

READER's GUIDE - CHAPTER QUESTIONS

Discussion & Reflection Questions for the Book

Authors: Cherie Lutes, Jalynn Bacon-Dorow & M.T New

Chapter 1: Wintershoek – Where It All Began

1. How did growing up on a South African farm shape the author's habits, values, and character?
2. How did the author's close bond with a black nanny and friendships with farm workers' children influence his views on race and social justice?
3. What key life lessons did the author learn from his grandfather and father?
4. In what ways did the wilderness and natural surroundings influence his future decisions and career path?
5. How did his father's quirky lessons—like the bull urine whistling trick—shape the author's sense of humor and mischievous nature? What other lessons stood out to you?
6. Why did the author's father restrict him to only three cartridges a day when hunting? What was the intended lesson?
7. The African saying "Time waits for no man" is mentioned. What does it mean to you, and how did the author use it in the narrative?
8. The author references "hiraeth," a deep longing for a place that no longer exists. Did this reflection on childhood stir any personal emotions or memories for you?

Chapter 2: Mowbray Road – 154 Greenside, Johannesburg

1. How did the lingering tensions between English and Afrikaners after the Boer War affect the author, especially in light of differing views between his father and grandfather?
2. Looking back as an adult, who most significantly influenced the author's beliefs and worldview?

Chapter 3: Growing Up in Pretoria

1. After a nearly fatal childhood shooting accident during a "Boer War" game, how did the adults respond? How does this compare to how similar incidents would be handled today in the U.S.?

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2. The author had significant freedom as a child, often facing danger and making tough choices. Did this freedom help or hinder his development into adulthood? How did it shape his character?

Chapter 4: The Rolex

1. How did the author's passion for racing homing pigeons and his desire to buy a Rolex become a lesson in patience, responsibility, and financial discipline?
2. After losing the prized watch while lobster diving, the author didn't give up. How did this moment reflect a pattern in how he faces loss and adversity throughout his life?

Chapter 5: The Stampede

1. When the author's father saved them during a Cape Buffalo stampede, what lesson in experience and decision-making emerged? Have you ever faced a near-death situation that taught you something important?

Chapter 6: The Puff Adder Bite

1. After being bitten by a venomous snake, the author's father—despite being a medical expert—chose not to use anti-venom. How did this affect the author's perception of trust, risk, and respect for his father?

Chapter 7: Mixed Messages During Apartheid

1. As a teen, the author struggled with the contradiction of considering black laborers as friends, while society treated them as lesser. How did these mixed messages during Apartheid influence his adult views on justice?
2. What are your thoughts on the Apartheid-era requirement for black adults to carry a "dompas" (passbook)? Was this an invasion of privacy or a form of control?
3. Although Helen Suzman opposed Apartheid, she disagreed with some of Mandela's revolutionary methods. Why do you think he still paid tribute to her legacy?

Chapter 8: Brothers

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1. What are your thoughts on South Africa's compulsory national military draft, where all males must register after high school or defer until after completing college? Do you think such a requirement is fair or effective?
2. Louis considered Lou more than a friend—he was like a brother, having lived with the family for most of their childhood after losing his parents. How did you feel when Louis's mother forced Lou to leave their home? Do you believe her struggle with alcoholism influenced this heartbreaking decision?
3. Should Louis's father have intervened or supported Lou financially with his education? What responsibilities do you think adults have in such situations?
4. How did this decision to remove Lou from the household affect Louis's relationship with his mother moving forward?
5. When Louis witnessed his mother fall unconscious into the pool, he hesitated for a full minute before saving her. Why do you think he paused? Could her history of addiction and questionable choices—like giving most of her possessions and wealth to the church—explain Louis's conflicted feelings, including his decision to block her inheritance of land? Was he justified?
6. After 39 years apart, Louis was finally reunited with Lou thanks to the internet and Facebook. What were your thoughts and emotions while reading about this long-awaited reunion?

Chapter 9: The “Gofer” at Bombusi

1. As a teenager, Louis faced a life-altering moment when he shot his first elephant—a haunting and pivotal experience. How did this scene affect you as a reader? Were you shocked by the unexpected charge from the second elephant? In your opinion, what inner strength, instincts, or external forces helped him survive?

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2. Louis's father once compelled him to track a wounded eland for days through the bush, demanding that he take responsibility for the life he had disrupted. What do you think Louis learned from this intense and humbling experience? How did it shape his understanding of accountability, respect for animals, and the deeper meaning behind the saying, "You eat what you kill"?

Chapter 10: Pandemonium in Thabazimbi

1. One of the most haunting scenes in the book is when teenage Louis shoots his first elephant. What were your emotional reactions as you read this moment? Were you surprised by the sudden counterattack from the second elephant? What inner strength or instincts do you think helped Louis survive—and how might that moment have shaped his character going forward?
3. Louis's father insisted he track a wounded eland for days in the bush, teaching him that every action carries weight and that "you eat what you kill." What do you think this experience taught Louis about responsibility, respect for life, and the consequences of one's choices? Have you ever had a moment in your life that taught you a similarly lasting lesson?

Chapter 11: The Military Years

1. Do you think Louis made the right decision by entering military service directly after high school, rather than deferring until after college? What might have influenced his choice, and how might his life have unfolded differently had he waited?
2. The author shares graphic accounts of the war in Rhodesia, including the devastating toll on civilians. How did these stories affect you emotionally? Are there conflicts in the world today that echo similar tragedies? What parallels do you see?
3. Louis describes weeping when the Prime Minister of Rhodesia accepted majority rule—believing it would lead to control by foreign powers. What

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does this reaction tell you about Louis’s worldview and fears at the time? How did this moment reflect the political complexities of southern Africa in that era?

4. Was it justified for Louis and his fellow soldiers to “borrow” a farmer’s tractor to return from the grueling Platoon Commander Course in time—rather than hike over the treacherous Swatberge Mountains? What would you have done in their place?
5. Louis earned the respect of his entire platoon by treating everyone with fairness and dignity, culminating in a surprise celebration at the Colombo Hotel. What does this say about his leadership style and character? Have you ever experienced or witnessed a leader who inspired similar loyalty and admiration?

Chapter 12: Poachers at Buffelsfontein

1. While on leave from boarding school, Louis and his friend Muis (“Mouse”) encountered a group of dangerous poachers in the bush. What clever and courageous tactic did they use to stop the poachers—and how did it lead to them being treated as heroes? What does this episode reveal about their character, resourcefulness, and sense of justice?

Chapter 13: Enrolling at Tux (University of Pretoria)

1. After completing military service, Louis reluctantly enrolled in college. How did his friend Muis persuade him to pursue a law degree—and how did that decision unexpectedly benefit him later in life?
2. Do you believe in coincidence, serendipity, or fate? One striking example in the book is when Louis’s classmate Albert Keys met a Russian soldier who had once faced off against Louis’s father during World War II. How did that wartime encounter between enemies turn into a moment of shared humanity? What are your thoughts on the improbable nature of that connection?

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3. In South African folklore, a Jacaranda blossom falling on your head is said to bring good luck—especially around exam time. What role did this superstition play in the author’s story? What other coincidences or meaningful patterns does Louis reflect on throughout his life?

Chapter 14: Studies at UNISA and Meeting Tia

1. After his first year, the author transferred to a new university. How did his father attempt to ensure Louis stayed focused and passed all his classes? What does this reveal about their relationship and his father’s expectations?
2. Working as a messenger of the court provided the author with a steady income—enough to earn his pilot’s license while continuing his university studies. How does Louis’s journey from messenger to court clerk reflect his determination and upward momentum? What lessons can be drawn from his steady climb through hard work and perseverance?
3. In need of a date for an Officer’s Dinner, Louis met his future wife, Tia, through a friend—a chance meeting that changed the course of his life. Have you ever met someone important due to a specific event or circumstance? Do you believe such moments are guided by fate, coincidence, or something else?

Chapter 15: The Ranching Days

1. Always thinking ahead, the author convinced his father to let him manage one of the family farms—with the condition that he plant peanuts and corn on the remaining arable land. How did this opportunity pave the way for Louis to eventually purchase another ranch, expand his crops and cattle operations, and achieve greater financial success?
2. Based on the author’s descriptions of his wife and young children, did you sense a deep emotional bond among them? What moments or details stood out to you in their family dynamic?

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3. The author and his neighbor Bart Saaiman often debated the meaning of success: is it about earning the most money, or having the most freedom? What's your personal definition of success—and has it changed over time?
4. After seeing the photograph of the leopard skin, how did you react to the story of the animal's attack on the author? Did the description of the encounter change your perspective on the dangers he faced in the wild?
5. When Louis switched to growing tobacco—what he called "the devil's weed"—to earn more money, the decision ultimately marked the end of his farming and ranching chapter. Have you ever made a choice driven by financial gain that didn't turn out as expected? What did you learn from it?
6. Bart Saaiman once said, "You can run out of money, as long as you don't run out of plans." How did this motto help the author navigate setbacks and move forward in life? Do you have a personal motto or philosophy that guides you through challenges?

Chapter 16: The Hemingway Lifestyle

1. How did the author's plan to profit from laundering Rhodesian currency for a neighboring farmer turn out? What were the risks and consequences of this scheme?
2. Around this time, the author pursued qualifications to start a professional hunting business with two friends. How did his views on the ethics of trophy hunting evolve over the years?
3. The author explains how killing the largest, healthiest animal in a herd can damage the gene pool. How did this insight change your view of big game hunting?
4. What unethical hunting practices did the author witness among professional hunters that ultimately led him to leave the industry? How did reading about these practices affect you?
5. Why did the author transition from being a big game hunter to guiding and managing photographic safaris? What values or revelations influenced this major change?

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6. The author believed photographic safaris could generate more sustainable income for local communities than trophy hunting. What were his reasons for this belief, and do you agree?
7. In what ways did the author help convert former hunting zones in Botswana into photo safari-only regions? What impact did these efforts have on conservation and local economies?
8. The author speaks seven languages and considers this a key personal and cultural achievement. Why do you think he placed such importance on language? How might it have shaped his experiences across different countries and communities?

Chapter 17: Adventures in Mozambique

1. What were some of the key challenges the author faced as Director of Operations when building a hunting concession and safari camp in Mozambique? How did he navigate issues like infrastructure, logistics, or local politics?
2. Why is biltong considered an essential staple in African culture and cuisine? What role did it play in the author's life and in the broader context of survival and tradition?
3. While camping near Pemba, Mozambique, the author encountered several dangers. What were some of the most serious threats he faced in that environment, and how did he respond?
4. What ultimately brought an end to the author's involvement in hunting operations in Mozambique? What factors—personal, ethical, or political—contributed to this decision?
5. The author references living a "Hemingway lifestyle." What does this phrase imply about his choices and way of life? In what ways did this adventurous existence create tension in his marriage?
6. What led the author to resign from Southern Africa Wildlife Safari and return to law school at the age of 40? How does this turning point reflect personal growth or a shift in values?

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Chapter 18: Back at University at Age 40

1. What challenges and insights did the author face returning to higher education mid-life? How did this experience reshape his identity or future?
2. In 1960, British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan delivered his famous “Winds of Change” speech to the South African Parliament. How did those words foreshadow the political and social transformation in South Africa—and reflect the evolving course of the author’s own life?
3. How did Nelson Mandela’s leadership influence the dismantling of apartheid and the end of British colonial power structures in South Africa? How is this change mirrored in the author’s reflections on justice, equality, and national identity?

Chapter 19: Racism and Medical Studies

1. What were some of the major social and cultural tensions between the English and Afrikaners in Johannesburg during the time the author’s father attended university—first at Johannesburg University and later at Pretoria University? How might these divisions have influenced his worldview?
2. Who financed the author’s father’s medical education, and why did he feel ashamed about accepting this assistance? What does this reveal about his values and sense of pride?
3. When the author’s father tried to repay his benefactor, he was instead given a traditional African saying: *“Roll a rock out of the road of somebody who needs it.”* What is the English equivalent of this expression, and how did he live out this philosophy in his own life?
4. How did the differing political beliefs between the author and his father—particularly regarding apartheid—affect their relationship? Were these differences ever reconciled?

Chapter 20: Moving to America

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1. Although apartheid was ending in 1993, what circumstances or changes compelled the author to leave South Africa and seek a new life in the United States?
2. What were some of the most significant challenges the author faced when relocating to a different continent—culturally, professionally, and personally? How did he cope with giving up his legal career after earning a second law degree? Have you ever had to make a life-altering decision or sacrifice in pursuit of a better future?
3. How difficult was the immigration process for the author and his wife—particularly in obtaining work permits and permanent residency in the U.S.?
4. After moving to America, the author had to return to South Africa to sell their home and take temporary work. How did this separation affect him emotionally? What toll did it take on his marriage and family life?
5. The author recounts a painful betrayal by a minister and a so-called Christian friend during this time. How did this experience impact his views on organized religion?
6. What inner conflict did the author face in taking work as a salesman and later returning to safari guiding? How did he reconcile the need to provide for his family with his evolving ethical beliefs?
7. While guiding a hunt in Zambia, the author had to act quickly to save the group from a buffalo attack. What exactly did he do, and what caused him to hesitate in that critical moment?
8. How did the author's willingness to learn new, cutting-edge skills in computing and the internet open the door to new opportunities and financial stability?
9. What personal and professional factors contributed to the breakdown of the author's marriage in 2001?

Chapter 21: A New Life

1. What does the author mean by the phrase "*Contradictio in Terminis*" in reference to March 28, 2002? What were the two conflicting documents he

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received on the same day, and why was this moment so emotionally jarring?

2. How did the September 11, 2001 attacks on the Twin Towers in New York City impact the author's personal life and his business endeavors in the United States?
3. In what ways did the author's divorce affect his relationships with his children? How did he cope with the emotional and familial fallout during that period?

Chapter 22: Meeting Terri New

1. How did the author meet his second wife, Terri, and what approach or shared values helped them build a deep friendship so quickly?
2. What serendipitous events or shared experiences created strong bonds between them early in their relationship?
3. How did their journey of mutual discovery and shared interests help the author heal from past emotional wounds?
4. What are some of the admirable qualities and talents the author attributes to Terri? How did her multifaceted career—as a playwright, singer, multimedia producer, and former Continental Airlines flight attendant—shape her worldview?
5. Terri founded Project Booklift, which sent hundreds of thousands of books to the newly liberated people of Czechoslovakia. How did her sense of community and airline connections enable her to make such a powerful and lasting contribution to global literacy and democracy?
6. Terri's song "Zimbabwe Drums" and her deep love for animals created an even deeper bond between her and the author. How did their shared love of music and nature strengthen their connection?
7. Terri, a polio survivor who lost hearing in one ear as a child, later devoted herself to eradicating polio in India and around the world. Do you believe her personal experience influenced her dedication to helping others? Have you experienced something in your own life that deepened your empathy for others?

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8. What were some of Terri's other humanitarian projects and charitable causes, and how do they reflect her character and life mission?

Chapter 23: Moving Forward with Life

1. The author and his new love, Terri, moved from California to a 10-acre property in Prescott, Arizona. Why do you think they both felt such an immediate connection to this land? What emotions or dreams might the property have represented for them?
2. How did their Arizona ranch become a sanctuary for their blended family and grandchildren? What aspects of ranch life seemed to create lasting memories and deeper bonds?
3. When the author and Terri were married in "God's Cathedral" — the scenic outdoors of Prescott — how did this choice reflect the author's spiritual beliefs and connection to nature?
4. On their honeymoon in South Africa, the couple stayed at several unique lodges. In one incredible hour, they saw all of the "Big Five" game animals. Can you name them? What does this moment reveal about their shared love for the African wilderness?

Chapter 24: Taking Mom and Dad on a Luxury Botswana Safari

1. The author names one location as his favorite destination in all of Africa. What is this place, and why do you think it holds such profound emotional significance for him?
2. Instead of using the term "step-parents," the author refers to his in-laws as "Mom and Dad." What does this choice of language reveal about his values and capacity for love? How does it reflect broader themes in the book related to family, belonging, and chosen bonds?

Chapter 25: Changing Our Business Model

1. Early on, the author had the foresight to acquire high-value website domain names related to safaris. How did this digital strategy help

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sustain the business during leaner times? In what ways did this decision eventually pay off?

2. The author loaned a prized safari domain name to his son, Louis Jr., but the outcome wasn't what he expected. How did this gesture backfire, and what effect did it have on their relationship and overall family dynamics?
3. Miscommunication and misunderstandings also played a role in family tensions. Have you ever experienced something similar in your own family? How did you navigate or resolve it?
4. The couple had to navigate the economic ups and downs of a changing global landscape. How did they adapt their business strategy to weather financial storms and keep their passion alive?

Chapter 26: The Chipuka Plains

1. The author was a strong supporter of Zambia's wildlife conservation program, ADMARE. How did this program help uplift local communities, and why did the author believe so deeply in its mission?
2. This memoir is filled with serendipity, strange coincidences, and unexpected encounters. Can you recall one or two examples that stood out to you? What do you think they reveal about the author's life journey?
3. When the author returned to Zambia years later, he described experiencing a sense of "hiraeth" — a deep, nostalgic longing for a place that feels like home. Why do you think this emotion was so strong for him, and have you ever felt something similar in your own life?

Chapter 27. The Era of Surgeries

1. How do the author and his wife demonstrate resilience and adapted fortitude as they face numerous health challenges and surgeries? What qualities or shared values helped them persevere through these difficult times?

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2. Family clearly plays a central role in the lives of the author and his wife. What moments or examples in the book best illustrate their deep sense of love, passion, and loyalty toward family? How do their actions reflect their values?

Chapter 28: The Golden Years (Epilogue)

1. After enduring the devastation of divorce, to whom or what does the author attribute his renewed happiness and sense of purpose? How does this turning point shape the final chapters of his life story?
2. The author often refers to his Arizona home as “our shelter in nature.” Why do you think this phrase holds such emotional and symbolic meaning for him? What does the home represent beyond its physical structure?
3. What is a “scatterling,” and how does the author connect with this term on a personal and emotional level? In what ways does it capture the theme of identity, exile, or belonging in the memoir?
4. In the book’s final image, the author reflects on the sculpture E Viaggiatori ("The Travelers"), which portrays figures with voids carved through them. How does the author relate to this haunting visual metaphor? What might the void symbolize in the context of his life’s journey?

Further Questions:

Based on the themes and arcs present in the memoir, here are several additional thought-provoking questions you could include in your book club discussion:

Legacy, Identity, and Transformation

1. Legacy of the Land: How does the author’s deep connection to the African landscape shape his identity throughout the book? What does he carry with him from Africa, and what does he leave behind?

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2. Name and Identity: The author transitions through many roles—soldier, lawyer, hunter, conservationist, immigrant, husband, and father. How do these identities conflict or complement each other over time?

3. Cultural Navigation: What challenges does the author face as he moves between cultures—Afrikaner, African, and American? How does he reconcile his traditional upbringing with his evolving worldview?

Resilience, Love, and Reinvention

4. The Role of Resilience: The author endures war, personal loss, divorce, career shifts, immigration, and health crises. What qualities allow him to continually reinvent himself? How might his upbringing have influenced this strength?

5. Second Chances in Love: How does the love story with Terri differ from his earlier relationships? What makes their bond feel restorative or redemptive?

6. The Healing Power of Purpose: How do shared goals like conservation, storytelling, and charitable work provide emotional healing for the author and Terri?

Family, Reconciliation, and Forgiveness

7. Generational Wounds: How do unresolved tensions with the author’s parents—particularly his mother—echo through his adult life? Do you think he ever finds peace with those past traumas?

8. Parenting and Legacy: How does the author’s relationship with his own children evolve, particularly through conflict and reconciliation? What does this say about cycles of parenting?

9. Chosen Family: The author speaks lovingly of “Mom and Dad,” his in-laws, and other non-blood relationships. What does this tell us about his view of family? How do chosen bonds differ from biological ones in the memoir?

Broader Themes

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10. Ethics and Transformation: The author once hunted for sport and profit, later turning toward conservation and photography. What does this evolution say about changing personal ethics? Can people fundamentally change?

11. The Role of Synchronicity: The memoir frequently references coincidences and meaningful chance encounters. Do you think the author sees his life as guided by fate, faith, or free will?

12. Final Reflections: If you could ask the author one question about his life's journey, what would it be?

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