

# **The Kalahari Typing School for Men Study Guide**

**The Kalahari Typing School for Men by Alexander  
McCall Smith**

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## Plot Summary

The Kalahari Typing School for Men is the fourth installment in the No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency series by Alexander McCall Smith. In this novel, Mma Ramotswe has moved her detective agency to the offices of the Tlokweng Road Speedy Motors due to her fiancé JLB Matekoni's depressive illness. Her assistant, Mma Makutsi, works for both businesses but finds herself struggling to make ends meet as she watches both businesses sit on the edge of failure. Mma Makutsi decides she must start her own business to make more money, eventually beginning the Kalahari Typing School for Men. At the same time, Mma Ramotswe takes on two cases. Her first case is a job to find a young woman her client once abandoned and the second to find out if a woman's husband is cheating on her. One of these cases will cause Mma Ramotswe to struggle between her sense of morality and honesty in her job.

Mma Ramotswe is worried about her foster children and her fiancé. On top of this she learns a new detective agency has opened across town. This agency, called the Satisfaction Guaranteed Detective Agency, is run by an unpleasant man who claims to have been a member of the CID and to have lived in New York for a time. Mma Makutsi is convinced that this new detective agency will drive them out of business, especially when they see the advertising brochure for Satisfaction Guaranteed Detective Agency that claims that a man is better than a woman at solving mysteries.

A short time later, Mma Makutsi has an epiphany that many men do not know how to type but they do not want to take classes alongside women. This thought inspires Mma Makutsi to begin a typing school especially for men. Mma Makutsi borrows a dozen typewriters from her secretarial school and classroom space from a local church to begin her business. During the first class, Mma Makutsi learns one of her students is in love with her and they begin to date.

Mma Ramotswe is approached by a man who has recently had a near death experience and has decided he would like to seek forgiveness from people he harmed in the past. This man tells Mma Ramotswe about a girl he once dated who became pregnant and asked for his help. The man stole a radio from the family he was living with and sold it to pay for his girl to have an abortion. Now the man wants to make amends both to the family he stole from and the girl he abandoned in her time of greatest need.

Mma Ramotswe begins her search immediately and has little trouble finding the woman in whose home the man once lived as a student. This woman is shocked to learn that the man once stole from her, but she quickly forgives him. This widowed woman has trouble of her own. She has taken custody of her grandchild, orphaned when her mother died of AIDS. The child too is thought to have the illness and the grandmother fears she will not survive childhood.

To find the young woman the man abandoned in her deepest time of need, Mma Ramotswe visits an old friend in the village where the young woman was said to have lived. Ironically, Mma Ramotswe learns that young woman lives directly across the

street. Mma Ramotswe visits the young woman and learns that she is happy in her life and feels that she might have lived a very different life if she had not known the man as a student.

During this investigation, Mma Ramotswe is visited by a woman from a neighboring city who is concerned about her husband. This woman works in the other city, but her husband works locally, therefore they live in two different homes. The woman is concerned that her husband has not been home in the evenings and that this might mean that he is having an affair. As Mma Ramotswe begins to look into this matter, she is shocked to discover that Mma Makutsi is dating her client's husband. Mma Ramotswe visits the man and encourages him to return to his wife and to let Mma Makutsi down easily.

Finally, Mma Ramotswe visits her male client and sets up a visit for him with the woman he once lived with. Mma Ramotswe then arranges for the man to pay the woman money she can spend on her AIDS afflicted granddaughter. Mma Ramotswe also encourages her client to pay for the nursing education of his old girlfriend's eldest daughter. In this way, the man is able to make amends for everything he feels he has done wrong in his past.



# **Chapter 1, How to Find a Man, and Chapter 2, Learn to Drive with Jesus**

## **Chapter 1, How to Find a Man, and Chapter 2, Learn to Drive with Jesus Summary**

This novel is the fourth installment in a group of novels featuring Mma Ramotswe, a Botswana woman who runs her own private detective agency. Mma Ramotswe is unmarried but engaged to marry JLB Matekoni in this novel. Mma Ramotswe also has two foster children for whom she cares.

In Chapter 1, Mma Ramotswe finds herself reflecting on the past few months during which her fiancé, Mr. JLB Matekoni struggled with a depressive illness. During his illness, Mma Ramotswe moved the offices of her business from her home to the offices of Mr. Matekoni's business, the Tlokweng Road Speedy Motors. Mma Ramotswe's assistant, Mma Makutsi, took over the garage during Mr. Matekoni's illness and is currently getting most of her income from that business. This is a relief for Mma Ramotswe because her own business has been suffering since the move. Now that Mr. Matekoni is back to work, Mma Ramotswe hopes things will get better. In fact, Mma Ramotswe finds herself turning her attention to Mma Makutsi and her financial struggles. Mma Ramotswe feels that Mma Makutsi would be saved if she could marry a man with some money. However, this possibility seems remote at the moment.

In Chapter 2, Mma Makutsi is also concerned about the state of the businesses for which she works. Mma Makutsi thinks about ways to increase income. Mma Makutsi suggests to two of the apprentices working in the garage that they begin a driving school out of the garage. The two men like the idea, especially the younger one who has become quite religious lately but Mma Makutsi fears that Mr. Matekoni will not go for the idea because of the required insurance.

## **Chapter 1, How to Find a Man, and Chapter 2, Learn to Drive with Jesus Analysis**

These two chapters introduce one of the conflicts that will propel the plot of the novel. Mma Ramotswe, a character that returning readers know well and one new readers will quickly come to like, reviews the past few months in the first chapter to help the reader catch up with what has happened since the last novel. Mma Ramotswe is engaged to be married to a mechanic with his own business but this man has just overcome a depressive illness and has failed to set a date for the wedding. This has led to difficulty in the businesses that these two people own, causing some concern about their future. This concern affects Mma Ramotswe's assistant the most, causing her to try to find

other ways to increase income. This along with Mma Ramotswe's desire to see her assistant married, are two of the conflicts that will propel the plot.



# Chapter 3, To Kill a Hoopoe, and Chapter 4, Trust Your Affairs to a Man

## Chapter 3, To Kill a Hoopoe, and Chapter 4, Trust Your Affairs to a Man Summary

In Chapter 3, Mma Ramotswe comes home after shopping to find her foster daughter, Motholeli, upset about something. Mma Ramotswe encourages the girl to talk and learns that the kids at school have been teasing her about not having a mother. This makes Mma Ramotswe recall her own troubles in school and the supportive talk her father gave her at the time. Drawing on this, Mma Ramotswe assures Motholeli that she still has a mother even if her mother is dead and that she, Mma Ramotswe, will be a mother to her in life. This seems to reassure Motholeli.

Mr. JLB Matekoni comes to Mma Ramotswe's home and goes straight to the garden to begin watering the vegetables. As he works, Mr. Matekoni becomes aware of a bird struggling a few feet away. Mr. Matekoni picks up the bird and realizes it has been shot with a child's catapult. Mr. Matekoni calls out to any boys who might be responsible. When Mr. Matekoni hears a rustle in the bushes, he comes to believe Puso, Mma Ramotswe's foster son, might be responsible. Mr. Matekoni gets Mma Ramotswe from the house and together they encourage Puso to come forward. The boy becomes very angry however and tells Mr. Matekoni that he hates him.

In Chapter 4, Mma Ramotswe arrives at work deeply troubled about her foster children. Mma Makutsi adds to her trouble when she tells her about a new detective agency opening across town. Mma Ramotswe and Mma Makutsi drive across town to check out the new business. This business, called the Satisfaction Guaranteed Detective Agency, claims to have an investigator who was both trained with the CID and once lived in New York. Mma Ramotswe and Mma Makutsi go inside where the detective immediately insults Mma Makutsi by ridiculing the Botswana Secretarial School from which she graduated. The man continues his insults as he shows Mma Ramotswe his brochure, an advertisement that ridicules the idea that anyone would want to hire a woman to do a man's work. Mma Ramotswe is angered by this man and fearful that her business will fail in a competition with him.

## Chapter 3, To Kill a Hoopoe, and Chapter 4, Trust Your Affairs to a Man Analysis

In Chapter 3, Mma Ramotswe discovers that her two foster children are struggling emotionally. The young girl's problem is clear and easy to solve but the boy's acting out is deeply disturbing to Mma Ramotswe, leaving her fearful for his future. This situation not only shows the depth of Mma Ramotswe's emotions for these children, but also sets

up a conflict that Mma Ramotswe will be driven to solve as the novel continues to develop.

The next chapter presents another conflict that threatens the very basics of Mma Ramotswe's business. A new detective agency has opened across town, run by the very unpleasant Mr. Buthelezi. This man is a chauvinist who advertises his business as an alternative to depending on a woman to do a man's job. This man also claims to have lived in New York and worked for the CID, the Botswana police agency. However, when questioned this man fails to prove his claims, suggesting to the reader that he is lying about these claims. This man, despite his possible lies and unpleasant personality, threatens the No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency, leaving both Mma Ramotswe and the reader fearful for their future success.





# **Chapter 5, The Talking Cure, and Chapter 6, Old Typewriters, Gathering Dust**

## **Chapter 5, The Talking Cure, and Chapter 6, Old Typewriters, Gathering Dust Summary**

In Chapter 5, Mma Ramotswe and Mma Makutsi return to the office. A man comes to speak with Mma Ramotswe alone, so they go for a walk. This man, Mr. Molefelo, tells Mma Ramotswe that he was recently held at gunpoint on his ostrich farm by ostrich wranglers and most likely would have been killed if his own men had not woken and scared the thieves away. This episode caused Mr. Molefelo to think about his life and everything he has done wrong.

In Chapter 6, Mma Makutsi remains in the office, paying bills for Mr. Matekoni's business. As she writes a collection letter, Mma Makutsi begins to think of all the men who do not know how to type but who do not want to learn alongside women. Mma Makutsi thinks that it would be a profitable business if she could teach men to type. Mma Makutsi calls the vice principal of her old school, the Botswana Secretarial School, and asks if she can use a dozen or so typewriters she knows the school has in storage because they are not longer working properly. The principal quickly agrees on the condition that Mma Makutsi return to the school on occasion to speak to the current classes about the workforce they will soon be entering.

## **Chapter 5, The Talking Cure, and Chapter 6, Old Typewriters, Gathering Dust Analysis**

The intention of Mr. Molefelo is not clear in these chapters as he tells Mma Ramotswe about his near death on his farm. However, it is clear to the reader that Mr. Molefelo is a rich man who feels a need to make amends for something he feels he has done wrong in his past. This suggests that Mr. Molefelo is a potential client, giving hope that the No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency will survive despite the new agency that has opened across town.

Mma Makutsi has been thinking about new businesses since the beginning of the novel. This latest idea, to teach men to type, seems to be a strong idea that could help Mma Makutsi make some extra money. In fact, it seems Mma Makutsi has found a way that she will not need to lay out too much capital to make money. It seems to be a win-win situation that might even lead Mma Makutsi to meet an eligible bachelor as Mma Ramotswe suggested earlier in the novel.



# **Chapter 7, What Mr. Molefelo Did, and Chapter 8, The Typewriters, and a Prayer Meeting**

## **Chapter 7, What Mr. Molefelo Did, and Chapter 8, The Typewriters, and a Prayer Meeting Summary**

In Chapter 7, Mma Ramotswe continues speaking to Mr. Molefelo. Mr. Molefelo tells her how he came to Gaborone as a student and lived with a host family where the man was a prison guard and the woman cared for the couple's two children. The family, the Tsolamoseses, also took in two boarders, Mr. Molefelo and his roommate. During this time, Mr. Molefelo fell in love with a girl who lived in Gaborone to attend nursing school. In time, the girl became pregnant. Frightened of what this would mean for his future, Mr. Molefelo told the girl he did not want a child. The girl informed him how much it would cost to have an abortion. The amount of money was too much for Mr. Molefelo, so to get it he stole a radio from the Tsolamoseses. Now Mr. Molefelo feels bad for what he has done and he wants to repay both the Tsolamoseses and the young girl, Tebogo Bathopi. Mr. Molefelo asks Mma Ramotswe to find both the family and Tebogo so that he may make amends somehow. Mma Ramotswe agrees.

In Chapter 8, Mma Makutsi goes to the Batswana Secretarial School to retrieve the typewriters that she will borrow to teach her class. The typewriters will be taken to the Tlokweng Road Speedy Motors to be repaired. Mma Makutsi has found great support in Mr. JLB Matekoni, but Mma Ramotswe is concerned that Mma Makutsi will be able to find enough willing students.

The young apprentice at the garage asks Mma Makutsi, Mma Ramotswe, and Mr. JLB Matekoni to come watch him give a speech at his church. They arrive and find a seat. However, the moment the preacher comes out, he calls them sinners and insists they confess their sins in front of the entire congregation. Mma Ramotswe goes into a swoon, creating a diversion so that they can escape the awkward situation.

## **Chapter 7, What Mr. Molefelo Did, and Chapter 8, The Typewriters, and a Prayer Meeting Analysis**

Mr. Molefelo tells his story to Mma Ramotswe, revealing the mistakes he feels he made in his youth that must be rectified before he dies. It turns out he forced a girl to get an abortion and then deserted her when she needed him most. This is a sad situation, but not uncommon. However, Mr. Molefelo's desire to make up this wrong shows that he is a strong, considerate man who finally understands the impact his actions had on

another person. It also gives Mma Ramotswe a job that will help keep her business open.

Mma Makutsi goes forward with her plan with the help of her friends despite Mma Ramotswe's hesitations. It is ironic at this point that Mma Ramotswe would have reservations based on her sex, especially when she faced the same sort of scrutiny when opening her business. However, it appears at this point that Mma Makutsi is determined to make this work, foreshadowing the opening of her independent business.



# **Chapter 9, The Civil Service, Chapter 10, The Kalahari Typing School for Men Throws Open its Doors (to Men), and Chapter 11, Mma Ramotswe Goes to a Small village to the South of Gaborone**

## **Chapter 9, The Civil Service, Chapter 10, The Kalahari Typing School for Men Throws Open its Doors (to Men), and Chapter 11, Mma Ramotswe Goes to a Small village to the South of Gaborone Summary**

In Chapter 9, Mma Ramotswe calls the prison where Mr. Tsolamosese worked and speaks to a man who remembers Mr. Tsolamosese. This man tells Mma Ramotswe that Mr. Tsolamosese died several years ago of a heart attack. From there, Mma Ramotswe goes to the government pensions office where she sweet talks a young man into telling her the address of Mma Tsolamosese.

In Chapter 10, Mma Makutsi places an ad in the newspaper for her new typing school. By the end of the first day in which the ad appears, Mma Makutsi has twenty-two students, enough to fill two classes and begin a third. The first class takes place the following Wednesday and is a quiet success.

In Chapter 11, Mma Ramotswe drives to a small fishing village near Lobatse to find Mma Tsolamosese. As she drives, Mma Ramotswe wonders if Mma Tsolamosese will want to call the police on Mr. Molefelo for stealing her radio all those years ago. However, when Mma Ramotswe arrives, she finds a kindly woman who is shocked, but not angry at Mr. Molefelo for his long ago actions. In fact, Mma Ramotswe expresses a desire to see Mr. Molefelo again. Before Mma Ramotswe leaves, she learns that Mma Tsolamosese has taken into her home two of her grandchildren, a teenaged granddaughter whose mother is away caring for sick relatives and a toddler whose mother died of AIDS. Mma Tsolamosese is sad when Mma Ramotswe comments that the toddler will be a beauty when she gets older because the child has AIDS as well and will most likely not survive past childhood. This gives Mma Ramotswe an idea as to what Molefelo can do to help Mma Tsolamosese.



## **Chapter 9, The Civil Service, Chapter 10, The Kalahari Typing School for Men Throws Open its Doors (to Men), and Chapter 11, Mma Ramotswe Goes to a Small village to the South of Gaborone Analysis**

In these chapters, Mma Ramotswe proves her good detective skills as she quickly locates Mma Tsolamosese. Mma Ramotswe is concerned about this woman's reaction to the news that Mr. Molefelo stole her radio almost twenty years before, but finds that she is a kindly, maternal woman who is only concerned for her old friend's current circumstances. Mma Tsolamosese is a mother who continues to raise children, even in her advanced years, including a child who is afflicted with the illness that seems to run so rampant in Africa, AIDS. This child will not live to see adulthood, which is a fact that worries and saddens Mma Tsolamosese. It seems this kind woman has far more important things on her mind than a stolen radio from twenty years ago.



# **Chapter 12, The Miracle that was Wrought at Tlokweng Road Speedy Motors, Chapter 13, Tea at the Orphan Farm, and Chapter 14, Mr. Bernard Selelipeng**

## **Chapter 12, The Miracle that was Wrought at Tlokweng Road Speedy Motors, Chapter 13, Tea at the Orphan Farm, and Chapter 14, Mr. Bernard Selelipeng Summary**

In Chapter 12, Mma Makutsi's class is progressing quickly and she has decided to end the class a week earlier than expected. Toward the end of the course, Mma Makutsi has the class write essays to show their typing skills. These essays are anonymous and are supposed to be about what is most important in the writer's life. Most are about sports, but Mma Makutsi finds one in which the author confesses a crush on Mma Makutsi. Mma Makutsi writes a note to the author encouraging him to ask her on a date.

The apprentices are left alone at Tlokweng Road Speedy Motors one afternoon while Mma Ramotswe and Mr. Matekoni go to the orphan farm. Mr. Matekoni has gotten a new hydraulic lift and has told the apprentices not to touch it. However, the boys cannot resist lifting a van on the new lift. The van rises to the top, but when the boys go to lower it, it will not move. The younger apprentice prays that God will allow the van to lower itself. Moments later, the hydraulic lift slowly lowers the van to the ground.

In Chapter 13, Mma Ramotswe and Mr. Matekoni arrive at the orphan farm. Mr. Matekoni goes to fix the pump while Mma Ramotswe goes to have tea with Mma Potowani, the matron of the farm. Mma Ramotswe tells Mma Potowani about Puso's behavior and Mma Potowani suggests that Mr. Matekoni spend more time alone with the boy. At the same time, Mr. Matekoni decides the pump is no longer fixable and returns determined to convince Mma Potowani of this fact.

In Chapter 14, Mma Ramotswe tells Mr. Matekoni that Mma Potowani suggested he spend more time with Puso. Mr. Matekoni agrees and takes the boy for a drive that same night. The following day, Mma Makutsi accepts a date with her mysterious student, Mr. Bernard Selelipeng. They have drinks at a local bar and talk for a long time. Mr. Selelipeng tells Mma Makutsi he is divorced and lives in a flat near Tlokweng Road. Mma Makutsi likes everything about Mr. Seleipeng and agrees to another date.



## **Chapter 12, The Miracle that was Wrought at Tlokweng Road Speedy Motors, Chapter 13, Tea at the Orphan Farm, and Chapter 14, Mr. Bernard Selelipeng Analysis**

Mma Ramotswe deals with the other problem in her life, the behavior of her young foster son. Mma Ramotswe asks the opinion of Mma Potowani, the matron of the orphan farm and the same woman who gave the children to Mma Ramotswe in the first place. This woman suggests the boy simply needs to spend more time with a father figure, so Mma Ramotswe encourages Mr. Matekoni to spend time with Puso and this seems to work. It is one conclusion to a conflict in Mma Ramotswe's life. The reader can only hope all her problems are solved so neatly.

Mma Makutsi has begun her typing school and it appears to be a success. On top of this, Mma Makutsi finds herself going on a date with a student. This student lives alone, which is unusual for a man his age, and claims to be divorced. Mma Makutsi is happy with all this, believing she has finally found a good man just like Mma Ramotswe found Mr. Matekoni. However, the reader senses that this is too good to be true, therefore the reader reserves judgment on this relationship.



## **Chapter 15, A Disgruntled Client, and Chapter 16, Mma Ramotswe Gets a Flat Tyre; Mma Makutsi Goes to the Cinema with Mr. Bernard Selelipeng**

### **Chapter 15, A Disgruntled Client, and Chapter 16, Mma Ramotswe Gets a Flat Tyre; Mma Makutsi Goes to the Cinema with Mr. Bernard Selelipeng Summary**

In Chapter 15, Mma Ramotswe and Mma Makutsi read an article in the newspaper about Mr. Buthelezi in which he runs down their agency because it is run by women. Mma Ramotswe has the older apprentice read the article and he tells them that he thinks it will get more business for the Satisfaction Guaranteed Detective Agency over their own. A short time later, however, a woman comes into the agency who employed Mr. Buthelezi, but found his services wanting. This woman is a physiotherapist at a hospital in Mochudi and her husband works in Gaborone. The husband did not like making the long drive everyday, so he and his wife bought a flat in Gaborone for him to live in during the week. Recently, however, the husband has not been home in the evenings when his wife calls. Mr. Buthelezi told her that her husband was going to church, but the wife knows this is unlikely because he refuses to attend church when he is home with her. The wife, named Mma Selelipeng, wants Mma Ramotswe to find out what her husband is really doing.

In Chapter 16, Mma Ramotswe is on the way home when she gets a flat. Mma Ramotswe goes to the home of Dr. Moffat to call Mr. Matekoni so that he might bring her spare tire and change the flat. While waiting for Mr. Matekoni, Mma Ramotswe and Mma Moffat look over old photos from when they both lived in Mochudi, including several pictures of Mma Ramotswe's father that make her miss him even more.

That night, Mma Makutsi goes to a movie and dinner with Mr. Bernard Selelipeng. While they are eating at a local diner, Mma Ramotswe comes in with Mr. Matekoni. Mma Makutsi introduces her boss to her companion, unaware of Mma Ramotswe's odd reaction to Mr. Selelipeng.





## **Chapter 15, A Disgruntled Client, and Chapter 16, Mma Ramotswe Gets a Flat Tyre; Mma Makutsi Goes to the Cinema with Mr. Bernard Selelipeng Analysis**

Mma Ramotswe gets a new client almost at the same moment she discovers that Mr. Buthelezi is trying to run her out of business by disparaging her sex. Ironically, this new client is a disgruntled client of Mr. Buthelezi, suggesting to the reader that Mr. Buthelezi is not good at what he does and will not be in business for much longer. Unfortunately, this same new client brings with her bad news for Mma Makutsi. It turns out the single, divorced man that Mma Makutsi is dating is the husband of this new client. Now Mma Ramotswe must make a decision between hurting her friend and doing her job, or fail at her job and protect her good friend.



# Chapter 17, Finding Tebogo, and Chapter 18, A Radio is a Small Thing

## Chapter 17, Finding Tebogo, and Chapter 18, A Radio is a Small Thing Summary

In Chapter 17, Mma Ramotswe goes to the village of Motepolole after learning that Tebogo Bathopi did not get her nursing license and cannot be tracked that way. Mma Ramotswe has a good friend in Motepoloe whom she visits. They talk about many things before Mma Ramotswe finally asks if her friend knows Tebogo Bathopi. The woman points across the street and tells Mma Ramotswe she is the woman standing outside the house there. Her name is now Mma Tshenyego.

In Chapter 18, Mr. Molefelo comes to the No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency to learn what Mma Ramotswe has found. Mma Ramotswe begins with Tebogo, telling Mr. Molefelo that the girl was heartbroken after Mr. Molefelo left her, but that she went home and met a wonderful man. Tebogo now considers her experiences with Mr. Molefelo as a stepping stone on the path to happiness. However, Mma Ramotswe suggests to Mr. Molefelo if he wants to make amends, he might consider paying tuition for Tebogo's daughter to go to a good nursing school. He reluctantly agrees. Then the older apprentice arrives with Mma Tsolamosese. Mr. Molefelo and his old guardian are reacquainted. After a while Mma Ramotswe pulls Mr. Molefelo aside and suggests that he give Mma Tsolamosese money she can use to spoil her dying grandchild while she is still alive and healthy enough to enjoy it. Mr. Molefelo agrees and is happy when Mma Tsolamosese agrees to accept the money.

## Chapter 17, Finding Tebogo, and Chapter 18, A Radio is a Small Thing Analysis

Mma Ramotswe quickly finds Mr. Molefelo's young girlfriend, now a married woman with five children. It turns out this woman bears no hard feelings for Mr. Molefelo and is touched that he wanted to find her to make up for past mistakes. However, Tebogo wants nothing from her ex-lover. Mma Ramotswe holds Mr. Molefelo to his initial desire to help this woman, though, by encouraging him to pay the high cost of tuition for Tebogo's daughter to attend nursing school. It is a gift the girl can use to make a good life for herself and one that will go a long way to amending the past.

Mma Ramotswe also brings Mma Tsolamosese to see her past boarder, a reunion that is sweet and filled with happiness. Mma Ramotswe has also thought of what Mr. Molefelo can do for this woman as well, suggesting that he provide money that will allow Mma Tsolamosese's granddaughter to have a good life before her tragic death. Mma

Ramotswe shows that she is not only smart and practical here, but that she has an enormous heart as well.



# **Chapter 19, No. 42 Limpopo Court, and Chapter 20, Two Awkward Men Satisfactorily Disposed of**

## **Chapter 19, No. 42 Limpopo Court, and Chapter 20, Two Awkward Men Satisfactorily Disposed of Summary**

In Chapter 19, Mma Ramotswe goes to the flat of Mr. Bernard Selelipeng and tells him that she knows he is married. Mma Ramotswe also tells Mr. Selelipeng that she knows he has not told Mma Makutsi the truth about his marriage. Mma Ramotswe then admits to having been hired by Mr. Selelipeng's wife to find out if he is cheating on her. Mma Ramotswe tells Mr. Selelipeng that if he does not go home and break things off with Mma Makutsi gently, she will tell his wife the truth about his actions.

In Chapter 20, Mma Ramotswe learns that Mr. Selelipeng told Mma Makutsi he had to return to Mochudi to care for a sick relative. Mma Makutsi confesses to some relief at this, however, because she had grown tired of his simple ways. Later that day, Mr. Buthelezi makes a surprise visit and announces that he has decided to get out of the detective business, making the No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency the only one in town again. To celebrate, Mma Ramotswe and Mr. Matekoni throw a picnic for their employees, friends, and family.

## **Chapter 19, No. 42 Limpopo Court, and Chapter 20, Two Awkward Men Satisfactorily Disposed of Analysis**

Mma Ramotswe handles the situation with Mr. Selelipeng with grace and intelligence. By doing things this way, Mma Ramotswe does not have to tell her client that her husband was cheating on her or her friend that her new lover is married. In fact, Mma Makutsi had grown tired of her new lover, so it all worked out for the best. The Satisfaction Guaranteed Detective Agency also closed its doors, so Mma Ramotswe's troubles have all disappeared, leaving the woman as the last man standing.



# Characters

## Mma Ramotswe

Mma Ramotswe is a middle-aged woman who has recently become engaged after promising herself she would never marry again. Mma Ramotswe once was married to a man who was unkind to her and that marriage ended after the death of a baby. Mma Ramotswe has become an independent woman in the years since that marriage, beginning her own business and caring for herself without feeling a need to be dependent on a man. However, Mma Ramotswe has found a man who needs her to care for him and she is quite content in the relationship.

Mma Ramotswe also has taken in two orphans. The eldest is a girl who is required to use a wheelchair. The younger child is a boy who has recently begun to have some trouble with his behavior. Mma Ramotswe worries about these children even as she finds herself confronted with several other problems at the same time. However, in her laid-back and confident way, Mma Ramotswe finds a way to deal with the problem in time.

## Mma Makutsi

Mma Makutsi is a bit younger than Mma Ramotswe. Mma Makutsi is Mma Ramotswe's assistant at the No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency. Mma Makutsi has also taken on the responsibilities of managing Mr. JLB Matekoni's business, the Tlokweng Road Speedy Motor. However, now that Mr. JLB Matekoni has gotten over his depressive illness and returned to work, Mma Makutsi has more time to work with Mma Ramotswe and to think about her own situation.

Mma Makutsi is single and she cares for a sick brother. Mma Makutsi is having trouble making ends meet with her meager salary. In this novel, Mma Ramotswe suggests a marriage might repair Mma Makutsi's financial problem, but Mma Makutsi finds herself thinking more along the lines of beginning her own business. In fact, Mma Makutsi does begin a business in this book that greatly improves her financial problems and leads to a brief romance with one of her students.

## Mr. JLB Matekoni

Mr. JLB Matekoni is Mma Ramotswe's fiancé. Mr. Matekoni owns the Tlokweng Road Speedy Motor where he is a mechanic and he employs two apprentices. Mr. Matekoni has recently suffered a debilitating depressive illness that left him unable to work. While he was away, Mma Makutsi took care of his business, even learning how to do minor repairs on the vehicles. However, Mr. Matekoni has returned to full health and to his business. Mr. Matekoni is also co-parenting the foster children Mma Ramotswe has



taken in and in this novel finds himself encouraged to spend more time with the boy to help alleviate some of his behavior problems.

## **The Young Apprentice**

The young apprentice is the younger of two apprentices employed by Mr. Matekoni at the Tlokweng Road Speedy Motor. This young man was once obsessed with women, but in this novel he has discovered religion. This young man repeatedly preaches to his co-workers and even invites them to watch him give a speech in his church. At one point, this young man finds himself in possible trouble with his employer when a hydraulic lift fails to release a car. This young man prays that God will allow the car to lower itself to the ground and within seconds the air is released from the hydraulic system, returning the car to the ground. This event seems to confirm the existence of God for this young man but youthful lust eventually overrides his sense of religion and he returns to his previous fascination with girls.

## **The Older Apprentice, Charlie**

The older apprentice is called Charlie. This young man is also employed at the Tlokweng Road Speedy Motor by Mr. Matekoni. This young man is obsessed with girls and girls are all he ever talks about. Charlie often ridicules his younger brother about his new religious beliefs, but after the incident with the hydraulic lift, Charlie begins to see that there is more power in religion than he had ever thought before. Charlie is young. He is bright and proves to be a good worker for Mr. Matekoni and a good friend to both Mma Ramotswe and Mma Makutsi.

## **Mr. Molefelo**

Mr. Molefelo hires the No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency to find two different people. When Mr. Molefelo was young, he lived with a couple during his time at school. During this time, Mr. Molefelo fell in love with a young nursing student and got her pregnant. Mr. Molefelo stole from his host family to pay for this young girl to get an abortion and then he left her. Now Mr. Molefelo wants to find the host family to repay what he stole and the young girl to make amends for leaving her when she needed him most. Mma Ramotswe warns Mr. Molefelo that money cannot always repay such debts, but when she finds each of these people, Mma Ramotswe is able to find a way for money to help each person in a unique way.

## **Mr. Bernard Selelipeng**

Mr. Bernard Selelipeng is an employee of the local diamond company. Mr. Selelipeng is married, but his wife works in a different city so that they spend a great deal of time separated. When Mma Makutsi begins her typing school for men, Mr. Selelipeng is among one of the first students. Mr. Selelipeng confesses a growing affection for Mma



Makutsi toward the end of the class and they begin dating. However, Mr. Selelipeng's wife comes to the No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency and hires Mma Ramotswe to learn if her husband is cheating. When Mma Ramotswe stumbles on the truth, she diplomatically makes it all right without injuring anyone's emotions.

## Mr. Buthelezi

Mr. Buthelezi is a detective who has opened a rival detective agency, the Satisfaction Guaranteed Detective Agency, across town. When Mma Ramotswe and Mma Makutsi visit this new detective agency, they discover that Mr. Buthelezi makes claims that he was both a member of the CID and he had lived in New York. However, questioning regarding these things seems to indicate they are lies. Mr. Buthelezi advertises his new agency by making claims that only a man can be a detective and that people should hire a man to do a man's job. This upsets Mma Ramotswe but she does nothing to fight Mr. Buthelezi. In fact, in time Mr. Buthelezi simply gives up.

## Puso and Motholeli

Puso is the young boy that Mma Ramotswe has taken in as her foster child. Puso is a frustrated young man who begins acting out in this novel by killing a small bird and telling Mr. Matekoni that he hates him. The matron of the orphan farm suggests the boy only needs added attention by Mr. Matekoni and this seems to help.

Motholeli is Mma Ramotswe's foster daughter and Puso's sister. Motholeli is required to use a wheelchair. Motholeli loves to work on engines and machines. Mr. Matekoni has promised to rig a ramp for her so that he can teach her to work on engines at the Tlokweng Road Speedy Motor. Motholeli has trouble with some kids at school in this novel when they make fun of her for not having a mother. Mma Ramotswe reassures Motholeli and this crisis appears to be quashed as soon as it begins.

## Mma Tsolamosese

Mma Tsolamosese took in Mr. Molefelo when he was a young student. Mma Tsolamosese's husband was a prison guard and the family had to save up for luxuries such as a radio. During his time with the Tsolamoseses Mr. Molefelo stole their radio to pay for an abortion for his girlfriend. Now Mr. Molefelo wants to find Mma Tsolamosese so that he can make amends for stealing this radio. When Mma Ramotswe finds Mma Tsolamosese, she learns that she has had a daughter die of AIDS and that her granddaughter is expected to die of the same thing before reaching adulthood. It is this information that inspires Mma Ramotswe to encourage Mr. Molefelo to give Mma Tsolamosese money to spoil the granddaughter before her death.



## Objects/Places

### Radio

Mr. Molefelo stole a radio from Mma Tsolamosese to pay for an abortion for his girlfriend.

### Typewriters

Mma Makutsi borrows a dozen typewriters from the Botswana Secretarial School in order to open her Kalahari Typing School for Men.

### Child's Catapult

Puso uses his catapult to kill a hoopoe bird. This action greatly upsets Mma Ramotswe and leaves her searching for answers throughout most of the novel.

### Pictures

While visiting Mma Moffet, Mma Ramotswe looks at pictures from her childhood and is given one of her father to whom she was very close.

### Essays

Mma Makutsi has her first typing class write essays to show their typing proficiency. One of these essays confesses a growing sense of affection for Mma Makutsi by one of her students.

### Collection Letters

Mma Makutsi gets inspiration for her typing school while writing a collection letter for the Tlokweng Road Speedy Motor.

### Little White Van

Mma Ramotswe drives a little white van.





## **No. 42 Limpopo Court**

Mma Ramotswe visits Mr. Bernard Selelipeng at his flat at No. 42 Limpopo Court to encourage him to return to his wife and leave Mma Makutsi alone.

## **Botswana Secretarial School**

Mma Makutsi graduated from the Botswana Secretarial School with the highest grade on the final exam ever reached. Mma Makutsi is proud of her success at the school.

## **Satisfaction Guarantee Detective Agency**

Mr. Buthelezi opens the Satisfaction Guaranteed Detective Agency across town, claiming that only a man can be a detective with the hopes of driving customers away from Mma Ramotswe.

## **No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency**

The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency is the detective agency that Mma Ramotswe runs with her assistant Mma Makutsi.

## **Tlokweng Road Speedy Motor**

Tlokweng Road Speedy Motor is the mechanics business that Mr. JLB Matekoni runs. During Mr. Matekoni's illness, Mma Ramotswe moved the offices of her detective agency to the Tlokweng Road Speedy Motor offices so that Mma Makutsi might run both businesses for them.



# Themes

## Bias Against Women

The women at the No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency learn that there is a new detective agency opening across town. The women are shocked because they have always been the only detective agency in the area. The women go to check out the new agency and discover that the agency claims to have a detective who both worked with the CID in Johannesburg and lived in New York where he was friends with many New York detectives. Mma Makutsi is immediately put off by this detective, Mr. Buthelezi, when he puts down her beloved Botswana Secretarial School. As their conversation continues, Mr. Buthelezi refuses to answer direct questions about his experiences both in the CID and in New York City.

As Mma Ramotswe and Mma Makutsi prepare to leave, Mr. Buthelezi gives them a brochure he plans to use to advertise his new agency. In this brochure, Mr. Buthelezi insists that women are not qualified to be private detectives, therefore potential clients should come to him for help rather than trust their futures in women. Mma Ramotswe is deeply offended by this brochure. Later, there is an article in the newspaper in which Mr. Buthelezi again claims that women are not qualified to be private detectives, an article that will easily bring clients to Mr. Buthelezi with the assumption that he can do a better job. All of this combines to make it appear that Mr. Buthelezi is better qualified as a private detective based on his sex, rather than his experience, making bias against women a theme of the novel.

## Ambition

Mma Makutsi is concerned that the two businesses she works for, the No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency and the Tlokweng Road Speedy Motor, are having financial problems. Mma Makutsi herself is struggling to make ends meet with her small income. Mma Makutsi begins thinking of things she can do to first increase the income of the businesses she works with and second to improve her own savings. The first idea Mma Makutsi has is to use the cars that come into the Tlokweng Road Speedy Motors to run a driving school. However, the insurance that would be required is too much to make the business a success.

Mma Makutsi keeps thinking of ways to increase her income. Mma Makutsi finally thinks of a business in which she could teach men how to type without them feeling as though they were competing against women in something women excel at. This idea leads to the Kalahari Typing School for Men, a successful business that greatly increases Mma Makutsi's income. Mma Makutsi is highly ambitious in branching out and beginning this business on her own, making ambition a theme of the novel.



## Making Amends

Mr. Molefelo comes to Mma Ramotswe and tells her a story of how when he was a student he had to steal a radio from his host family to pay for an abortion for his girlfriend. Mr. Molefelo has since had a near death experience that has caused him to reflect on his past. Mr. Molefelo would like to make amends to both the family he stole from and the girl he abandoned in her darkest time of need.

Mma Ramotswe quickly finds the widow with whom Mr. Molefelo once lived. Mma Tsolamosese is now living with her two granddaughters, living off her husband's pension from the prison where he once worked. Mma Ramotswe discovers that Mma Tsolamosese's youngest granddaughter, a two year old, is afflicted with the AIDS that killed her mother and will most likely not live to see adulthood. This gives Mma Ramotswe the idea to encourage Mr. Molefelo to assuage his guilt by giving Mma Ramotswe a sum of money with which she can spoil her granddaughter while she still lives.

Mma Ramotswe turns her attention to Tedogo Bathopi, the young nursing student Mr. Molefelo impregnated and abandoned. This young girl gave up her nursing degree after her fallout with Mr. Molefelo and moved home to the village where she grew up. Here Tedogo found love and had a family, telling Mma Ramotswe that she feels that her breakup with Mr. Molefelo was only a stepping stone to ultimate happiness. Mr. Molefelo wants to give Tedogo money, but instead Mma Ramotswe suggests he pay tuition for her eldest daughter to attend nursing school. In this way, Mr. Molefelo is able to make amends to Tedogo and set fate back on the right course.

# Style

## Point of View

The point of view of this novel is the third-person omniscient. This novel is seen through the eyes of several characters, including Mma Ramotswe, Mma Makutsi, and Mr. Matekoni. The point of view of this novel allows the reader to see the events of the plot through the thoughts and emotions of these main characters. There is a great deal of internal dialogue in this novel, allowing the reader to follow the thought processes of the main characters that lead to their actions within the plot.

The point of view of this novel works well with the novel because it allows the reader to follow the thoughts and actions of the main characters without getting lost in a group of inconsequential characters. The novel's action is slow and methodical, most of based on the thoughts of the main characters, therefore this point of view allows the reader to understand what is going on even without a great number of important events driving the plot. This point of view also allows the reader to develop a good relationship with the characters, causing the reader to be concerned with what happens to each character as the plot develops.

## Setting

This novel is set in Gaborone, Botswana. The country of Botswana is in Africa and it has its own culture and traditions that influence the actions of the characters in this novel, most notably in the way they speak to one another and the way they enter an office or room when they come to visit someone. The city itself is consequential to the overall plot only based on its size as a medium metropolis and the community of people who live there. The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency has been the only detective agency in this town for many years, but in this novel a new detective agency opens. This suggests that the size of the city is changing, growing, but the writer manages to keep the sense of a small community as the plot continues to develop.

The setting of this novel works well with the plot because it is populated with a people who have a strong sense of pride in their country and whose actions are motivated by the traditions and customs of their country. The setting is unique to this type of novel, causing the novel to stand out among others in its genre. The setting also creates a sort of laid-back sense in the novel that is also unusual among this genre, making it the kind of book any reader of any age can enjoy. Overall, the setting is intrical with the plot and the characters, giving the entire novel a sense of continuity that is important to any novel.



## Language and Meaning

The language of the novel tends to lean on a more formal side. The language, while not textbook formal, is more formal than the slang and relaxed tone most novels of this genre tend to use. There is the implication in the text of the novel that English is not the language the characters speak, but there are no foreign words that appear in the text. However, the characters each refer to each other in a formal manner, using Mma and Rra to address one another.

The language of the novel is appropriate to its plot because it tends to fit the style and manner in which people in Botswana speak to one another. The language, while leaning on a more formal side, is simple enough for most readers to understand. The lack of foreign words or phrases helps to keep the novel simple to comprehend, adding to the simplicity of the format of the novel. Despite its more formal tone, the novel's language is grammatically correct and easy to understand.

## Structure

The novel is divided into twenty chapters, each one titled with a word or phrase that describes something that will take place in the chapter. Each chapter is fairly short, most less than ten pages long. The novel is told in both exposition and dialogue, with lots of internal monologues included to help the reader understand how an important character comes to a conclusion or to act in a particular way.

The novel has many plot lines. The first is the relationships between Mma Ramotswe and the important people in her life. This plot is focused on Mma Ramotswe and her foster children in this novel as she struggles to find a way to deal with her foster son's unpleasant behaviors. Another plot follows Mma Makutsi's attempts to find another way to supplement her tiny savings account. Other plot lines follow Mma Ramotswe as she investigates two very different cases. All these plot lines come to a satisfying conclusion at the end of the novel.



## Quotes

"I must remember, thought Mma Ramotswe, how fortunate I am in this life; at every moment, but especially now, sitting on the verandah of my house in Zebra Drive, and looking up at the high sky of Botswana, so empty that the blue is almost white" (Chapter 1, How to Find a Man, pg. 3.)

"But it was not in Mr. JLB Matekoni's heart to say no—that was the problem. And she loved him all the more for that" (Chapter 3, To Kill a Hoopoe, pg. 27.)

"Mr. Buthelezi was a rather more serious matter, but then again, was he really that much of a threat?" (Chapter 5, The Talking Cure, pg. 54.)

"Sins, thought Mma Ramotswe, are darker and more powerful when contemplated within confining walls" (Chapter 5, The Talking Cure, pg. 64.)

"Those poor men, desperate to know how to type, but too ashamed to ask how to do it, had relief in store" (Chapter 6, Old Typewriters, Gathering Dust, pg. 71.)

"Do you think that money can change things? Do you think that just by giving somebody money, you can undo what you did?" (Chapter 7, What Mr. Molefelo Did, pg. 81.)

"How could anybody do that sort of thing to a fellow human being? The answer, of course, was that such people were cold inside" (Chapter 9, The Civil Service, pg. 91.)

"Roads, thought Mma Ramotswe, were a country's showcase" (Chapter 11, Mma Ramotswe Goes to a Small Village to the South of Gaborone, pg. 104.)

"There was nothing more that could be said, but as she stood there, sharing the moments of private grief, the idea had come to her of what Mr. Molefelo could do" (Chapter 11, Mma Ramotswe Goes to a Small Village to the South of Gaborone, pg. 113.)

"This pump had come from far away and could be given back to the British now. Here is your pump, which you left in Africa. It is finished now" (Chapter 13, Tea at the Orphan Farm, pg. 125.)

"Mr. Molefelo had earned this moment for himself, she thought, and there should be no spectator" (Chapter 18, A Radio is a Small Thing, pg. 173.)

"Mr. JLB Matekoni was perfect as he was, she thought; a good man, with a profound feeling for the machinery and possessed of a nature made up of utter kindness. There

were so few men like that around; how satisfactory it was, then, that she had one of them" (Chapter 20, Two Awkward Men Satisfactorily Disposed of, pg. 185.)



## Topics for Discussion

Who is Mma Ramotswe? What business does she run? Why does she tell the reader she has always vowed to never marry again? Why has Mma Ramotswe decided to marry again? What is postponing this marriage? For what reason? How does Mma Ramotswe feel about this postponement? Who does Mma Ramotswe live with? What unique problem arises with these roommates?

Who is Mma Makutsi? Why is she concerned about her financial situation? Is Mma Makutsi worried about losing her job? Why? What idea does Mma Makutsi entertain during a great deal of the novel? What inspired this idea? How does it differ from the idea that Mma Ramotswe suggested for Mma Makutsi's financial woes? Who does Mma Makutsi begin to date during this novel? What happens to that relationship?

Who is Mr. Molefelo? What happened to him to make him reflect on his life? What regrets does Mr. Molefelo have from his days as a student? Are these his only regrets in life? Why does Mr. Molefelo want to repair what happened in his past? Is this possible? What warnings does Mma Ramotswe offer Mr. Molefelo? In the end, what does Mma Ramotswe encourage Mr. Molefelo to do to make his amends?

Who is Mr. JLB Matekoni? What illness has he recently recovered from? Who helped him through this illness? For what reason? What does Mr. Matekoni do to help this woman before and after his illness? What is Mr. Matekoni's relationship with Mma Ramotswe? What is his relationship to her foster children? What is Mr. Matekoni's occupation? Does he enjoy this work?

Who is Bernard Selelipeng? How does Mma Makutsi meet him? What does he tell Mma Makutsi on their first meeting? What does Mma Ramotswe eventually learn about Mr. Selelipeng? Where does she learn this? What does Mma Ramotswe think when she learns Mma Makutsi is dating this man? How does Mma Ramotswe attempt to save both Mma Makutsi's feelings and do her job?

What is the Kalahari Typing School for Men? Who thought it up? How is it opened? Where is it opened? For what purpose? What does this school teach? For whom? For what reason? Is this a successful business? Explain.

Who are the apprentices? What is their job? What does Mr. Matekoni discourage them to do from work? What is the apprentices main object of obsession? How has the younger one changed in this novel? How does the older apprentice feel about this? How does Mr. Matekoni and Mma Ramotswe feel about this new change? Does this change last? Explain.