

# **Morality for Beautiful Girls Study Guide**

**Morality for Beautiful Girls by Alexander McCall Smith**

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## Plot Summary

This is the third in a series of books about Precious Ramotswe, the owner and chief detective of the No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency. Set in the African republic of Botswana, this entry into the series sees Mma Ramotswe investigating a suspected poisoning at the same time as she struggles to determine the best choice of action when it comes to the depression of her fiancé, Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni. As the narrative dramatizes questions of what defines morality, it also explores themes relating to the nature of beauty and the value of compassion.

The novel begins with a brief summing up of the circumstances that have brought Mma Ramotswe to this point in her life; in particular, the development of her relationship with Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni and the establishment of the Agency and the hiring of assistant Grace Makutsi. Mma Ramotswe, however, faces the difficult task of making some changes - having Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni moving into her home will be relatively easy, but moving the Agency into a back room of his garage might be more difficult. Somewhat surprisingly, however (and as the result of being offered a new position with more responsibility), Mma Makutsi proves to be more accommodating than Mma Ramotswe thought she was going to be.

As plans solidify for the various moves about to take place, Mma Ramotswe has to come to grips with other events and circumstances, all of which have to be handled at the same time and with similar degrees of tact and patience. There is her sudden awareness of Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni's depression, which has led him into irresponsibility at work. There is the case brought to the Agency by the Government Man, who wants Mma Ramotswe to find out the truth of why life on his cattle ranch seems so unhappy, and specifically whether his brother's new wife is after his brother's money. Then there is the case of a wild, mute boy brought to an Orphan Farm. Finally, there is the question of how to keep life at home with Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni's two adopted children functioning in the middle of all these demands.

One by one, Mma Ramotswe takes steps to address each and all of these circumstances. She arranges for Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni to move out to the orphan farm, where Mma Potokwane (the farm's efficient but compassionate administrator) will take care of him. She also arranges for Mma Makutsi, who has a degree in office administration, to take over the running of Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni's garage, Tlokweng Road Speedy Motors. The two apprentices who work there are reluctant, at first, to take orders from a woman, but they soon start responding to Mma Makutsi's firm managerial hand. In the meantime, Mma Ramotswe goes out to the large cattle farm run by the Government Man's brother, and discovers a very different set of circumstances that he had led her to believe were present.

While Mma Ramotswe is away, Mma Makutsi is offered a case of her own to investigate - the question of which of the four finalists in The Miss Beauty and Integrity Contest is best suited to win the title. As Mma Ramotswe survives a poisoning attempt, Mma Makutsi puts together a plan to interview the finalists. Then, as Mma Ramotswe gets to



the truth of what's happening at the cattle farm (discovering that a disgruntled cook is behind the poisonings), Mma Makutsi discovers that one of the finalists is, in fact, the perfect candidate. Upon returning home, Mma Ramotswe confronts the Government Man with the truth of what she has discovered. Not only was the Cook unhappy, but the rest of the family is unhappy with how the Government Man has allowed his need for status to overwhelm his need for his family. The Government Man realizes the error of his ways, and vows to change.

With the garage running smoothly and the Agency celebrating the successful completion of two cases, Mma Ramotswe visits the orphan farm, where she discovers that in spite of Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni's efforts at communicating with the Wild Boy, the boy is as unreachable as ever. She is, however, happier to discover that Mr. J. L. B. Matekoni seems to be returning to normal.



# Chapters 1 and 2

## Chapters 1 and 2 Summary

"The World as Seen by Another Person." Narration summarizes the events (recounted in previous books in the series) that have led to Mma Ramotswe's current circumstances, primarily her engagement to Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni and their mutual decisions to live in Mma Ramotswe's home but move her money-losing business (The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency) into his more economically advantageous premises. The move, Mma Ramotswe realizes, has the potential to affect the efficient and bespectacled Mma Grace Makutsi, recently promoted from secretary to assistant detective. After discussing the situation with Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni, Mma Ramotswe proposes a solution - that Mma Makutsi also become Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni's assistant manager and help him sort out his messy paperwork. Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni agrees, partly because he needs the help and partly because he wants to keep his future wife happy.

Shortly afterwards, at the Agency, while she and Mma Makutsi are taking their tea break, Mma Ramotswe begins to speak of her decision, but is diverted by Mma Makutsi's discussion of the discoveries of a Dr. Leakey, who she calls a bone doctor. She tells the increasingly astonished Mma Ramotswe of Leakey's discovery that every human being is genetically related to every other human being, a comment that leads the women into a discussion of whether, if everyone knew that fact, every human being would be nicer to each other. This, in turn, leads Mma Ramotswe to feel guilty about what she's about to do, but she nevertheless proceeds, telling Mma Makutsi of her plans. Mma Makutsi becomes upset, responding to Mma Ramotswe's assurances of both success and future relationships with a story of a group of beautiful girls who once took advantage of Mma Makutsi's skills and work ethic all got successfully, and richly, married ... while she remains single, and with little hope. The easily moved Mma Ramotswe impulsively tells Mma Makutsi that her new job will involve a new title and more money, and Mma Makutsi immediately becomes happier. For her part, however, Mma Ramotswe is concerned about how and when she'll tell Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni what she has done, but realizes that there will come a time when the moment is right, and she'll be able to tell him without fear of conflict.

"A Boy in the Night". The narrative point of view shifts focus in this chapter, describing nighttime events at a camp in the African bush. As a tracker chats quietly with a pair of white tourists (a man and a woman), his assistants argue over where a man's identity comes from, his mother's womb or his mother's milk. All conversation stills when a strange sound comes out of the darkness. The tracker orders one of his assistants to investigate, and after a struggle, he comes back to the fire with a silent, naked, wounded boy. Attempts to get the boy to communicate all fail, as does an attempt by the female tourist to comfort him. The assistant, meanwhile, notices that the boy has a strange smell about him - the scent of a lion. Later, after the assistant and the boy have gone to sleep, the tracker urges the female tourist to not worry, the boy will be handed over to the police and they will "work out where he's come from and get him home".



## Chapters 1 and 2 Analysis

The first chapter simultaneously functions as exposition, explaining the past and present circumstances within which the narrative is to unfold, and as the putting of that narrative in motion. It's important to note that while "Morality for Beautiful Girls" is one of a series of books written about Precious Ramotswe and the No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency, the reader does not necessarily have to have read the first three books in the series to understand the characters, their intentions, and their relationships in this book. The exposition gives all the information one needs to know.

The first chapter also introduces components of one of the novel's major themes, the contrast between physical and moral beauty. In this context, the comments made by Mma Makutsi about the morality of the beautiful girls with whom she went to school can be seen as foreshadowing later incidents exploring the same issue; in particular, Mma Makutsi's investigations of The Miss Beauty and Integrity Contest. Here, it's important to note that the narrative's considerations of this subject hint at deeper considerations as well -specifically, the nature of beauty, and whether it is a solely physical concept.

Meanwhile, the novel's thematically central consideration of morality also begins in chapter one with Mma Ramotswe's moral dilemma. She places herself in the position of having to make a decision without consulting her (professional and personal) partner and therefore ease the discomfort of her trusted employee, or do the right thing and wait to consult that partner, but run the risk of allowing her employee's discomfort to continue. Her actions here, to make the former choice, function on three levels. As evidence of character, they suggest that Mma Ramotswe is compassionate and sensitive, traits that make her both a good person and a good detective. As actions in a narrative, they foreshadow her later, compassion-motivated (but morally somewhat suspect) choices to assume a false identity to help the Government Man and to bully Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni into seeking medical help. Finally, as manifestations of theme, Mma Ramotswe's choice to ease Mma Makutsi's discomfort suggest that genuine morality should ideally come down on the side of compassion rather than judgment.

One last noteworthy point in chapter one is the reference to Dr. Leakey, a real life archaeologist whose work in Africa uncovered historical genetic links between humanity and its evolutionary ancestors, links that as Mma Makutsi suggests, indicate that human beings are more like each other than many, it seems, would like to believe. Here again are hints of the novel's thematic suggestion that compassion (i.e., the belief that every human being is essentially similar) should be the guiding force behind decision and action. Events in chapter two, meanwhile, supports this thematic contention, with the actions of the tracker, his assistants, and the tourist all grounded in the same sort of compassionate regard for humanity practiced by Mma Ramotswe throughout the narrative. Also, the events of chapter two foreshadow events later in the narrative, not only what happens to the Boy but also events in the lives of other characters.



# Chapters 3 and 4

## Chapters 3 and 4 Summary

"Garage Affairs". In the first part of the chapter, Mma Ramotswe visits Tlokweng Road Speedy Motors with the intention of confessing to Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni what she has promised Mma Makutsi. She worries that he will be upset, but has confidence that his kind nature will enable him to forgive her. When she arrives, however, she is surprised to discover that Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni has left for the day and left his two apprentices (who in the past he has described as lazy and useless) in charge. The older apprentice seems to take great pleasure in telling Mma Ramotswe that Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni has, for the last ten days, taken much less interest in his work, and has also been told by a parts supplier that unless he pays his bills, his supply is going to be cut off. As Mma Ramotswe wonders about what could have caused this change in the usually conscientious Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni, the apprentice also tells her that he believes Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni is too old to keep running the business, and that he (Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni) has decided to turn it over to them. Angry now, Mma Ramotswe tells them Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni has no intention of doing so, that a new assistant manager is going to start work at the garage the following week, and that the apprentices' lazy days of doing no work are over. She leaves them with worry on their faces, but is worried herself - what if, she wonders, Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni is worried and unsure about the upcoming wedding?

The second half of the chapter follows Mma Makutsi on her way home from work, celebrating her new promotion with the luxury of a doughnut. She reflects on the situation of her brother, once robust and healthy, now sickly and unable to keep food down. When she arrives, she discovers that a nurse from a church hospice has come in response to Mma Makutsi's letter saying that her brother Richard was not well. The nurse offers medicine that, she says, will not cure him but will ease his suffering. The women offer Richard some water, then the nurse prays, for both him and his sister. Afterward, the two women sit in silence.

"A Visit to Dr. Moffat". When Mma Ramotswe visits Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni, she is surprised to see that his house is even messier than usual, that there are stacks of unread newspapers and unread mail, and that he is quieter and less energetic. She is even more surprised by his suggestion that his business will be all right being run by the two apprentices, by his agreement to Mma Makutsi becoming assistant manager, and by his decision to go into the bush for a few days on his own. After Mma Ramotswe leaves, instead of returning home to Zebra Drive, she visits her old family friend and confidante Dr. Moffat who, after hearing her description of Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni's condition, suggests that he might be suffering from depression. He assures Mma Ramotswe that depression is easily treatable, but when she firmly asserts that she will bring Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni in for treatment, he warns her to be careful. "Sometimes," he says, "they don't think there's anything wrong with them".



## Chapters 3 and 4 Analysis

Events in these two chapters focus on the question of illness, both physical and mental, and on how such illness triggers different reactions - jokes and ambition on the part of the apprentices, compassion and care on the part of Mma Ramotswe and Mma Makutsi. The consideration of both illnesses is notable because men are portrayed as experiencing vulnerability and weakness in a culture noted for, and noted in the book as having, a perspective on masculinity that requires men to be strong. Meanwhile, the compassion both illnesses trigger in the women who care for the suffering men reinforces the previously discussed suggestion that in the novel's thematic perspective, compassion can, and should, be the predominant factor when it comes to choosing action. This last point is particularly noteworthy when the reader considers the possibility that Mma Makutsi's brother is suffering from AIDS. The narrative never states explicitly that this is in fact the case, but it is well known that the population of Africa in general, and the male population in particular, suffers greatly as the result of AIDS, and of negative beliefs about those who have the disease. In other words, if Richard does in fact have AIDS, the compassion displayed by Mma Makutsi and the nurse becomes even more significant ... as does, ironically enough, Mma Makutsi's desire for secrecy, since living with AIDS continues to carry with it a profoundly negative stigma.





# Chapters 5 and 6

## Chapters 5 and 6 Summary

"The Government Man". The next day, Mma Ramotswe tells Mma Makutsi that she will start work at the garage immediately, and Mma Makutsi is pleased. They discuss the situation of Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni, and Mma Makutsi assures Mma Ramotswe that he will be fine. In turn, Mma Ramotswe asks after Mma Makutsi's family, and Mma Makutsi says everyone is fine. As they go back to work, they are interrupted by the arrival of an important looking man driving an important looking car ... The Government Man. After establishing that the office is indeed that of the No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency, and after establishing that the two women recognize both him and his high status (as a wealthy landowner and as a bureaucrat in the government), the Government Man explains his situation. He has, he says, a younger brother whom he loves deeply and who has recently married a young woman. The woman, the Government Man says, is hostile to the brother's family and is, according to the Government Man's mother, attempting to poison her husband in order to gain control of his money and land. When the Government Man asks Mma Ramotswe to find out whether this is in fact true, Mma Ramotswe initially refuses, suggesting that he go to the police. The Government Man angrily says the police would ask for proof which he does not have, and says that the job of a detective agency is to investigate things which the police would not. When Mma Ramotswe continues to refuse, the Government Man appears to threaten her with investigation into the Agency's legal status. This triggers Mma Makutsi (who had been upset with Mma Ramotswe's refusal) to offer a suggestion - that Mma Ramotswe be invited into the Government Man's home as a guest, and that while there she talk to the servants who, Mma Makutsi says, know everything about a house's goings on. The Government Man is pleased with the idea and agrees, quickly leaving to make the arrangements. Mma Ramotswe is less than pleased, realizing that the case is going to complicate her life immensely. She soon turns practical, however, and as she makes plans for how to organize all the various aspects of her life, takes Mma Makutsi over to Tlokweng Road Speedy Motors to start work as the new Acting Manager.

"Under New Management". When they arrive at Tlokweng Road Speedy Motors, Mma Ramotswe and Mma Makutsi notice the apprentices lazily pushing a car into the shop for repair. They give a long, complicated explanation of where it came from and what they believe to be wrong, but Mma Makutsi cuts them off and orders them to test the battery. Mma Ramotswe watches, increasingly impressed, as Mma Makutsi is proved right - the problem is an under-charged battery. Mma Ramotswe becomes even more impressed as Mma Makutsi goes through the rest of the day dealing efficiently with suppliers and customers and apprentices alike, clearing up a backlog of both repair and administrative work. As the exhausted apprentices leave, Mma Ramotswe congratulates Mma Makutsi, who comments that while she may not know how cars function, she does know about machines. Mma Ramotswe drops Mma Makutsi off at home and catches a glimpse of what she thinks is a second figure inside the house. Mma Makutsi, however,



turns back around for a moment and Mma Ramotswe, who feels she should not be seen, is forced to drive off before she can be sure about the second figure.

## Chapters 5 and 6 Analysis

There are several important points to note about this section. The first is the introduction of the Government Man, which itself is noteworthy for several reasons. One is that he and the members of his family are never actually named. This suggests that their situation is primarily defined by his status rather than by larger questions of identity. The second reason the introduction of the character is important is that it initiates what might be described as the novel's primary "mystery" plot. The "No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency" books are marketed as a mystery series, and generally regarded by critics and readers alike as such. The introduction of the Government Man, therefore, meets the series' main criteria and, as the beginnings of a mystery, draws the reader further into the story with the promise of secrets and truths to be revealed. Meanwhile, the third reason the introduction of the Government Man is important is that the character is the third manifestation of the novel's thematic consideration of male withdrawal from human feeling.

Another point to note about this section is Mma Makutsi's increasing assertiveness, which in some ways challenges Mma Ramotswe's authority and wisdom and, in other ways, illustrates the value of Mma Ramotswe's moral emphasis on compassion. If, it could be argued, Mma Ramotswe had not treated Mma Makutsi with respect and sensitivity, Mma Makutsi would not be able to react to circumstances around her with the kind of confidence that she displays when she takes charge at Tlokweng Road Speedy Motors. In this context, it's important to note that the ever-wise Mma Ramotswe gets over her initial resentment and realizes the value of Mma Makutsi's increased determination and efficiency.

Finally, there is the wall of secrecy and lies Mma Makutsi constructs around her brother, a reiteration of the previously discussed point about the shame associated with AIDS (if that is in fact what Richard has) or, on a more general level, with being male and unwell. Here again, a clear resonance exists between the situations of Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni and Richard.



# Chapters 7 and 8

## Chapters 7 and 8 Summary

"The Girl with Three Lives". In the first part of the chapter, narration comments that "every house in Zebra Drive ... would be likely to have a servant", and describes how so many of the servants are taken advantage of and financially abused, all because they are people in need. Narration also describes Mma Ramotswe's contemplation of a situation in her own neighborhood - a woman who had once been a friend who had no qualms about taking advantage of her servant. Contemplation of the woman and her attitude lead Mma Ramotswe to considerations on the subject of morality in general, and on the subject of her relationship with her own maid, Rose (a woman in her thirties with two young children).

When she arrives home, Mma Ramotswe is greeted cordially by Rose, who tells her that Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni 's two adopted children, Motholeli and Puso are in the living room, reading together. When she goes in to see them, Mma Ramotswe is surprised to learn that Motholeli is reading a story she wrote in school about herself, a story in which she says she has lived three lives. The narrative then shifts to Motholeli's first person story, in which she describes her first life as the happy, active daughter of bush people who, after her parents died, was taken to live with a farm family. There, she writes, she was happy for a while, but became ill, crippled, and confined to a wheelchair. Her second life, Motholeli writes, began when the farm woman said she couldn't take care of a "wheelchair girl" and sent her to an orphan farm, where (Motholeli says) she was well taken care of, until the day they were adopted by Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni At that point, Motholeli writes, her third life began. She moved in with Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni 's soon-to-be wife, Mma Ramotswe, where she is happy and feels very fortunate. Her story concludes with her expressing her desire to be a mechanic when she grows up. "Then," she writes, "when they are old, they will be able to be proud of me and say that I have been a good daughter for them and a good citizen of Botswana." After Motholeli is finished reading, narration describes the reactions of her three listeners, Puso, Mma Ramotswe, and Rose.

"Low Serotonin Levels". The next day, Mma Ramotswe begins her morning as often does, with a telephone conversation with Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni This time, however, it is she who makes the call. She is surprised to find that she has woken Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni up, that he has not slept well, and that he feels like there is some "animal" in his room keeping him awake. She is even more surprised when he reveals his belief that he has done something awful in his past for which she will never be able to forgive him, and upset when he refuses to see Dr. Moffat. After she hangs up, Mma Ramotswe goes straight to her favorite bookstore, where she asks the manager for help in finding a book on depression. When he has helped her and she has paid for her book, Mma Ramotswe takes it back to her van, leafing through it and pleased to find a section that describes Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni 's condition exactly. She eagerly gets on with the rest of



her day, convinced that she will be able to help Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni get well, whether he wants that help or not.

Mma Ramotswe's next stop is Tlokweng Road Speedy Motors, where she discovers that Mma Makutsi and the apprentices have been hard at work, that Mma Makutsi has won the apprentices' respect by correctly diagnosing a problem with a troublesome car, and that Mma Makutsi has quickly and efficiently organized Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni 's office. She is less pleased to discover that Mma Makutsi has also attempted to organize her life by making a list of all the things she has to do and prioritizing them. One of the items on the list, Mma Ramotswe discovers, is to return a phone call made to Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni by Mma Potokwane, the manager of the orphanage from which Motholeli and Pusa were adopted. Because of Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni 's situation, Mma Ramotswe calls in his place, and is not surprised when Mma Potokwane asks her to drive out and have tea - there is a situation, she says, that Mma Ramotswe should see.

## Chapters 7 and 8 Analysis

The first part of chapter seven continues the novel's thematic consideration of morality, with its contemplation of the employer/servant relationship and how most such relationships are defined more by the "morality" of money and status than by the "morality" of compassion. It's important to note, in this context, the clear and vivid contrast between how Mma Ramotswe treats Rose and how her friend apparently treats her servant, a further reinforcement of the narrative's thematic contention that compassion ought to be the watchword and defining factor in relationships. This contention is further reinforced in the second part of chapter seven, Motholeli's story, in which the defining aspect of all three of her lives appears to be compassion - or, in the case of the farm wife, the lack of it.

Meanwhile, chapter eight sees Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni 's depression deepening, Mma Ramotswe's determination to help him simultaneously deepening, and Mma Ramotswe taking action on that determination. The first point to note here is the title - serotonin is the name of a chemical in the brain that affects mood, and when it goes below a certain level, it can trigger depression. The second point to note is the juxtaposition between Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni 's experience and that of the mysterious Boy, about to return to the narrative. Finally, there is the ending of chapter eight which, in the tradition of many mystery novels, tantalizes the reader into moving further into the narrative with the promise of deeper mysteries and perhaps even more surprising truths.



# Chapters 9, 10 and 11

## Chapters 9, 10 and 11 Summary

"At the Orphan Farm". When she arrives at the orphan farm, Mma Ramotswe is greeted by the friendly Mma Potokwane, who serves her tea and cake. When they're finished, Mma Potokwane takes Mma Ramotswe to meet one of the farm's newest arrivals, a silent boy who refuses to keep his clothes on. After meeting him (being warned against getting too close, because he bites), Mma Potokwane says she hopes that Mma Ramotswe, with her investigative skills, can find out where the boy came from and who he is. She also tells Mma Ramotswe that when he was found, the boy smelled of lion. The two women express their doubt that finding the boy's family will be easy, or even possible, since they have both encountered children whose families have no interest in taking care of them. Mma Ramotswe, however, resolves to try.

"The Clerk's Tale". Mma Ramotswe and Mma Makutsi, with the help of the two apprentices, move the few pieces of property owned by the No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency into its new premises at Tlokweng Road Speedy Motors. Both women are somewhat upset at leaving what has come to be a kind of second home, but they console each other by saying that the business is not dead, only moving. Mma Ramotswe, however, also realizes that the business is failing, and that she has to make investigating the Government Man's case. She recalls that he mentioned that his sister-in-law's father is a low level government clerk, which leads her to assume that he is ambitious and behind his daughter's alleged attempt to poison the Government Man's brother. She also recalls that the Government Man told her that the man, Kgosi Sipoleli, takes his lunch every day under the same tree. Mma Ramotswe then arranges to not only "accidentally" meet him there, but to engage him in conversation. When she puts her plan into action, she speaks to him as a stranger, and is surprised to discover that he is not ambitious at all, but humble and gentle. She comes away from the meeting having realized two things - that she has to come at her investigation a different way, and that in future she has to be careful of making assumptions.

"Mma Potokwane Obliges". Mma Ramotswe telephones the Government Man to inquire whether he's made arrangements for her to stay with his brother's family, and learns that he has - she is to visit for a week, and is believed to be a political supporter in need of a rest. He expresses excitement and confidence about her ability to find out the truth about his sister in law, but Mma Ramotswe remains cautious. She then contemplates what to do about Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni, especially since she is to be gone a week. She wonders whether she could, or should, trick him into taking medicine for his depression, but then realizes there is another way. She goes out to visit the forceful Mma Potokwane, and asks her to take charge of getting Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni to the doctor and making sure he takes his medicine. Because both Mma Ramotswe and Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni have been such good friends to the orphan farm, Mma Potokwane agrees. The narrative then follows Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni as he is taken by Mma Potokwane to visit Dr. Moffat, who immediately diagnoses him with depression, gives him medicine,



and insists that he (Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni ) allow Mma Potokwane to help him. Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni agrees, and returns to the orphan farm with Mma Potokwane, passing TLOKWENG ROAD SPEEDY MOTORS on the way ... and not even glancing at it.

## Chapters 9, 10 and 11 Analysis

Chapter nine sees the return to the narrative of the wild Boy first seen in chapter two. There are several points to note here - the contrast between his experience/situation and those of Motholeli and Puso, the similarities in attitude and action to Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni, and the reiteration of the novel's thematic emphasis on compassion, evident in the concern/actions of both Mma Ramotswe and Mma Potokwane.

Chapter ten, meanwhile, begins with a brief glimpse of sentimentality over the Agency's move from one premises to another, an action which in some ways echoes and illuminates Mma Makutsi's move into a position of more responsibility and self respect. In other words, in the same way as the Agency moves into a new building, Mma Makutsi moves into a new way of thinking of herself. Chapter ten also sees the narrative returning to the narrative of the Government Man, re-engaging the reader in the mysteries associated with that plot. Here it's important to note that while the Government Man and his family remain unnamed, the bride's father is named. There is the sense here that the author is making a point about the value of having a sense of internal identity (as Sipoleli does) as opposed to feeling as though identity is defined by externals (as the Government Man does, and as, by extension, his family does). On another level, however, the character of Sipoleli and his apparently extreme difference from how he was described by the Government Ma are clever tactics for drawing the reader into the narrative, and specifically into the mystery.

Finally, chapter ten continues the novel's thematically entwined considerations of morality and compassion; specifically, Mma Ramotswe's concern, as relates to the situations of both Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni and the Government Man, about the nature and function of deception. Here again, compassion seems to trump absolute morality - in this case, compassion for the suffering of both the Government Man and Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni. It's important to note here that compassion is also an important component of the character of Mma Potokwane, yet another reiteration of the book's narrative/thematic suggestion that compassion should be the ultimate, defining factor in a person's life and actions. It's also important to note, however, that in response to the Government Man's situation, Mma Ramotswe decides it's okay to lie, while in response to the situation of Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni , Mma Ramotswe decides to tell the truth, albeit bending it a little. Ultimately, however, her actions towards, and considerations of, both men are ultimately defined by the same motivation - a compassionate sensitivity to, and awareness of, suffering ... as mentioned above, a fundamental aspect of both her character and of her work.



# Chapters 12 and 13

## Chapters 12 and 13 Summary

"Family Business". Early in the morning, Mma Ramotswe has breakfast with Rose and the children. When she tells Motholeli and Puso that she is going to be gone for a few days and Rose will take care of them, Motholeli says she will help Rose as much as she can. This leads Mma Ramotswe to contemplate what a good wife Motholeli would probably be, and how it's unlikely she would get a chance to be. Mma Ramotswe then packs up and leaves, heading for the farm run by the Government Man's brother. When she arrives, she thinks for a moment about how much her father, a modest cattle rancher, would have enjoyed owning a farm that size. Arriving at the main house, she is greeted by a maid, who shows her to the room where the mother of the Government Man is waiting. Mma Ramotswe greets her formally, and the mother (who knows the truth of her identity and purpose) comments on how nice it is to see someone who still believes in, and acts upon, the old ways. After a friendly chat, Mma Ramotswe is shown to her room by the maid, and takes the opportunity to try and get some information. The maid turns out to be quite talkative, describing the mother as a bit foolish about her sons, the Government Man as full of himself, and the Government Man's brother as a good farmer. Finally, much to Mma Ramotswe's surprise, the maid describes the brother's wife as "a good woman. She is the cousin of my mother's cousin. All the family, all of them, are Christians. They read the Bible. They follow the Lord".

"The Chief Justice of Beauty". Back at Tlokweng Road Speedy Motors, Mma Makutsi nervously hopes that there are no clients while Mma Ramotswe is away, as she is worried that she would not be able to handle both the garage and an investigation (in spite of the fact that she is desperate to solve a case of her own). She is therefore somewhat anxious when she is visited by Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni Moemedi Pulani, expensively dressed and possessed of a flashy personality. He is, at first, interested in speaking only with Mma Ramotswe, but when Mma Makutsi tells him she is away investigating an important case (exaggerating a bit by saying the case is abroad), Pulani tells her what he wants. He is, he says, the "chief justice of beauty" for the The Miss Beauty and Integrity Contest, so called because the reputations of other contests, which have focused solely on the competitors' beauty, have suffered because of the bad conduct and character of their contestants and winners. He describes the process by which he selected five highly moral competitors for his competition, how one of them proved to be a thief, and how concerned he's become that the other girls will prove to be equally immoral. He tells Mma Makutsi that he wants the Agency to find out which of the girls is most moral, adding that the competition is in three days. When Mma Makutsi comments on how difficult a process it would be, he offers a post-dated check for a substantial fee. Mma Makutsi realizes how pleased Mma Ramotswe would be to discover both the check and the successful resolution of a high profile case, and also realizes that for all his flashiness, Pulani really does mean well. She accepts the case, wondering as she does so how she can possibly solve it.



## Chapters 12 and 13 Analysis

The narrative's contemplation of just what constitutes beauty resurfaces in chapter twelve, with Motholeli's generosity of spirit arguably qualifying her as "beautiful" at the same time as her being in a wheelchair seems to define her, at least in what Mma Ramotswe seems to think would be the reactions of most men, as not beautiful. In the same way, and perhaps for similar reasons, the narrative implies that Mma Makutsi's efficiency, skill and perception make her beautiful, whereas her glasses and intellectual capacity seem to define her, for the reasons outlined above, as not beautiful. The consideration continues into chapter thirteen, in which the narrative begins its consideration of the tensions between these two aspects of a woman's personality/identity.

Meanwhile, the novel's primary mystery (the question of what is going on at the farm of the Government Man's brother) becomes more intriguing, as Mma Ramotswe uncovers layers of truth hidden from her by the Government Man. It's interesting to note the parallels here between this mystery and the one that comes to Mma Makutsi in the form of "the chief justice of beauty", since both mysteries seem to involve levels and degrees of difference between appearances and reality ... which is, arguably a key component in almost all novels of this genre (i.e., mysteries).

At the same time, Mma Ramotswe's reflections on her father are a manifestation of one of the narrative's emotional motifs, or recurring images - specifically, recurring commentary on the relationship between past and present. Throughout the narrative several characters, most notably including Mma Ramotswe herself, Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni, and the Government Man, react in the present to circumstances in the past. There are also comments in narration, often reflective of Mma Ramotswe's thoughts, about how Botswana's past as a nation continues to shape its present at the same time as aspects of that past (i.e., male supremacy) are being challenged and changed. In other words, the past is experienced by the characters and by the narrative as both positive and negative, as a source of meaning and insight as well as a source of misunderstanding and misdirected choices ... something to be embraced, and something to be left behind, however reluctantly at times.

Finally, the question of the nature of morality comes into play with Mma Makutsi's comments to Pulani about the whereabouts of Mma Ramotswe. In effect, Mma Makutsi does the same thing as Mma Ramotswe has done - told a small lie in order to assist the realization of a greater good. In this case, however, the "good" relates to the ongoing viability of the detective agency. There is the sense that the narrative intends this perhaps relatively minor deception to be on a par with that that Mma Ramotswe is perpetrating on the family of the Government Man, but different from that she considers doing to Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni (which she ultimately decides not to do). There is also the sense, therefore, that the narrative seems to be suggesting that when it comes to dealing with non-intimates, the questionable morality of a minor deception is less of a concern.





# Chapters 14 and 15

## Chapters 14 and 15 Summary

"God Decided that Botswana Would Be a Dry Place". At the cattle farm, while waiting for lunch to be served, Mma Ramotswe decides to go out and look at the animals, recalling as she does her late father's success at having a small farm and thinking of how she still grieves for him. One of the herdsmen joins her and, as they're talking about how healthy the animals seem, he reveals some of the ways of the family - how the Government Man bullies his brother, how the brother allows it, how the handicapped youngest son became what he is because of something in the mother's past, and how the mother should be watched closely. At lunch, during polite greetings and small talk about the apparently impending rain, Mma Ramotswe is introduced to the Government Man's brother (who seems uneasy with his mother) and his wife (who simply seems uneasy, only picking at her food). For her part, Mma Ramotswe notices that there is something unusual about the thickness of the stew, but eats it anyway. She also notices that the mother repeatedly looks away and later, in her room, reasons that the reason why is that she doesn't like being where she is ...specifically, in the company of her son's wife. As the rain draws closer, Mma Ramotswe falls into an uneasy sleep, from which she awakens feeling quite ill. She makes her way to the bathroom where she vomits up her lunch, and "almost immediately" feels better. She returns to her room, reflecting "on her situation. She had come to the home of a poisoner and had been poisoned herself. She should not be surprised at that. Indeed it was entirely and completely predictable."

"What Do You Want to Do with Your Life?". Mma Makutsi formulates a plan to investigate the girls in the The Miss Beauty and Integrity Contest - she will pose as a journalist, take a questionnaire about morality and beliefs to each girl, and judge from both their answers and their manner whether they are the best potential winner. She goes through the list of the competitor's names provided to her by Pulani, decides to visit the one at the university first, and gets one of the apprentices to drive her. After asking a group of students where to find the contestant (Motlamedi) and hearing them joke about the girl's vanity, Mma Makutsi goes to the girl's dorm room. There, Motlamedi's abrupt and rude manner upon answering the door changes completely when Mma Makutsi says why she's there. All smiles and friendliness, Motlamedi answers Mma Makutsi's questions and completes the survey, unaware that Mma Makutsi is looking around the room, noting the mess and lack of books. Motlamedi's answers to the survey seem to be the same sort of polite platitudes that Mma Makutsi expected, and she leaves. She discovers the apprentice flirting with a group of girls, angrily tells the girls that he is married, and gets him to drive away. As they go, she reflects on whether the apprentice will ever really change his womanizing ways, and wonders whether, as Mma Ramotswe says, people ever actually change and, if they do, how.



## Chapters 14 and 15 Analysis

There are several points about this section. First is how these two chapters parallel the investigations undertaken by the two operatives of the No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency. Specifically, Mma Ramotswe digs into the truths beneath the surface lives of the Government Man's family, while Mma Makutsi digs into the truth behind the surface attractions of one of the beauty pageant contestants. In both cases, the operatives employ a degree of deceit in pursuit of a positive result, a classic case (it could be argued) of the means justifying the end. Second, there is the appearance of the metaphoric motif, or repeated image, of rain. Third, there is a reiteration of the occasionally glimpsed consideration of the relationship between past and present, with Mma Ramotswe's contemplations of, and surge of grief for, her dead father.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, at the end of chapter fifteen comes Mma Makutsi's contemplation of the concept of change as referred to by Mma Ramotswe. This is important on a couple of key levels. One, it defines a fundamental aspect of Mma Ramotswe's character and work, in that much of what she does as an operative of the No. 1 Ladies' Detective agency is do exactly what she says - find the best in people and bring it out. It is, in fact, what she is about to do for the Government Man and his family, not to mention Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni. Second, it clearly relates to the narrative's thematic consideration of compassion, since (it could be argued) that that's all compassion is - recognizing the good inside a person, and when necessary acting to help someone being overwhelmed by trouble to reconnect with that good. This, again, seems to be a primary function of the No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency, which in many ways function as much to reawaken the good of people as to investigate the bad.



# Chapters 16 and 17

## Chapters 16 and 17 Summary

"The Cook's Tale". Mma Ramotswe thinks about the properties of the various plants and herbs growing wild in Botswana, and wonders whether one of them could have been put in the food. Eventually, she realizes that it's time for dinner, even though she doesn't feel at all like eating. As she prepares to go down, she makes sure to check her shoes for scorpions, having had a bad experience with a scorpion as a girl and reflecting on how people have to be careful about those who, like scorpions, hide and secretly sting. After finding a scorpion in one of her shoes and shaking it out, Mma Ramotswe heads downstairs but is stopped by the maid, who says everyone in the family has been sick. Mma Ramotswe suggests that they be allowed to rest for the evening. The maid agrees, and goes to spread the word. Mma Ramotswe then spends a sleepless night, getting up before dawn to enjoy the quiet and the sunrise. At the back of the house, she finds a man stoking the boiler. He reveals himself to be the house's cook, having been brought there by the Government Man, who discovered him working as a cook in a hotel. The cook confesses that he hates the job, but that he stays to keep his family fed and happy. Mma Ramotswe comes to a quick insight, and tells the cook she saw him put something in the food. He confesses to doing so, admitting that he hoped making the family ill would convince the Government Man's brother to free him. Mma Ramotswe promises to not reveal the truth of what happened and to get the cook reassigned to the cattle barn, where he is happiest. After accepting the cook's thanks, Mma Ramotswe returns to her room and prepares to leave, knowing what she has to tell the Government Man and that she might as well do so back home in Gaborone.

"An Excellent Type of Girl". After leaving Motlamedi's dorm room and after discovering the apprentice's excitement when he hears they're going to visit more girls, Mma Makutsi realizes that he is a potentially useful source of necessary information. She gives the apprentice the list of girls to be investigated, and he reveals that he knows three of them, saying how much fun they are. The fourth, he says, he doesn't know. Mma Makutsi, realizing that if the girl-crazy apprentice knows the other girls, they're probably not the kind of girls who should be in the pageant, says they're going to visit the fourth girl. As they drive, Mma Makutsi reflects on the likelihood of a "good" girl actually entering a beauty pageant and on how there is no such thing as a "good" or "bad" boy (in the same way as there are "good" or "bad" girls). She also reflects on the differences between how the morality of men and women are perceived. When they arrive at the house of the fourth girl, Patricia, Mma Makutsi is gratified to see that it has all the appearances of a traditionally run home, as well as an atmosphere of near-poverty. She greets Patricia's mother formally, and the two wait outside for Patricia, musing about rain. Patricia arrives, greets Mma Makutsi in the traditional, formal way, and speaks of her doubt that she will win the contest. When Mma Makutsi asks what she wants to do with her life, Patricia gives what Mma Makutsi believes to be an honest answer - that she wants to go to the Botswana Secretarial College. When Mma Makutsi reveals that she went to the same school and that she graduated with a final score of



ninety-seven percent, Patricia and her mother are impressed. They both compliment Mma Makutsi on her intelligence ... and her prettiness. The surprised Mma Makutsi says she has no doubt that Patricia will win the contest.

## Chapters 16 and 17 Analysis

The parallel investigations continue in this section, again with the operatives of the No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency drawing closer to the truths at the heart of their respective investigations. An interesting aspect of those truths manifests in the metaphorically significant contemplation of scorpions at the beginning of chapter sixteen, a section that foreshadows the discovery of the human "scorpion" in the home of the Government Man's brother (i.e., the cook) and the emotional "scorpion" (i.e., vanity and selfishness) behind the beauty of Motlamedi. There is also, perhaps, a metaphoric reference to the "scorpion" of depression at work in Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni. Meanwhile, the narrative repeats its thematic contention that a degree of minor deceit is forgivable, perhaps even admirable, when used as a tactic to uncover a truth. Specifically, Mma Ramotswe perpetrates such a deceit when she says she saw the cook poisoning the food (when she didn't). It's interesting to note, however, that Mma Makutsi abandons her use of deceit and does nothing but tell the truth (albeit not the entire truth) when she meets and interviews Patricia. This may happen for the same reason as Mma Ramotswe ultimately decides to not trick Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni into taking his medication. In both cases, there seems to be a connection of spirit, an unspoken respect for the truth, that short circuits any intent and/or desire for falsehood.

In chapter seventeen, the narrative returns to its thematically central consideration of the nature of morality, with its commentary on how there seems to be one set of morality for men, and one for women. Here the narrative comes close to making the thematic suggestion that there should be no differences in morality at all, that everyone should be related to as though they were of equal value and everyone has the best interests of everyone else at the forefront of their perceptions and actions. The point is not made explicitly but rather by implication, one supported by the appearance of the near saintly Patricia, whose qualities seem almost too good to be true but which do support the narrative's central contention that appearances should not be the only trigger for judgment. In other words, she's beautiful, but unlike the other beautiful girls in the book, she is also moral. This premise, that appearances (to coin a phrase) can be deceiving, is borne out by the comments made by Patricia and her mother about Mma Makutsi's beauty which, in addition to reiterating the novel's questioning of what beauty actually is, echoes a thematic point evident in the characters of, of all things, the apprentices. They have proven themselves capable of the sort of change promised (and hoped for) by Mma Ramotswe, and have, by undergoing those changes, been a component of change arising in Mma Makutsi. In other words, the best has been awakened in both of them.



# Chapters 18 and 19

## Chapters 18 and 19 Summary

"The First Step". Narration describes how Mma Ramotswe spoke to the members of the Government Man's family, then drove back home, past fields and landscapes newly refreshed and renewed with rain. She stops at the house on Zebra Drive, where she is greeted happily by the children (who are full of news about exciting happenings at school) and by Rose (who gives her some lunch and tells her that Mma Makutsi needs to speak with her right away). Mma Ramotswe immediately telephones Mma Makutsi, who tells her that the agency has just received a large fee as the result of the successful resolution of a case. Before Mma Makutsi can go much further, Mma Ramotswe tells her to call the Government Man and make an appointment for a meeting that afternoon. Mma Ramotswe then hurries into the agency, and is happy to see how busy the apprentices are. She is even more happy when one of them asks after Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni. She then gets some of the details of her case from Mma Makutsi but not all, as they have to prepare for the arrival of the Government Man. Eventually, the Government Man does arrive, speaking arrogantly to Mma Ramotswe and ignoring Mma Makutsi completely. Mma Ramotswe tells him that unless he apologizes to them both, he can leave and not know the truth of what happened on the farm. Reluctantly, he does apologize. Mma Ramotswe then tells him a story - of a first born son who simultaneously loves, and is jealous of, his younger brother, so much so that he begins to imagine all sorts of negative things about the younger man's family. When the investigator hired by the first born son looks into those things, she discovers the truth - that the first born has, in fact, alienated his family, inadvertently and out of jealousy and fear ... fear, she adds, that has made the first born arrogant. She also tells him that the members of the first born's family all love him, promise to treat him with respect, and would welcome him for a visit so they can all talk together. After she's finished her story, the Government Man puts his hands to his face. "Do not be ashamed to cry, Rra", says Mma Ramotswe. "It is the way that things begin to get better. It is the first step."

"The Words for Africa". The chapter begins with the narrative comment that "there was rain over the next four days", and further comments on how the country, both its land and its people, were renewed. Narration also describes how business at the garage is so good that Mma Makutsi has to hire another part time mechanic. When she asks Mma Ramotswe when Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni will be back, Mma Ramotswe says he must have all the time he needs, and shouldn't be rushed. She then drives out to the orphan farm to pay him a visit, but first visits with Mma Potokwane, who tells Mma Ramotswe that Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni is slowly getting better, and has been spending time with the silent wild boy. The women discuss the possibility that the boy may, like some children they thought only existed in stories, have been raised by animals, and wonder what would happen to him if their beliefs were ever made public. They agree to stay quiet, with Mma Potokwane wondering whether there are times when ignorance is wise and Mma Ramotswe promising to think about that in detail some other time. Later, Mma Ramotswe takes Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni out for a drive, and is pleased to see that he is



more responsive and takes more interest in his surroundings. At first, he refuses to climb a hill with her, but she insists, and after a short walk, they stand atop a rock overlooking Mochudi, the city where Mma Ramotswe was born and where she grew up. "Mma Ramotswe stood quite still", narration comments, "a woman on a rock in Africa, which was who, and where, she wanted to be." She sees Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni smiling, and suggests he might be feeling a little better. Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni nods.

## Chapters 18 and 19 Analysis

The first point to note about this section is how it develops the narrative's metaphorically significant reference to rain. The second point to note is how Mma Ramotswe's actions, in talking with the family and with the Government Man, embody the principle referred to in the quote on p. 190 - specifically, her suggestion that people change as the result of having the best in them reawakened. Her conversations with everyone involved in that particular mystery seem, albeit to varying degrees, to have woken up the best (i.e., honesty and love) in each of them. Enaction of this belief system, or practice, can also be seen in the way Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni seems to be returning to better emotional health. Mma Ramotswe has, by her compassion-defined action, reawakened the best in him. The third point to note about this section is how the value of compassion is pointed out by contrast - specifically, the contrast supplied by, and dramatized in, the experience of the mute wild boy. The best efforts, the most compassionate efforts, of Mr., Mma Ramotswe and Mma Potokwane are not enough to bring the boy out of whatever shell his mind and spirit have taken refuge in. In other words, their failure with the boy highlights the success they've had in the investigations and in helping to heal Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni

Finally, it's interesting to consider the book's final moments, with their passing but potent contemplation on the nature/value of self-identity and integrity. One of the hallmarks of Mma Ramotswe's character is that she is so strong, so self assured and yet willing to question her beliefs and grow from that questioning, and so connected with her identity. This, perhaps more than anything, is the morality the narrative seems to be espousing, a confident yet flexible connection to an experience of justice, of right and wrong, of honesty, of integrity, and of flowing, genuine feeling ... anchored in the past, functional in the present, and looking squarely but vulnerably into the future.

# Characters

## Precious Ramotswe

Precious Ramotswe, in her mid-thirties and (as the narrative calls it) "traditionally built" (i.e., plump and solid) is the novel's central character, and indeed the central character of all the books in the No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency series. Interestingly, however, while her determination and compassion both brought the Agency into existence and continue to define the work it does, her presence in the narrative is somewhat less than it is in some of the others. This is because her life is expanding in scope - she now has Mr. Mma Makutsi, and the two children (Motholeli and Puso) to concern herself with. She is still an independent woman, still very much herself, but she is finding that she no longer has to rely only on herself, or be solely responsible FOR, herself. It could be argued that in some ways she is even more of a modern woman than she was in the previous books, struggling like so many women to find the balance between work and home life.

Up to this point in the series, Mma Ramotswe had been a woman fairly rare in her culture, owning and successfully running her own business in a world and society still dominated by maleness. She was, however, and in many ways still is, simply being herself (as the narrative repeatedly suggests, someone who cannot walk away from suffering). Now, however, she is assimilating and blending what appears, even to her, as somewhat contradictory aspects of her life - a relationship and family that require her time and which she enjoys, co-existing with work away from that home and family that, in many ways, defined and cemented her sense of identity. But what's important about Precious Ramotswe, and what makes her such a memorable and engaging character, is that she reconciles these aspects of her life through her connection with a core aspect of identity - her previously discussed compassion, her inability to ignore suffering. In other words, she is able to accommodate so much because she has so much compassion-defined capacity to care.

## Grace Makutsi

Grace Makutsi is Mma Ramotswe's assistant at the No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency. Efficient and ambitious, intellectual and unsure of herself in many ways, she is simultaneously an engaging narrative contrast and an effective professional complement to Mma Ramotswe. Mma Makutsi plays an important role in the narrative's thematic contemplations of beauty and morality, in that she sees herself as both unattractive and moral, but later discovers that while she is still moral, she is also considered attractive. In Mma Makutsi's reactions to the events of the narrative, the novel seems to be suggesting that physical and moral attractiveness are not necessarily mutually exclusive.



## **Richard Makutsi**

Glimpsed only in one scene, Richard is Grace Makutsi's brother, ill with an unnamed fatal illness that is, in all likelihood, AIDS, an illness that continues to ravage the black populations of Africa. His very brief appearance (not to mention his relationship with his sister as portrayed in that appearance) emphasizes the novel's apparently central thematic comment on the power, value, and sacrifice associated with compassion.

## **Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni**

Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni is Mma Ramotswe's fiancé, the owner and chief mechanic at Tlokweng Road Speedy Motors. His quiet devotion, deep respect, and profound love for her that were on display in previous books and which earned her trust after a particularly torturous first marriage are somewhat muted in this book, as the result of his becoming afflicted with depression. As previously discussed, the portrayal of Mr.'s illness is particularly noteworthy in that he is portrayed as being vulnerable and wounded by a non-physical ailment, significant in a culture where men, the narrative suggests, are perceived as/expected to be strong and silent.

## **Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni's Apprentices**

The two young men who work for Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni at Tlokweng Road Speedy Motors are portrayed as being somewhat lazy, foolish, rude, and obsessed with girls and parties. Over the course of the narrative, however, and in response to the firm managerial style of Mma Makutsi, they become more efficient and more respectful. There seems to be an aspect of the novel's thematic focus on compassion here - or rather, on compassion as a manifestation of integrity. Specifically, Mma Makutsi treats the apprentices with a firm, no-nonsense integrity that seems to awaken, in them, a new sense of respect. It may be that with the transformation, albeit limited, of the apprentices, the narrative is suggesting that integrity, in all its forms and manifestations, is and/or should be a core value.

## **Rose, Motholeli, Puso**

Rose is Mma Ramotswe's maid, a competent and efficient single mother whose presence in Mma Ramotswe's household is another manifestation of the latter's compassion. In other words, the presence of this relatively minor character is, to some degree, a manifestation of one of the narrative's key themes. Motholeli and Puso are two children adopted by Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni over the course of events in a previous novel, and make their home with Mma Ramotswe. Motholeli is in a wheelchair, but nevertheless manages to act as something of a housekeeper in Mma Ramotswe's house on Zebra Drive. She is a component of the novel's contemplation of the nature of beauty and its relationship to morality. Puso, meanwhile, who is glimpsed only briefly





but is clearly portrayed as somewhat troubled, can be seen whose experience parallels that, at least to some degree of the Wild Boy.

## **The Wild Boy**

The Wild Boy is found living in the bush. Naked, mute, and smelling at first of lion, his true identity is never revealed, but he is suspected of having been abandoned by his family.

## **Mma Potokwane**

Mma Potokwane is the administrator of the Orphans Home where Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni first came in contact with Motholeli and Puso, and where the Wild Boy is taken after he is found in the bush. No-nonsense and firm, Mma Potokwane's profound compassion, and respect for those who have similar compassion (like the pre-depression Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni and Mma Ramotswe) make her a character who, to a significant degree, manifests and illuminates the narrative's thematic emphasis on compassion.

## **Dr. Moffat**

Dr. Moffat is an old friend of Mma Ramotswe's family, and provides important information to her on the condition of Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni. His compassion is perhaps more professional and a bit more austere than that of the other characters, but he is still defined and motivated by the same things that motivate, in particular, Mma Ramotswe, Mma Potokwane and Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni - a desire to ease suffering.

## **The Government Man and his Family**

As portrayed by the narrative, the unnamed Government Man appears to be one of the most important clients the No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency has ever had. As impressed with his own status as he expects everyone else to be, he is imperious, somewhat rude, and a bit unpleasant. All this, however, is eventually revealed to be a mask for a profound vulnerability and fear, making his experience quite similar to that of other male characters whose exterior manner conceals a significant vulnerability. Meanwhile, he visits the Agency in the hopes that Mma Ramotswe will be able to get to the truth of what he sees as trouble in his family - in particular, with his brother, their mother, and his brother's new wife. None of these characters are named either, a situation which suggests (as previously discussed) that on some level, all the members of the family define themselves more by the Government Man's status and opinions than anything else. Once the Government Man and his family are confronted with what Mma Ramotswe believes to be the truth of their situation, however, they all come to realize that there is more to be gained from compassionately respecting one another than there is from fearfully reacting to vulnerability with self-isolation.



## **The Maid, the Cook**

These two servants in the home of the Government Man's family provide Mma Ramotswe with the crucial information she needs to gain insight into the family's situation. The Maid tells her what she sees, and has come to understand, about the family's relationships and attitudes, while the Cook's confession of his unhappiness, and of what that unhappiness drove him to do, leads Mma Ramotswe to the truth.

## **Note Mokoti, Obed Ramotswe**

These two men played important roles in Mma Ramotswe's past. Mokoti was her abusive husband, Obed her gentle, loving, respectful father. The narrative refers several times to both their actions and their impact, making them and their presence central to the book's exploration of a secondary theme - the relationship between past and present.

## **Moemedi Pulani**

Pulani is the self-styled "Chief Justice of Beauty", the founder and producer of The Miss Beauty and Integrity Contest. He is, in his own way, as pleased with himself as the Government Man, but appears to have a stronger, more responsible and more sensitive connection to a sense of humanity beneath the flashiness.



# Objects/Places

## Africa

Africa is referred to several times throughout the narrative as being troubled in many ways (economically, socially, politically, militarily) but still a beautiful place to live and a trigger, for many of the characters, of a powerful sense of home and identity.

## Botswana

The novel is set in this relatively new African republic, its sense of progressiveness and integrity serving as a source of both pride and inspiration for Mma Ramotswe.

## Gaborone

Gaborone is Botswana's capital city, a relatively prosperous and progressive community in which the novel's two main business establishments, the No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency and Tlokweng Road Speedy Motors, have been established.

## The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency

The Agency, established and run by Mma Ramotswe, is the only female-run detective agency in Botswana, and perhaps even in Africa. It specializes in relatively small, but nonetheless personally significant, investigations.

## Tlokweng Road Speedy Motors

This garage, owned and operated by Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni, has a history of being somewhat inconsistent in its business success. Over the course of the narrative, however, and as the result of the professional management of Mma Makutsi, the garage becomes so busy (with its emerging emphasis on taking care of the cars of ladies) that another part time mechanic has to be hired.

## The House on Zebra Drive

This is Mma Ramotswe's home. Quiet, cozy and well cared for, it is a source of quiet pride for Mma Ramotswe that she owns it on her own terms, and that she is able to make a comfortable, welcoming place to live for so many - herself, Rose, Motholeli and Puso, and eventually Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni. It is, perhaps, an externalization and/or manifestation of the compassion that so thoroughly and deeply defines both Mma Ramotswe and her work.



## **The Government Man's Farm**

Mma Ramotswe visits this prosperous cattle ranch, a short drive away from Gaborone, at the request of the Government Man, who hopes once and for all to find out the truth of what's going on between his brother and his new wife. In addition, the sights and sounds of the farm trigger wistful, longing memories of Mma Ramotswe's father, also a rancher, and a good one, but one who never quite achieved the economic status of the Government Man and his family.

## **The Orphan Farm**

Also a short drive of Gaborone, the Orphan Farm is where Mma Potokwane lives and works, trying to find/create new lives for abandoned young people. It's possible to see its presence in the narrative as a telling, thematically relevant contrast to the farm of the Government Man with life at the former being defined by compassion and patience, and life at the latter, at least at first, being defined by suspicion and resentment.

## **The Miss Beauty and Integrity Contest**

Established and run by Moemedi Pulani, the Miss Beauty and Integrity Contest is intended to suggest and highlight the idea that beauty and integrity are not mutually exclusive. As such, it is a clear embodiment and/or manifestation of the narrative's two main themes, examining the natures of beauty and morality.

## **The Poisoned Stew**

The stew served to the Government Man's family, and to their guest Mma Ramotswe, proves to be a catalyst for Mma's realization of the truth of what's going on at the Government Man's farm. Lightly poisoned by the Cook in an effort to get himself fired from a job he hates, the toxicity of his stew could possibly be seen as a metaphoric representation of the toxicity of the jealousy, fear and resentment at work in the lives of the Government Man and his family.



# Themes

## The Nature of Morality

On many levels, this appears to be the narrative's central thematic concern, as two of its central characters (Mma Ramotswe, Mma Makutsi) and at least one of its larger supporting characters (Moemidi Pulani) have questions of morality on their minds. It's important to note, at this point, that while much of the narrative's consideration of morality is framed within the context of its relationship to beauty, particularly when it comes to Pulani (see below), the bulk of the narrative's examination of the question takes place outside that context. Examples include Mma Ramotswe's consideration of whether it's moral to lie to Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni (she decides it isn't), whether it's moral to lie to the family of the Government Man (she decides it is), and Mma Makutsi's consideration of whether it's moral to lie to the pageant contestants (she starts out believing it is, but then changes her mind). As previously discussed, the narrative seems to suggest that it is moral to lie in pursuit of a greater good (this is why Mma Ramotswe even considers lying to Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni, the "greater good" being his health), but draws the line at lying to those with whom there is already a relationship of trust, or the potential of trust. The narrative never actually states it explicitly, but it's reasonable to infer that this is the reason why Mma Ramotswe doesn't lie to Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni, and why Mma Makutsi decides to not lie to the evidently trustworthy, and trusting, Patricia.

## The Nature of Beauty

As mentioned above, the narrative frequently entwines its considerations of the nature of morality with considerations of its relationship to beauty, frequently suggesting that physical beauty and morality are mutually exclusive. In several circumstances, however, the narrative takes the question a degree or two further, making the suggestion that physical beauty is not the only sort of beauty to be considered. There is, for example, the comment quoted on p. 114, in which Mma Ramotswe wonders how someone like Mma Makutsi, who is not conventionally beautiful, could still command the attention of the apprentices, who seem almost entirely obsessed with physically beautiful women.

The most vivid example of this idea of multiple perspectives on beauty, however, occurs late in the narrative, in chapter seventeen. Mma Makutsi, who has lied during her previous investigations of the beauty pageant contestants, has an instinctive sense that contestant Patricia, while beautiful, is an essentially moral girl, and as a result tells the truth. The narrative juxtaposes this decision with the almost immediately subsequent comment that Mma Makutsi is beautiful, something she is used to neither hearing nor believing about herself. In this juxtaposition, the novel draws a very clear connection between morality and spiritual beauty, and if the reader backspaces this connection to other points in the novel, and indeed the entire series of books, s/he can find similar implications, particularly when it comes to Mma Ramotswe. She is rarely, if ever, described as beautiful, but is frequently described and/or reacted to as attractive. Part of



this has to do with her "traditional" build (i.e., somewhat overweight) and her contentment with it. It has more to do, however, with her habit of looking for the good in people, sensing the danger to that good when there is suffering in play, and choosing to act in order to preserve, recognize, support and/or sustain that good. This, in turn, leads to the novel's third major theme, the value and necessity of compassion.

## Gaborone

Gaborone is Botswana's capital city, a relatively prosperous and progressive community in which the novel's two main business establishments, the No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency and Tlokweng Road Speedy Motors, have been established.

## The Necessity for, and Value of, Compassion

Described throughout the novel, both beauty and morality are defined in terms of compassion. In other words, compassion makes people moral and/or beautiful. According to the novel, in fact, morality based in compassion is beauty. Interestingly, the word is rarely (if ever) actually used, but the concept is at the heart of virtually everything Mma Ramotswe does, and of many actions taken by many of the other characters. In the case of the former, narration repeatedly comments on how Mma Ramotswe cannot bear to see other people suffering. This is, in effect, a definition of compassion, the feeling of sympathy and/or empathy that drives Mma Ramotswe to take virtually every case that comes her way (it is, after all, some form of suffering that brings every client to the agency), and to offer what help she can to everyone, friend or family or stranger, that she encounters. Her compassion for Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni leads her to consider the extreme action of lying to him, but then makes her realize that she cannot damage the trust that exists between the two of them. Her compassion for Motholeli and Puso is profoundly evident, to the reader and to Mma Potokwane ... a compassion, incidentally, shared by Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni, who is only one of several characters who also enact that feeling. There is also Mma Makutsi's compassion for her dying brother, the nurse's simultaneous compassion for him, Motholeli's compassion for her brother, the Government Man's misguided but genuine compassion for his brother, and his mother's equally misguided but equally genuine compassion for his mentally deficient brother. All are examples of the narrative's primary thematic contention that compassion should be the ultimate, governing human feeling and/or sensibility.

# Style

## Point of View

For the most part, the narrative unfolds from the third person, omniscient point of view; that is, from the perspective of a narrator who is able to discern and comment on the thoughts of all the characters. The point is not made to suggest that each chapter is defined by the perspectives of a number of characters, but rather to point out that at various/successive times in the narrative, various individual perspectives are the focus. A good example can be found in the latter half of the novel, where chapters that follow Mma Ramotswe's investigation alternate with chapters following the investigations of Mma Makutsi. Each chapter focuses on, and is defined by, the actions, reactions, insights and contemplations of each of the characters.

A particularly interesting manifestation of this technique can be found in chapter seven, which contains a mid-chapter shift in point of view. The first part of the chapter is narrated from the third person perspective of Mma Ramotswe, but when Motholeli begins to read her story, the point of view shifts to the first person point of view with which the story was/is written - in other words, Motholeli's perspective. In the final moments of the chapter, the narrative perspective shifts yet again, revealing and commenting on the perspectives of the three people who heard that story - Mma Ramotswe, Rose, and Puso.

There are two main benefits of this shifting point of view. First, it keeps the reader involved and curious, wondering whose perspective is going to be the focus next. Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, it reveals the thematic similarities in the actions and experiences of each of the characters, the commonalities within the differences (i.e., seeing Mma Ramotswe's and Mma Makutsi's different reactions to the same questions of morality).

## Setting

All the books in "The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency" series are set in Botswana, one of the newer republics in Africa. There are several values to this setting. First, it's somewhat exotic (to Western readers, the prime audience for this sort of novel), and therefore engaging. Second, because Africa is widely regarded as one of the most economically disadvantaged of the continents, the setting provides a subtext of obstacle against which the characters struggle, a national experience/manifestation of the sort of suffering Mma Ramotswe cannot bear to leave untended. Third, and as the narrative points out (particularly when Mma Ramotswe reflects upon it), Botswana as a country is a country whose very existence is defined by the sort of independence, clear mindedness, and compassionate morality that defines her own belief systems and practices. In other words, and as the final moments of the novel express, she is very much a "child" of her home - her national home (she is also a child of the home



provided by her father, but that's less relevant to this particular conversation). A related point is the sense that, at the point in its history in which the novel is set (the early 2000's), Botswana is continuing to change, customs and practices and belief systems evolving and widening in the same way as Mma Ramotswe's are. Again, Mma Ramotswe is a child of, and manifestation of, the spirit of her home. Her personal belief systems change and expand, her business expands, the role of her employees, family and friends expands - all in the same way that Botswana as a country is expanding. There are implications in the narrative, in fact, that Mma Ramotswe has hopes that the continent will "expand" as well.

## Language and Meaning

For the most part, the language of the writing is simultaneously evocative and unchallenging. There are no obscure images, although there are some clear, and effective, metaphors that, where they are particularly effective, gently enhance the piece's overall thematic focus on compassion, and the hope that arises from an experience of compassion. There is, in fact, very little that is heavy handed or obvious about any of the narrative's thematic considerations. There is the sense that meaning can be, or is intended to be, gleaned through interpretation and intuition, through the reader's understanding rather than the author's lecturing. It could be argued, in fact, that the possibility of any sort of metaphorical sensibility at all, the possibility of any meaning to a book of the mystery genre other than the question of whodunit is an important component of why the series has become, and continues to be, so engaging and popular. Meanwhile, the long-standing and perhaps habitual and engaging idiosyncrasies established early in the series remain - the interjections of traditionally used names and comments, the language of the geography and plant life, and the habit of consistently referring to Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni by his initials and last name. There is also the sense that at just the right time and in just the right place, the author knows when/how to turn the screws of suspense, to crank up the mystery that keeps the readers turning pages and which is the ostensible reason for the series. That said, there is also the sense that the vocabulary used in the writing of the book is just slightly more advanced than that used in previous books in the series. There was a certain freshly colloquial sensibility about the earlier books, a sense of relaxation in the language that seems to have been tightened up in "Morality for Beautiful Girls" - not off-putting in any way, just a little more ... dictionaried.

## Structure

As previously discussed, the novel seems intended to fall within certain recognized, traditional parameters of the mystery genre. There is a puzzle for the central character to solve, a complex web of characters, motivations, and concealed truths to sort through, a surprising confrontation or two, chapters ending on cliffhanging notes of peril or indecision, an ultimate revelation of truth. These parameters are clearly laid out in the novel's structure, although they are somewhat more loosely followed than they might be in other novels of the genre - in other words, the narrative takes occasional, if



thematically relevant and narratively engaging, diversions into more character-oriented circumstances.

It's important to note, however, that this entry into the "No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency" series follows these parameters twice - in the mystery investigated by Mma Ramotswe, and in the mystery investigated by Mma Makutsi. This practice of having the central characters engage in the solving of more than one mystery is common to all the books in the series, and has both a practical and thematic function. In terms of the former, the multiple mysteries can be seen as a straightforward manifestation of how the business works - a detective agency is, after all, likely to have more than one project on the go at the same time. Also in terms of practicality, having more than one mystery in progress increases the likelihood that the reader will become, and remain involved. In terms of thematic function, this multiplicity of plotlines simultaneously offers a multiplicity of opportunities to explore the same theme in different contexts - in this case, the thematic questions of the nature of morality, the nature of beauty, and the value of compassion.



## Quotes

"Traditional marriages, in which the man made all the decisions and controlled most of the household assets, were all very well for women who wanted to spend their time cooking and looking after children, but times had changed, and for educated women who wanted to make something of their lives, it was undoubtedly better for both spouses to have something to do."

Chap. 1, pp. 3-4

"Doubt could be preferable to sure knowledge if the difference between the two was a large sum of money."

Chap. 1, p. 8

"Mma Ramotswe ... had never been able to see unhappiness and not do something about it. It was a difficult quality for a private detective to have, as there was so much unhappiness entailed in her work, but she could not harden her heart, however much she tried."

Chap. 1, p. 17

"It was a good thing to be an African. There were terrible things that happened in Africa, things that brought shame and despair when one thought about them, but ... however great the suffering of the people of Africa, however harrowing the cruelty and chaos brought about by soldiers ... there was still ... the kindness ... and the ability to smile, and the art and the music."

Chap. 3, p. 29

"In traditional society, she would not have looked so hard into the eyes of a man of his rank ... but times had changed, and she was a citizen of the modern Republic of Botswana, where there was a constitution which guaranteed the dignity of all citizens, lady private detectives among them."

Chap. 5, p. 60

" 'I am good with typewriters, and one machine is very much like another, don't you think?'"

Chap. 6, p. 70

"Slavery had been a great wrong perpetrated against Africa, but there had always been willing African slavers, who sold their own people, and there were still vast legions of Africans working for a pittance in conditions of near slavery. These people were quiet people, weak people, and the domestic servants were among them."

Chap. 7, p. 75

"Can one be the friend of a person who behaves badly? Or is the case that bad people can only have bad friends, because only other bad people will have sufficient in common with them to be friends?"

Chap. 7, p. 75



"[W]hen it came to her maid ... [the woman] seemed to have little concern for her feelings. It occurred to Mma Ramotswe that such behavior was no more than ignorance; an inability to understand the hopes and aspirations of others. That understanding, thought Mma Ramotswe, was the beginning of morality."

Chap. 7, p. 77

"Most morality, thought Mma Ramotswe, was about doing the right thing because it had been identified as such by a long process of acceptance and observance. You simply could not create your own morality because your experience would never be enough to do so. What gives you the right to say you know better than your ancestors? ... that was what made the modern morality, with its emphasis on individuals and the working out of an individual position, so weak."

Chap. 7, pp. 77-78

"The boy ... thought: I am a lucky boy to have such a clever sister. I hope that God will give her back her legs one day. Mma Ramotswe ... thought: I will look after this child. I am now her mother. Rose, who had been listening from the corridor ... thought: What a strange way of putting it: three lives".

Chap. 7, p. 86

"Mma Ramotswe reread the passage, her spirits rising gloriously as she did so. A book on depression might not normally be expected to have that effect on the reader, but it did now."

Chap. 8, p. 95

"It was not uncommon to be connected to somebody in Botswana, a lesson which foreigners were quick to learn when they realized that if they made a critical remark of somebody they were inevitably speaking to that person's distant cousin."

Chap. 9, p. 101

"Mma Ramotswe accepted her large slice of cake and looked at the rich fruit within it. There were at least seven hundred calories in that, she thought, but it did not matter; she was a traditionally built lady and she did not have to worry about such things."

Chap. 9, p. 103

"Mma Ramotswe noticed, with approval, how clean the house was. She knew how much hard work there would be in this woman; throughout the country there were women who worked and worked and who were rarely given any praise. Politicians claimed the credit for building Botswana, but how dare they? How dare they claim the credit for all the hard work of people like Mma Kerileng, and women like her?"

Chap. 9, p. 105

"Mma Makutsi was not beautiful in a conventional sense ... yet here was this person who would never have got into round one of a beauty competition, commanding the slavish attentions of these two notoriously difficult young men. It was very puzzling."

Chap. 10, p. 114



"Mma Ramotswe liked to help everybody, no matter what their station was in life. She had often been out of pocket on a case, simply because she could not refuse to help a person in need. This is what I am called to do, she said to herself. I must help whomsoever asks for my help. That is my duty: to help other people with the problems in their lives."

Chap. 10, p. 116

"She did not like the idea of using underhand methods with Mr., but when a person's reason was disturbed, then she thought that any means were justified in getting them better. It was as if a person had been kidnapped by some evil being and held ransom. You would not hesitate, she felt to resort to trickery to defeat the evil being. In her view, that was perfectly in line with the old Botswana morality, or indeed with any other sort of morality."

Chap. 11, p. 130

"Could [Motholeli] be a mother in a wheelchair? It would probably be impossible to bear a child if one could not walk ... and even if it were possible, she was not sure that any man would want to marry a woman in a wheelchair. It was very unfair, but you could not hide your face from the truth. It would always be more difficult for that girl, always."

Chap. 12, p. 139

"There would be a wind soon, and with it would come that wonderful, unmistakable smell of rain, that smell of dust and water meeting that lingered for a few seconds in the nostrils and then was gone, and would be missed, sometimes for months, before the next time that it caught you and made you stop ..."

Chap. 14, p. 172

"You can cultivate your mind, or you can cultivate your hairstyle. But you cannot do both."

Chap. 15, p. 185

"People did not change a great deal. Mma Ramotswe had said that ... once and it had stuck in her mind. People do not change, but that does not mean that they will always remain the same. What you can do is find out the good side of their character and then bring that out."

Chap. 15, p. 190

"There was a world beneath the world inhabited by ordinary, law-abiding people; a world of selfishness and mistrust occupied by scheming and manipulative people. One had to check one's shoes."

Chap. 16, p. 193

"The difficulty was that good girls were unlikely to enter a beauty competition in the first place. It was, in general, not the sort of thing that good girls thought of doing ... it would not be very useful to say that all the girls were as bad as one another, that none of them were worthy of the title."

Chap. 17, p. 204



"Women, as usual, were expected to behave better than men, and inevitably attracted criticism for doing things that men were licensed to do with impunity. It was not fair; it had never been fair, and it would probably never be fair in the future."

Chap. 17. p. 207

"When there was no rain, you thought about it, hardly daring to hope for the miracle to begin. And when the rain came, all you could think about was how long it would last. God is crying. God is crying for this country. See, children, there are his tears. The rain is his tears. That is what the teacher ... had said one day, when she was young, and she had remembered her words."

Chap. 17, p. 209

"The fact that the apprenticed had asked [after Mr.] was a good sign. It suggested that he was beginning to take an interest in the welfare of others. Perhaps he was growing up. Perhaps it was something to do with Mma Makutsi, who might have been teaching them a bit about morality as well as a bit about hard work."

Chap. 18, p. 216

"It is sometimes easier to be happy if you don't know everything."

Chap. 19, p. 225



## Topics for Discussion

Discuss the symbolic relationship between rain and the events of the narrative. What does rain symbolize? How does it relate to the experiences of the characters? In this context, also consider references to dryness - in particular, the title to chapter fourteen and how it metaphorically relates to that chapter's content.

Do you agree with the quote from p. 225? Why or why not?

Discuss the parallels (in situation, in action, and in reaction) between the experiences and attitudes of the unnamed Boy, Mr., Richard Makutsi, and the Government Man.

Consider the titles of the various chapters. The meanings of many (such as, for example, chapter two) are fairly straightforward. Others, however, are more metaphorical and/or thematically evocative. Discuss which chapter titles fall into the former category and which fall into the latter, commenting briefly on the metaphorical relationship between the title in question and the content of the chapter it heads.

Discuss the nature of morality. What determines morality? How is morality enacted? In what ways are there different sorts of morality for different people and/or different situations? Is there a single morality that applies to everyone?

Discuss the nature of beauty. How much societal and/or moral value is placed on physical beauty? How much on spiritual and/or intellectual beauty? Which is valued more? Why? What do you value more? Why? What would you suggest are the consequences of valuing one over the other? What would you suggest are the rewards?

What is the relationship, in your experience and opinion, between beauty and morality?

The narrative makes the clear statement that small falsehoods entered into the pursuit of a greater good are often both necessary and valid. Do you agree with this contention? Why or why not?

Do you agree with Mma Ramotswe's choice to not report the cook to the police? Why or why not? What question and/or aspect of morality, and specifically her morality, is at work in her decision?