smyrna and Jerusalem before returning to England by the summer. Before long, Gertrude embarks on a second trip to Switzerland and comes dangerously close to losing her life on a climb up the rocky surface of the Finsteraarhorn glacier.

In the next chapter, Gertrude has returned to England in the summer of 1902 and hires a maid named Marie Delaere and plans a trip to Delhi. Gertrude is accompanied on her trip to India by her brother, Hugo, and they reach Bombay in December 1902. Gertrude is introduced to the members of the esteemed Indian Civil Service, a group of Oxford and Cambridge graduates who now rule the country and its outposts. One of the most distinguished of the group is Percy Cox, the presiding British Consul in Muscat, who will become an important figure in Gertrude's life.

From India, Gertrude and Hugo travel across Asia, cross the Pacific to Vancouver, Canada, and then into the United States where she climbs the Rocky Mountains before returning to England in July 1903. Gertrude longs to escape her dreary existence in England and leaves for the East once more in January 1905. This time, Gertrude's plan is to study Roman and Byzantine ruins and observe the Bedouin and Druze people so that she can share her findings with the English.



In February, Gertrude sets out with her cook and three muleteers on another trip across the desert. Before long, Gertrude encounters the Druze and is brought to the tent of their sheik to initiate a professional friendship. Gertrude remains a few weeks in the mountains and arrives in Damascus where her heart quickens with anticipation at crossing the desert. Gertrude hires servants and guides to direct her to the ruins of the Roman and Byzantine churches.

By the spring of 1906, Gertrude is once again in England where she is working on a book about Syria and the Druze. The Bell family has officially moved into Rounton Grange and Gertrude is blissfully happy in the verdant surroundings writing about the mysterious life she left behind in the East. In March 1907, on the heels of her newly-published book, *The Desert and the Sown*, Gertrude leaves for Asia Minor for more excavations and explorations with a colleague, William Ramsay. At the completion of the excavations with Ramsay, Gertrude proceeds to Konia where she meets Major Charles Doughty, the British official in residence. Gertrude stays with Major Doughty and his wife to get acclimated to the area and meets their nephew who will soon become a major part of Gertrude's life.

In the next chapter, the author states the irony that Gertrude, a highly independent, intelligent woman is active in the anti-suffrage movement in England in 1908. At her core, Gertrude is still a Victorian woman who values tradition and the movement is in staunch opposition to her fundamental beliefs.

In this section, Gertrude establishes herself as a woman of the world, capable of travel to the most remote regions of the globe where she revels in dangerous pursuits and the search for treasures both past and present. Gertrude's greatest accomplishment to this point is being recognized as an important person in the East. "'I am a Person in this country,' she wrote excitedly to her parents. 'I am a Person! and one of the first questions everyone seems to ask everyone else is, 'Have you ever met Miss Gertrude Bell?'" Part 1, Chapter 6, Page 61 Gertrude revels in her equal footing with men in the Arab countries and this persona may serve as the foundation for her opposition to the suffrage movement because she feels she is fully capable of managing her life but that most women are not.



# Part 1: A Victorian, Chapters 9, 10, 11 and 12

## Part 1: A Victorian, Chapters 9, 10, 11 and 12 Summary and Analysis

In the winter of 1909 Gertrude makes her first journey from Syria to Mesopotamia, armed with knowledge of surveying, map making and astronomy learned at the Royal Geographical Society. Gertrude employs a servant named Fattuh in addition to several other servants and muleteers to make the trip across the desert. Gertrude spends months documenting and photographing the ancient ruins and treasures she finds in desert cities. When she returns home, Gertrude spends eighteen months writing a new book, *Amurath to Amurath*, about her adventure.

In January 1911 Gertrude once more leaves England for a trip East. In May of that year, Gertrude meets junior archaeologist, Thomas Edward Lawrence, who will become known one day as Lawrence of Arabia. The next chapter notes Gertrude spending the balance of 1911 and 1912 at home in England lecturing and writing articles on archeology. She turns her attention now to Turkey where the Ottoman Government is suffering a decline and will probably be up for grabs by other Arab countries.

Much of Gertrude's information is provided by Richard (Dick) Doughty-Wylie who is now living in Constantinople. Gertrude entertains Dick and his wife when they visit England. Gertrude and Dick begin an intense relationship including the exchange of many fervent letters but the relationship is thwarted by Dick's refusal to divorce his wife.

Gertrude arrives in Damascus in November 1913 prepared to make a journey into Central Arabia, an expedition into the Nejd (desert) which signifies escape to her. Gertrude once again employs Fattuh and engages the support of the influential Sheikh Muhammad Bassam who provides vital information about the area, especially about the two rival warriors of Central Arabia: Ibn Rashid and Ibn Saud. Gertrude and Fattuh go to the marketplace to gather their provisions but Fattuh contracts typhoid and Gertrude must hire a substitute servant for the trip.

In the next chapter Gertrude finally sets off on her trek to cross the Arabian desert. The twenty camels in her caravan carry tents, food, furniture, china, clothing and more provisions which are foreign to her Arab servants. A few days into the trip, Gertrude's caravan is attacked by a band of Druze but is rescued by two sheikhs who recognize two of Gertrude's guides. By the end of January 1914 water and provisions are running low and Gertrude's camp is approached by Turkish soldiers sent to warn her to turn back.

Gertrude moves her camp to nearby Amman and spends a few days with a local sheikh before setting off once again on her desert expedition. The days are tedious with no





relics to view and the nights are cold and empty as Gertrude ruminates on the letters she continues to receive from Dick declaring his love but no way to fully engage in a romantic relationship.

In the next chapter Gertrude and her caravan reach the city of Hayil on February 24, 1914. Gertrude enters a large house and is interrogated by an Arab woman and left to stay in a huge room for four days before being granted an audience with the Emir Ibrihim. The local people are suspicious of Gertrude's motives and keep her imprisoned in the huge palace room until her release on March 7. The next day Gertrude reaches Baghdad and learns in a letter from Dick that he has accepted a diplomatic post in Ethiopia.

In this section, Gertrude tests the boundaries of her physical and emotional states. Ironically, Gertrude's forays into the East, and especially the desert, represent escape from the ennui of life in England at the same time that she would like to get closer to Dick who pulls her in emotionally only to push her away. Gertrude is now in her mid-Forties and well past the age of acquiring a suitable husband so she enriches her life with travel, archeology and writing. Gertrude is certainly not immune to the pull of romance and affection but once again has found a man who is unavailable, so she indulges her passionate side in her love for the Arabian countries.



# Part 1: A Victorian, Chapters 13, 14, 15 and 16

## Part 1: A Victorian, Chapters 13, 14, 15 and 16 Summary and Analysis

Gertrude spends three weeks in Baghdad and moves west across the Syrian desert toward Damascus. Along the way, Gertrude is befriended by Bedouin sheikhs but is always alert to thieves and raiding parties of warring tribes. She arrives in Damascus on May 1 completely exhausted. Before long Gertrude is sought out by the British Ambassador in Constantinople who is eager to learn what she had discovered about the people and the area on her journey. The British government is concerned that the Turkish people will align with Germany if a world war were to break out.

By the end of May, Gertrude is back in England where she receives a prestigious gold medal from the Royal Geographical Society. During this time, the Archduke Ferdinand is assassinated and World War I begins. The Turks align with Germany and the British are concerned about their trade routes to India and their petroleum fields in the Persian Gulf. Gertrude is once more sought out for her information on the region and she advises the British government to organize the Arabs in a revolt against the Turks. Gertrude is denied passage to the East for more than a year following the outbreak of war.

By the next chapter Gertrude is working for the Red Cross in Boulogne, France. Gertrude learns that Dick is returning to England so she, too, returns home to an unrequited tryst. Before long, Dick is sent to war and Gertrude learns that he is killed in battle. Gertrude plunges into a silent depression which never completely lifts for the duration of her life.

In the following chapter it is the autumn of 1915 and Gertrude longs to escape the dreariness of her life in England to return to the East. Her adventure arrives in an invitation from a colleague stationed in Cairo who needs Gertrude's knowledge of the Arab countries and her map reading skills. Gertrude will become a spy for the British army. Gertrude is met in Egypt by Lawrence and she is soon installed in her office at the Military Intelligence agency.

The British goal is to align with the Arabs and prevent them from declaring a holy war against the British and the French. The key to success is information and Gertrude is called upon to ferret out information on the Arab tribes. To complicate matters, the British government in India is fighting with the British government in Egypt over territory and Gertrude is called upon to mediate because of her understanding of the regions and the parties involved. Gertrude travels to Delhi to act as liaison between the two factions of the British government and also work toward convincing the Arabs to join the British.



The next chapter finds Gertrude disembarking from the troop transport ship, full of conviction but not much power because she acts in an unofficial capacity. She meets the men at the British consul, H. St. John Philby, A.T. Wilson and Sir Percy Cox. At first, the men are cautious in their interactions with Gertrude but she soon wins them over with her accomplishments and confidence.

At last, Gertrude feels that her life has purpose. It is only in the East that she feels like a real Person, one who is admired and sought out for her skills and knowledge and not some vacuous parlor room games conducted in the mansions of England. It seems as if Gertrude's life will be a professional one because romance has eluded her for many years. With the death of Dick Doughty-Wylie, the hopes of romance are all but squashed as she cannot imagine ever loving a man as much as she loved Dick. For a woman who thrives on accomplishment, the thwarted passion for a public relationship with Dick is a source of pain and frustration. Gertrude's personality does not indulge such ambiguity easily and she is happiest when she is on military missions in the Arab countries where she feels that she can contribute and make progress at least in one area of her life.



## Part 2: The Khatun, Chapters 17, 18, 19 and 20

### Part 2: The Khatun, Chapters 17, 18, 19 and 20 Summary and Analysis

Lawrence meets up with Gertrude in Basrah and their professional regard for each other deepens. Lawrence hopes that Gertrude will return to Cairo but she prefers the work in Basrah because she is uniquely qualified to learn about the activities of the Arab tribes. Gertrude braves wartime skirmishes and blistering heat to travel the area in search of information along the Euphrates River. Gertrude is unhappy that she must continue to function in an unofficial capacity which hinders her progress and status. Finally, Gertrude is named a full member of Sir Percy Cox's Political Staff of the India Expeditionary Force D, making her the only female Political Officer in the British forces.

Gertrude's role is to keep track of Ibn Saud and Ibn Rashid as well as monitor activities of the German spies. Gertrude thrives on the work but laments the lack of friends. The weather is also a major obstacle as the intense heat prohibits sleep and makes everyday tasks unbearable. Gertrude's personal appearance is suffering from the situation and her now-gray hair falls out in clumps and her clothes are looking more worn than she usually would allow. By 1917 Gertrude acquires a two-room suite in the Political Office and her work is being praised by the British government. By March, the British are in control of Baghdad and Gertrude is summoned there and given the title of Oriental Secretary by Cox.

In the next chapter Gertrude is mesmerized by the beauty of Baghdad and the city is celebrating its liberation by the British. Once more, Gertrude's role is the acquisition of information from people in the region and she is quite a contrast in her long skirts and flowered hats among the Arab people in their long, flowing robes. Gertrude rejects the military housing offered to her and finds a more suitable house complete with a rose garden which will allow her to indulge her passion for gardening. Her colleague, Lawrence, is garnering publicity for his Arabian work but Gertrude prefers the domestic life and keeps a low profile. In December 1920 it is learned that Shiite tribesmen are assisting the Turks in the Euphrates Valley and Gertrude heads out to the region and finds that people are dissatisfied with the British. Gertrude returns after two weeks, rattled but still in love with her adopted country, Iraq.

In the next chapter, in the spring of 1918, Gertrude works under the command of the Acting Civil Commissioner, Arnold T. Wilson, while Cox is away. Gertrude turns down an opportunity to return to England in the summer of 1918 fearing that the Arabs will feel abandoned if she, whom they call the Khatun, were to leave. Gertrude is in dire need of a holiday, however, and leaves for a week in Teheran. When she returns, Gertrude learns that Cox is leaving for the British consulate in Persia and Gertrude is deeply disturbed by the loss of her trusted mentor.



Gertrude is soon stricken with a bout of malaria but her spirits rise when she learns on October 31, 1918, that the Allies have signed an armistice with Turkey. While the end of war is well received, the job ahead now turns to reorganization and the establishment of independent Arab rule. Gertrude becomes a center of information sharing as she hosts a multitude of people from the region to discuss the new direction for Iraq. Gertrude thrills to the possibility of defining a whole new country as she pores over her maps of Persia, Turkey, Syria, Kuwait and Mesopotamia.

Gertrude is in a difficult position because she loves the Arab nations, especially Iraq, and her knowledge and skills set are perfect for intelligence work during the war, but the stress and intensity of the conditions are taking quite a toll on her health. Even thinner than before, Gertrude is now nearly bald because her hair has fallen out due to stress. She feels committed to her cause, however, and will not return home for a much-needed rest when she feels that the Arab people need her even more than she needs a respite. Gertrude does make some gestures toward establishing a peaceful domestic life when she finds a house with a rose garden and has Florence send her clothing and household goods from England. Gertrude is in the difficult situation of working with men and associating with them much of the time but longing for female friends and finding none, especially in the insipid wives of the British consul officers.



## Part 2: The Khatun, Chapters 21, 22, 23 and 24

### Part 2: The Khatun, Chapters 21, 22, 23 and 24 Summary and Analysis

The British government instructs General Allenby of the British forces to appoint Faisal, the son of the Sharif Hussein, as the new ruler of Syria. Faisal will rule with Arab governors and an Arab administration but he will rule under French supervision. This news sets up ripples of discord among those who think the British should retain rule, the most influential of these is the Naqib of Baghdad, the religious leader of the Sunnis, who shares his discontent with Gertrude.

Gertrude travels to Paris in March 1919 to take part in the Paris Peace Conference where the leaders of the world's major powers are convening. Gertrude formally meets Faisal and spends much time exploring Paris with Lawrence. Gertrude takes a long-needed rest at home in England for a few months before leaving again for her home in Baghdad in September.

In the next chapter Gertrude stops in Cairo en route to Baghdad where she takes a meeting with General Gilbert Clayton, the Interior Minister. Gertrude also makes stops in Palestine and Damascus where she visits Faisal's home and learns that he is in England lobbying for support. Gertrude meets his brother, Zaid, as well as a noted soldier, Jafar Pasha whom Gertrude notes will be useful in the future.

In the next chapter Gertrude is thrilled to return to her Baghdad home and is anxious to get to work. Gertrude's first matter of business is to draft a report stating that an Arab State would be a possibility within a few years and that the British government should work toward that end. A.T. Wilson, Gertrude's superior, is furious about the memo because he feels that Britain should not do anything to risk losing the valuable oil located in the Mesopotamian region. This is the beginning of the major breakdown of the relationship between Gertrude and Wilson.

The next chapter finds Gertrude shunned by her British colleagues but openly embraced by the Arab people. Gertrude learns that there is unrest in the region as the Turks, frustrated that no peace treaty had yet been signed with Britain and France, are embracing Bolshevik propaganda. The Arab government, in desperate need of financial assistance, is angry and unwilling to accept French aid, as are other local uprisings that threaten tranquility in the area. Gertrude remains fixed that an Arab government must be created in Iraq while her colleagues stand adamantly opposed to this idea.

Gertrude has weathered the ravages of World War I yet faces the biggest war of her political life as she asserts her opinion that Iraq should be a self-governing country. The return to the Baghdad home she loves and the work which fuels her is seriously



tempered by disgruntled and opposing colleagues who make her life very difficult. Gertrude's major opponent will be A.T. Wilson and an adversarial relationship will ensue for quite awhile. Still, Gertrude cannot abandon the Arab people whom she has come to know and who have come to respect her, calling her their Khatun, or an important lady in public office who keeps the needs of the people at the forefront.



## Part 2: The Khatun, Chapters 25, 26, 27 and 28

### Part 2: The Khatun, Chapters 25, 26, 27 and 28 Summary and Analysis

Faisal has been proclaimed King of Syria, his brother, Abdullah, has been named King of Iraq, and the area is in chaos. Gertrude escapes the political hostilities and escorts her father on a month-long trip in the Arab countries. Once more her father is the only man who can buoy her spirits in the face of adversity such as that related to the British influence in the Arab region.

The next chapter opens in May 1920 and there is still no establishment of an Arab government in Iraq. With hopes of encouraging the moderate Arabs, Gertrude leaks some secret documents about a constitutional government to an influential Arab nationalist. When hearing of the leak, A.T. Wilson severely chastises Gertrude for the indiscretion and her colleagues remain fixed in their opposition to Arab independence.

In the next chapter Percy Cox returns to Baghdad and Gertrude is quick to share information about the uprisings and unrest among the people who are tired of waiting for an Arab ruler. Cox soon announces that Mesopotamia is to be made an independent state under the guarantee of the League of Nations and subject to the mandate of Great Britain. Cox must leave but promises to return to establish a provisional Arab government.

Gertrude continues to meet with representatives of all factions including the Sunnis and Shiites in order to reach agreements for Arab rule. In July of 1920 the French government sends Faisal an ultimatum demanding acceptance of the French mandate complete with French control over the army, economy and railroads. In July, Faisal and his brother, Zaid, leave Damascus and Arab government is over after only twenty-one months.

At home, Gertrude's family's business is suffering huge financial problems from the strikes and the Depression that hit England after the war, and Gertrude's monthly allowance is severely reduced. Things are difficult at the office too as A.T. Wilson alternately reprimands and ignores Gertrude. Fortunately, A.T. is scheduled to leave soon and Percy Cox will return much to Gertrude's delight.

The next chapter finds Gertrude ebullient at Cox's return in October of 1920. Cox's intention is to form a provisional Arab government immediately, a start contrast to A.T. Wilson's abhorrence to Iraqi independence. Cox enlists Gertrude's help in naming Arab Ministers and Naqib accepts the position of Prime Minister. The Council of State of the first Arab government meets on November 2, 1920, and among the issues to be decided is how to hold an election to vote in either Faisal or Abdullah as Emir. Gertrude



feels that Faisal is the obvious choice, having been ousted from Damascus by the French.

Even though Gertrude never gave birth to children, she is mimicking the process in establishing the country of Iraq and nurturing it until it is able to stand on its own. Her love for the Arab country and its people supersedes even her own personal happiness as she forgoes any close relationships in her life in order to complete her mission in the East. Gertrude is like any good mother in that she staunchly defends Iraq's rights even when it makes her life very difficult with her colleagues, especially A.T. Wilson. Ironically, it is the continuing financial support of her father which allows Gertrude to live her life abroad and do her work in Iraq which positions him as the indirect father of Iraq.



## Part 2: The Khatun, Chapters 29, 30, 31 and 32

### Part 2: The Khatun, Chapters 29, 30, 31 and 32 Summary and Analysis

Gertrude is filled with apprehension at the beginning of 1921 and she buries herself in work to manage her emotions. Gertrude also feels the lack of any real friends in her life even though she finds most people boring and dull and alienates most people she meets. Gertrude's white paper entitled Review of the Civil Administration of Mesopotamia is published in January and presented to both houses of Parliament. A few weeks later Gertrude is one of a small group of Orientalists summoned by Winston Churchill for a meeting in Cairo.

Gertrude meets up again with Lawrence at the Cairo Conference and she is pleased to see her old friend. Gertrude is pleased with Churchill's management style and is especially pleased that the group decides that Faisal should be Iraq's new king. It is determined that Faisal should be brought to Baghdad and positioned as an Iraqi and not as someone thrust upon the people by the British.

The next chapter finds Gertrude facing the challenge of getting Faisal to the throne. The plan is for Faisal to travel toward Baghdad with stops at several important cities in order to garner public acceptance and awareness so that by the time he reaches Baghdad, he will be the unanimous choice for king. Gertrude learns from Faisal's official aide, Kinahan Cornwallis, that the receptions are not going well and Faisal is glad to see Gertrude's friendly face when he arrives in Baghdad.

In the next chapter Gertrude advises Faisal on how to gain the approval of Naqib, Iraq's Prime Minister, and determines that she will have to create proper ceremonial procedures for Faisal and his court. Faisal is regal but cautious in his maneuvers in Iraq, a country he has never even visited or whose people he does not know. Faisal is eventually elected and his coronation is held on August 23, 1921.

The next chapter shows the burgeoning friendship between King Faisal and Gertrude upon whom the king has come to rely for advice both of political and mundane household issues. King Faisal and Gertrude spend much time together having meals, playing cards, riding horses, swimming and other activities to get the new king acclimated to his new country.

Gertrude's plan for an independent Iraq is nearly complete with the coronation of King Faisal. As her choice for the position, Faisal does not show her stalwart determination that he is the correct man for the role but due to her unending support, his sense of disease vanishes. Gertrude is masterful at not only conceiving a plan but also putting the machine in place for brilliant execution and this is just what she does with Faisal.

Perhaps because she is a woman, Gertrude also has the ability to determine how to make plans seem as if they are arrived at without any manipulation or guile. Gertrude is steadfast in her ability to manage situations after the conclusion too just as she helps Faisal set up his household and manage the integration of his family into Iraqi life.



## Part 2: The Khatun, Chapters 33, 34, 35 and 36

### Part 2: The Khatun, Chapters 33, 34, 35 and 36 Summary and Analysis

With King Faisal established now on the Iraqi throne, Gertrude turns her attention to romantic thoughts of Kinahan Cornwallis, Personal Adviser to the King and Chief Adviser in the Ministry of the Interior. The king becomes their mutual interest and a perfect opportunity to initiate flirtations as the pair spends much time together in both business and social situations.

The next chapter finds the new Iraqi government floundering with Ministers resigning and King Faisal floating along and ignoring British advice. Gertrude manages to retain influence with the king but worries that the day is rapidly approaching when that will not be the case. Gertrude and Kinahan find every possible opportunity to spend time together while also serving King Faisal. Gertrude also assumes the position of Director of Antiquities in preparation for the establishment of a Baghdad Museum.

A dark cloud appears for Gertrude when her beloved Percy Cox retires and she must now serve Henry Dobbs. Gertrude plunges into her antiquities work and also in hosting receptions for the departing Cox.

In the next chapter Gertrude returns to Rounton in June 1923 and finds that most of the house has been closed off and the servants dismissed in order to conserve expenditures. The Bell family fortune is slipping away and Gertrude ponders her own future and whether her plans can include Kinahan. Gertrude returns to Baghdad in the autumn and even though she finds Henry Dobbs to be a pleasant man, she can feel that her power and importance in the office is waning.

Kinahan spends most of his time at Gertrude's house and he soon leaves for England to get a divorce from his wife. Gertrude finds that the workload that used to keep her at the office for ten hours each day can now be accomplished in three or four so she spends time tending her garden, riding horses and swimming. Overall, Gertrude slips into a deep depression sending her to bed by the end of the summer.

The next chapter opens on the autumn of 1924 and Gertrude is recuperating from her depression and accepts an invitation from the King to visit his new estate. The King admits his loneliness and his misgivings about coming to Iraq to rule. The next day, King Faisal's twelve-year-old son, Ghazi, arrives in Baghdad from Mecca where the rest of the family still lives. Gertrude sets about with plans to make Ghazi feel more at home in this strange land even overseeing the tailoring of his clothes and insuring that he has the appropriate entertainments and diversions.



Kinahan returns with news that his divorce had been a messy one which bars him from seeing his children so she puts all her energies into lifting his spirits. Gertrude's presence is required less and less at the office and with the King. Even Kinahan is coming to see her less frequently and her spirits begin once more to plunge. Gertrude returns to England in the late summer to see her beloved family home which her parents must leave because they can no longer afford to maintain it.

On Sunday July 11, 1926, three days before her fifty-eighth birthday, Gertrude has lunch with colleagues and returns home for a nap before an afternoon swimming party. Returning home later that afternoon Gertrude asks Marie to awaken her at six the next morning, takes an extra dose of sleeping pills and falls asleep forever.

Gertrude reaches a point in her life where she feels that she fills no useful purpose to anyone anymore. Gertrude has never married and her relationships with men seem to be with those who are unavailable to her either physically or emotionally. Perhaps Gertrude is seeking a man like her beloved father and because there is no one like him, she is attracted to men who will either disappoint her or not be available to her. Unfortunately, Gertrude's greatest success, the birth of Iraq, is also her greatest sorrow as she no longer has a role in the British government office now that Iraq is independent. Throughout her life Gertrude bemoans the lack of friends but she also makes no effort to encourage any real friendships, preferring the solitude of the desert and her comfortable house to the inadequacies of other humans not as equipped as she. Her professional persona is the one she shows for most of her life but it is her personal pain which finally asserts itself and enables her to take her own life.



# Characters

## Gertrude Margaret Lowthian Bell (the Khatun)

Gertrude Bell is born in Washington Hall, County Durham, England, on July 14, 1868, to extremely wealthy parents, Hugh and Mary Bell. The Bell family business of iron and coal manufacturing provides vast opportunities to Gertrude throughout her life. Tragedy will mark Gertrude's otherwise privileged life with the death of her mother when Gertrude is only three-years-old. Gertrude forms an extraordinarily close bond with her father which will continue until her death.

When Mr. Bell remarries, Gertrude forms a cautious and polite relationship with her stepmother but it drastically pales in comparison to the feelings Gertrude has for her father. Gertrude has one brother, Maurice, a stepbrother, Hugo, and two stepsisters, Molly and Elsa. Gertrude is an extremely accomplished young woman, who failing to secure a suitable husband, sets her life course for world travel, especially the Arab countries.

"For people who had never seen a woman accepted so unequivocally by men, it was difficult to believe that sex was not the reason. Indeed, she oozed femininity in her fancy dress. She percolated sociability in her outgoing ways. She even flirted with seductive charm. When one holy man paid her a call, he refused to look at her, an unveiled woman, in the face. It did not prevent him, however, from talking to her about his personal affairs. 'And at the end of it,' she wrote home delightedly, 'I'll admit he tipped me a casual wink or two, just enough to know me again.' But it was the power of her mind that won men over." Part 2, Chapter 19, Page 197

## Hugh Bell

Thomas Hugh Bell is born on February 10, 1844, to parents Isaac Lowthian Bell and Margaret Pattinson Bell. Hugh is born into great wealth and spends a privileged childhood complete with advanced education and world travel. Brilliant and witty, Hugh grows to be a perfect Victorian gentleman and marries Miss Mary Shield in the summer of 1867. Hugh continues in the Bell family business of iron and coal production and perpetuates the imperialist rule of the British Empire. Hugh and Mary have two children, Gertrude and Maurice, before Mary dies from complications of childbirth. A short time later, Hugh marries Florence Olliffe, a young British playwright with whom he has three more children, Hugo, Molly and Elsa. Hugh has an especially close relationship with his eldest child, Gertrude, who is much like him in his thirst for knowledge and joie de vivre. Hugh will provide complete financial and emotional support to the unmarried Gertrude whose life path is one of world travel and service in the British government intelligence agency. Hugh remains devoted to Gertrude and continues to provide for her even when the family fortune dwindles dramatically due to the financial collapse of the British



economy after World War I. Hugh outlives his daughter, Gertrude, who commits suicide just prior to her fifty-eighth birthday.

## **Richard (Dick) Doughty-Wylie**

Richard Doughty-Wylie is a British statesman whom Gertrude meets in a professional capacity related to work in the Arab states. Their relationship escalates to include intense romantic feelings on both sides but the relationship is never fully consummated because Richard is married. Their relationship extends through frequent letters pouring out their deep affections but comes to an abrupt, tragic end when Richard is killed in World War I. Gertrude never recovers from this loss and mourns him until the day she herself dies.

## **Maurice Bell**

Maurice Bell is Gertrude's natural brother who is born in 1871 when Gertrude is three-years-old. Mrs. Bell dies of complications from Maurice's birth so he never knows his mother and he and Gertrude become very close, lifelong friends.

## **Florence (Olliffe) Bell**

Florence (Olliffe) Bell is the second wife of Thomas Hugh Bell whose first wife, Mary Shield Bell, dies from complications of childbirth in 1871. Florence is a young playwright when she marries Hugh and her attempts at mothering his two children are strained but congenial. Florence and Hugh have three more children, Hugo, Molly and Elsa.

## **Billy Lascelles**

Billy Lascelles is Florence Bell's nephew and a short-term love interest for Gertrude when she is twenty years old.

## **Henry Cadogan**

Gertrude falls in love with Henry Cadogan in Persia but her father will not consent to the marriage and the relationship ends.

## **Marie Delaere**

Gertrude hires Marie Delaere as her maid in August of 1902.



## **Percy Cox**

Gertrude first meets Percy Cox in Bombay in 1902 when he is the British Consul in Muscat. Percy later heads the British diplomatic and intelligence office in Baghdad and becomes a treasured mentor for Gertrude.

## **Druze**

The Druze people are a religious sect said to be an offshoot of Islam and who live primarily in Lebanon, Israel and Syria.

## **Bedouins**

The Bedouins are tribes of Muslim people who live nomadic lives in the deserts of Arabia.

## **Fattuh**

Fattuh is the Christian servant employed by Gertrude to manage her affairs on the desert trips.

## **Thomas Edward Lawrence**

Thomas Edward Lawrence is a junior archaeologist when Gertrude first meets him in the spring of 1911. He will become a well respected presence in the desert and will be known as Lawrence of Arabia.

## **King Faisal**

King Faisal is a descendant of the tribe of Muhammed and becomes the first King of Iraq in 1920.





## Objects/Places

### Red Barns

As a toddler, Gertrude lives in the Bell mansion called Red Barns located in Middlesbrough.

### Rounton Grange

Rounton Grange is the Yorkshire estate built by Lowthian Bell, Gertrude's paternal grandfather.

### Queen's College

Queen's College is a progressive girls' school located on Harley Street in London.

### University of Oxford

The University of Oxford, one of the world's most acclaimed institutions of higher learning, is located in Oxford, Oxfordshire, England and is the oldest English-speaking university in the world.

### Finsteraarhorn Glacier

Gertrude comes dangerously close to losing her life while climbing the Finsteraarhorn glacier in Switzerland.

### The Desert and the Sown

The Desert and the Sown is Gertrude's book about the Bedouin people of the Syrian desert published in 1907.

### Amurath to Amurath

Amurath to Amurath is Gertrude's book about her excavation and documentation of the desert ruins she finds in 1909.

### Nejd

Nejd is the Arabic word for desert.



## Hayil

Gertrude is kept as a prisoner in a palace in this desert city until the local leaders can determine whether or not she is a threat.

## Cairo

Cairo is the capital and largest city in Egypt and the site of the Cairo Conference held in March of 1921.

## Iraq

Iraq, formerly called Mesopotamia, is a country in Eastern Asia carefully crafted and designed by Gertrude and her colleagues.



# Themes

## The Privileges of Wealth

Undoubtedly Gertrude is able to live the fantastic life that she does due in large part to her family's wealth. Beginning with exclusive educational opportunities both at Queen's College and at Oxford University, Gertrude obtains premiere advantages will provide entrance into the upper echelons of her personal and professional lives. Socially, Gertrude's family is of British nobility which also gives her entrée into worlds not available to those with fewer advantages. When Gertrude does not secure a suitable husband in the socially-appointed time frame, her family's wealth allows her to travel the world in search of her life's purpose.

Through all her travels, her father subsidizes her efforts with a monthly allowance and her stepmother sends her packages containing clothes and furs of the latest fashions. Although Gertrude does receive a small salary when employed by the British government, she is able to maintain her household and its employees by the money received each month from her father. Even when the family fortune begins to dwindle after World War I and the Bell family must downsize its lifestyle, Gertrude's father continues to send her money so that she may continue to live the life to which she has become accustomed.

## An Independent Woman in the Victorian Age

Gertrude is a misfit in the Victorian world into which she is born. During this time period, girls are reared to become wives and mothers and to do their jobs dutifully, never expecting more from life than to care for their families. Women in the Victorian Age are typically represented by repressed women who have no outlets for their emotions, passions and creativity. Fortunately, Gertrude is born into a family who understands her mental alacrity and passion for life and open up opportunities for her to enjoy a full life. Gertrude tries to some degree to live within societal boundaries but when she cannot find a suitable husband by a suitable age, it is clear that her life will veer dramatically from the norm.

The combination of Gertrude's intelligence and verve make her seem more masculine than feminine according to Victorian standards, but she is very much a woman and is not above using feminine charms to manipulate situations to her advantage. Ironically, Gertrude, who is an extremely independent woman, is opposed to the Women's Suffragette movement for two reasons: first, many of the public officials being challenged by the Suffragettes are her friends and family members, and second, she feels that most women are not capable of determining their own minds, a stark contrast to her own self-proclaimed capabilities.



## The Thrill of Adventure

The reader can decide whether Gertrude crafts a life of adventure because she has a penchant for it or whether her prescribed life is so boring that she determines to change her circumstances. Perhaps there is a little of both elements in Gertrude's plan. She seems to have no fear of unknown places and even relishes solitary treks across the Arabian Desert, a journey that would make the most seasoned traveler think twice. Gertrude demands that life meet her head on and she does the same, whether it is hanging from a mountain peak in Switzerland or riding with a troop of Bedouin soldiers in the desert. Gertrude also pushes limits in her personal life too and falls deeply in love with a married man who will not leave his wife. The loss of this love will haunt her all her life but when she falls in love toward the end of her life, she pushes the man to commit to marriage and her demands make him back away. Her intensity is abrasive to many people but she expects that other people feel as passionately as she does. The disappointment of repressed relationships and social restrictions catapult her to the Arabian Desert where she finds her perfect escape and the environment in which she was destined to live fully.

# Style

## Perspective

This nonfiction book is written in the third person limited perspective. This means that the person telling the story is writing a biography about the book's title subject, Gertrude Bell, and the author delivers the events and points of significance of Gertrude's life from a limited point of view. Because the book is a biography, the author relies on extensive research of Gertrude's life to understand her life and the type of person she was. Given the amount of knowledge gleaned from research about Gertrude, the author is able to supply some insight into the motives, feelings or actions of Gertrude and some of the other people who are important in her life. When there are conversations detailed, the author can simply relate what the other person says, and although the author may guess at the other person's thoughts, he cannot share them with the reader. Because the nature of the book is a nonfiction account of a person's philosophy on different topics, there is little room for any other points of view. This relaying of personal thoughts is punctuated at times by the retelling of events or incidents to add some dimension to the book, and everything is still from the author's own view on Gertrude's life experiences and perspectives.

## Tone

The tone of the book is very informal and engaging almost as if the reader is having a one-on-one conversation with the author about Gertrude's life. The language ranges from informal to formal in keeping with the time period of Victorian England. The narrative is also very high energy with a laid back yet intelligent wit belying what the author would believe to be Gertrude's own personal style of speaking. The story is told in an unhurried style to mirror the author's pace during the journey. There is also a strong undercurrent of authenticity and sincerity throughout the book which makes the story believable. This is supported by frequent insertions of quotes found in letters and documents Gertrude had written to friends, family and colleagues. At times, the author inserts descriptions of personal situations that may seem out of place in the book's formal timeline of Gertrude's life and the reader may think he/she has stepped into a romance novel. Overall, however, the tone is respectful and does justice to the dignity and presence of Gertrude Bell.

## Structure

The book is structured in two parts with each one defining the particular phases of Gertrude's life. Part 1 is titled A Victorian to indicate Gertrude's birth, youth and initial discoveries in her preliminary world travels. In this section she is still very much tied to England and the restrictions of the Victorian Age. In Part 2, entitled The Khatun, Gertrude has transitioned to a true citizen of the Arab region, if not by citizenship, at



least by dedication and commitment. A Khatun is a powerful woman who takes into consideration the needs of the common people when determining policy and governmental regulations. As this section indicates, Gertrude earns the trust and respect of the Arabian people who bestow this rare title on her. The first part contains 16 chapters and the second part contains 20 chapters. Each of the chapters is named to indicate the main topic of the chapter and most have unnamed subsections. The book also contains many fine photographs and excerpts from letters and other writing important to Gertrude.



## Quotes

"Anger, betrayal, a sense of abandonment; these are the feelings that surge in a child who has lost a parent. But Gertrude was also fortunate to be enveloped by her father's love. Few can deny the powerful affection of a three-year-old girl for her father; even more, he became her role model. He would be the person she most patterned herself after, the one whose stamp of approval she always sought. From him she gained enormous confidence and the attitude for overcoming obstacles." Part 1, Chapter 1, Page 12

"She was brash and immature, and in spite of her dazzling scholastic achievements, Gertrude had failed the most important test of all. Unlike her two friends from home, she had had no one ask for her hand in marriage. She was twenty years old, a snob, a bluestocking, a woman with an 'attitude'; her haughtiness and self-importance hardly appealed to eligible young men, and those who dared to court her were soon dismissed." Part 1, Chapter 2, Page 25

"Three seasons were all that a young lady was allotted to find a husband. Gertrude had used up her time. No one had asked her to marry him, nor was there someone she wished to wed. Not that she did not enjoy the company of young men; she did. But her sharp tongue sliced through their egos and her intellectual thirst quickly soaked up what drops of knowledge they shed. She refused to bow to them in her behavior: to be servile or silent or not argue, but rather agree with everything they said. She refused to change her personality to suit another's. And if she did not meet their expectations, so be it. No tight-lipped male would be her lord and master." Part 1, Chapter 3, Page 32

"At the start of the new year, 1902, the East beckoned. Gertrude set sail from Liverpool with her father and her brother Hugo, stopping first in Algiers, where she wrote in her diary: 'Even here there is enough of the East to give one the feel of it. I find it catching at my heart again as nothing else can, or ever will I believe, thing or person.'" Part 1, Chapter 6, Page 63

"She adored breaking new ground, being the center of attention, with everyone's eyes and ears on her. But, no less fascinated by those whom she deemed of particular interest, she focused her own attention on the way they thought and behaved. At home, however, life had curdled from ennui. The English were too predictable; she could tell in advance what a politician might do or what her dinner partner might say. The one group she had met that was different was the Arabs; they excited her. They stimulated her imagination; they were romantic, exotic, mysterious, unplumbed." Part 1, Chapter 7, Page 68

"But their shrieks created a backlash. The suffragists' behavior shocked the public,



especially people like Gertrude Bell, who valued tradition. To her, the harassment of public officials was nothing short of heresy. After all, they were among her closest friends and family." Part 1, Chapter 8, Page 82

"She was a spinster of forty-five, alone, aching for a husband, yearning for children. He was a married man, grounded to a woman of wealth and social position. The situation seemed impossible, ridden with ghosts and guilt. Yet even as he spoke of the hopelessness of it all, her desire grew. When was he leaving? She wanted to know. What would happen to them? Should she still write to him after he left? Should she write only to him or to Judith too?" Part 1, Chapter 10, Page 97

"And yet, she loved the desert. For her it meant escape. She had written years before: 'To those bred under an elaborate social order few such moments of exhilaration can come as that which stands at the threshold of wild travel. The gates of the enclosed garden are thrown open, the chain at the entrance of the sanctuary is lowered... and, like the man in the fairy story, you feel the bands break that were riveted about your heart.' Indeed, the bands around her heart were not just the obstacles of English society but the shackles that constrained her love for a married man. Travel would let her break free." Part 1, Chapter 10, Page 100

"Although they came from opposite social strata—she, a scion of one of England's most prominent families; he, a bastard from the lower middle class—Gertrude and Lawrence were very much alike. Oddities, and out of the mainstream, both were loners who felt more at ease in the empty desert than in the crowded drawing room. To them, the Bedouin were more accepting than the British." Part 1, Chapter 15, Page 150

"For Gertrude the key word of Iraq was 'romance. Wherever you look for it you will find it. The great twin rivers, gloriously named, the huge Babylonian plains, now desert which were once a garden of the world; the story stretching back into the dark recesses of time—they shout romance.'" Part 1, Chapter 16, Page 158

"As interesting as she found the work, the lack of friends left her lonely. 'I feel rather detached from you,' she lamented in a letter to her father. 'I wish I could sit somewhere midway and have a talk with you once or twice a week.' The 'kind' and 'generous' Sir Percy Cox, the Chief Political Officer, was still somewhat aloof, shy and reserved, and although she met with him several times a week, he was not the type whose advice she could seek or with whom she could ever gossip." Part 2, The Khatun, Chapter 18, Page 182

"'Do you know,' Gertrude mused, as she sat in her room ten days before Christmas 1916, writing her weekly letter to her father, 'I was thinking yesterday what I would pick out as the happiest things I've done in all my life, and I came to the conclusion that I





should choose the old Italian journeys with you, those long ago journeys which were so delicious. I've been very unhappy in the big things and very happy in the little things... only in that very big thing, complete love and confidence in my own family—I've had that always and can't lose it. And you are the pivot of it." Part 2, The Khatun, Chapter 18, Page 188

"The debate would continue for years, but Britain's position was clear: she desperately needed oil for her vital interests and military power. The control of Iraqi oil fields would allow the British people to sleep well at night; the security blanket of coal could now be replaced with a smooth coating of oil." Part 2, The Khatun, Chapter 25, Page 260

"Chatting one afternoon with the King, Gertrude let drop that she planned to go home the next summer. 'You're not to talk of going home,' Faisal replied severely; 'your home is here. You may say you are going to see your father.' Despite his sharp tone, his words pleased her; her fear of not being needed seemed premature." Part 2, The Khatun, Chapter 32, Page 332

## Topics for Discussion

Discuss Gertrude's role in Victorian England. How is she the perfect model for the time and in what ways does she reject the model?

Gertrude has an extremely strong relationship with her father all throughout her life. How does this unusual relationship both help and hinder Gertrude's relationships with other men?

To Gertrude, the Arabian desert represents the perfect escape. From what or whom is it that Gertrude wants to escape?

Why do you think the Arabian people so readily accept Gertrude, an assertive Englishwoman with a strong drive for success?

What do you think Gertrude would consider to be her greatest success? Her greatest failure?

At the present time, the United States is at war with Iraq. Does this book shed any light on your understanding of Iraq, its culture, and why it takes the positions it does?

After her death, Gertrude is mourned by dignitaries and commoners alike who cannot believe that she is gone from their presence. Why do you think Gertrude no longer felt that she had no further reason for living?