

# The kalahari typing school for men, general book report



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Morality and Justice in The Kalahari Typing School for Men The fictional novel The Kalahari Typing School for Men reveals an underlying concern with issues of morality and justice. The story is basically a new chapter in the life of Precious Ramotswe, who was introduced in an earlier novel with the founding of the only detective agency in Gaborone, Botswana. In this edition, the No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency receives competition in the form of the Satisfaction Guaranteed Detective Agency opened by Mr. Cephass Buthelezi, who urges customers to 'trust their enquiries to a man'. The female detective and her assistant, Mma. Makutsi, then set out to demonstrate why women are much better at detective work than men because they notice the little things, pay attention to what other people are saying with more than just their words and have a much more developed sense of normal human psychology. Mma. Ramotswe does this by helping one client find equitable means of making amends for mistakes of his past and another client find out whether her husband is being unfaithful. In both cases, it is because of the particularly feminine touch she brings to her profession that they are solved to such positive ends.

There is a dual plot to the novel in the story of Mma. Makutsi, who starts the business mentioned in the title. Mma. Makutsi needs to earn more money to help support her family as well as to meet her own needs. With the opening of the other detective agency in town and Mma. Ramotswe's recent adoption of two children, one of whom is confined to a wheelchair, Mma. Makutsi knows she cannot ask for additional money from her employer. Through a wonderful demonstration of brainstorming, Mma. Makutsi realizes that men need office skills as much as women if they are to be successful in business, but that men are often sensitive about being shown up by women, so they

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don't take the classes they need. From this thought, she develops the concept of the Typing School for Men and uses further intelligent thought to make her concept become reality. Experiencing immediate success with her business, Mma. Makutsi is surprised to find romance in her classes as well. This is where the two stories overlap as Mma. Makutsi's new boyfriend turns out to be the husband Mma. Ramotswe is seeking for one of her clients. Through both of these plotlines, which interweave at several points, the importance of using tact and a judicious sense of morality in finding solutions that are positive for all of the individuals involved. While Mr. Molefino stole something valuable from a family he lived with and respected in order to pay for an abortion for a girl he did not plan to stay with, he was able to amend these wrongs in a way that made him feel he was truly making amends and was able to maintain his reputation at the same time. In paying for the wronged girl's daughter to go to school and for the medicine necessary for the wronged mother's small grandchild, he is able to bring benefit to the lives of all those he'd previously damaged. In starting her typing school for men, Mma. Makutsi does not harm anyone in the process of establishing her school and provides a helpful, non-judgmental means for men to learn the skills they need without embarrassment. Although Mma. Ramotswe is given the opportunity to publicly denounce Mr. Selepeng for cheating on his wife with Mma. Makutsi, she opts to speak to him quietly about the issue and provides him with a chance to make things right in his own way. By doing this, Mma. Ramotswe avoids embarrassing her friend, enabling her to maintain her dignity and gives Mr. Selepeng a chance to explain things to Mma. Makutsi that avoids hurting her too deeply or traumatically as would have been the case had Mr. Buthelezi had the case. Finally, Mr. Buthelezi,

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although he appears only rarely in the story, is himself an example of the importance of maintaining morality in the business. By the end of the story, he is demonstrated to have held a great deal of misconceptions regarding his potential clients, discriminatory practices and less concern for the 'human' element beyond the simple facts. By the end of the book, he has closed his agency and is moving out of town.

#### References

Smith, Alexander McCall. *The Kalahari Typing School for Men*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2002.