

Discussion Questions for *The Camel Bookmobile* by Masha Hamilton

(Most questions taken or adapted from <http://www.bookmovement.com/app/readingguide/view.php?readingGuideID=1702#questions> and <http://bookbuddies3.blogspot.com/2008/04/camel-bookmobile-discussion-questions-1.html>)

1. Did you like the book? If so, why? If not, why not?
2. Did any thing that happened or was said in the book stick with you?
3. One of the main conflicts in the book is between the library proponents and those who fear the imposition of Western values and the loss of centuries of tradition. Can the Camel Bookmobile be seen as an allegory for what's still taking place in the world today? Is there a lesson to be learned?
4. What is gained (or lost) by the use of multiple viewpoints to tell this story? How do the various viewpoints weave together to reinforce the theme of books as instruments of change and growth?
5. Each character is changed in some way by the bookmobile. Discuss those changes. For example, Fi goes to Kenya convinced that she is bringing knowledge to the African bush, but in the end she learns at least as much as any other character. What are the main lessons she learns?
6. Many of the people of Mididima make it clear that they do not want to be seen as ignorant simply because they are illiterate. At the novel's end, the traditional values seem to win out. But do you think books and modernism will continue to impact the people of Mididima, even beyond the novel's conclusion?
7. "Mididima" means "Those Rooted in Dust" (p. 25). How is this a metaphor for the lives of the villagers? In what ways are their lives changing, for the better or for the worse?
8. Mr. Abasi considered Miss Sweeney meddling: "These foreigners couldn't understand that literacy was not the only path to education. In tribal settlements, the tradition was an oral one..." (p. 51). What do you think about a librarian with this attitude?
9. What do you think about Mr. Abasi's rule that losing even a single book means the bookmobile will not return to the village? What was Mr. Abasi's ulterior motive for making such a rule?
10. Why do you think educated people are feared by the illiterate? "Mothers watched with a mixture of envy and resentment as she [Kanika] shared some mysterious secret with their offspring. They didn't respect her any more than ever. But they were afraid of her ... afraid of the skill she possessed that they didn't have" (p. 16).
11. Did you find the characters believable? Likeable?
12. Has anyone here ever been to Kenya, or otherwise have experiences relevant to the book? Tell us about them.
13. Any comments about the way the book ended?
14. Are there any questions you would like to ask?