



Reading Guide: **The God of the Hive** by Laurie R. King

1. In **The Language of Bees** and **The God of the Hive**, we see Russell as she is thrust into the role of Estelle's guardian, and Holmes as he tentatively forges a relationship with the son he's never known. What do these new connections reveal, both about the characters and their relationship? What would you do if suddenly faced with new and demanding family responsibilities?
2. During the time period of this novel, British society was going through its own period of disillusionment and loss of innocence between the World Wars. How are these contradictions and changes symbolized in the novel? What parallels can you see with our own time?
3. Mary Russell met Mycroft when she was an orphaned teenager. By her mid-20s, he had become "the fixed point in my universe, the ultimate source of assistance, shelter, information, and knowledge." In what ways do the events of **The God of the Hive** shake Russell's faith in him? How is this process like any other young adult's, discovering that parents are human and therefore fallible? Have you ever experienced a similar process of self-determination in your life?
4. This is a novel full of gods and demi-gods, ancient and modern, wicked and whimsical. How do these archetypes embody the societal tensions and changes discussed in question two above? Who do you think is the god of the hive?
5. Early in the novel, Russell muses about modern gods, those of flying machines and rifles – both relatively new technologies with massive repercussions on her world. If you were to choose patron saints for today's society, what would they be?
6. What kind of deity is Robert Goodman? What does he represent, both for the story and for his society at large?
7. In what ways do we see family portrayed in **The God of the Hive**? How do these ties influence the character's actions, and how far they are willing to go for their perceived or actual families?
8. The first few chapters are told from five different points of view, with each character unaware of all the truths in the case and what the others are doing. For example, Russell knows that Brothers is dead from the beginning, while Holmes believes him alive until much later. What does the author gain from a shifting point of view? How does this technique show us parts of the story we wouldn't otherwise see? As a reader, did you enjoy the frequent shifts in narration?

9. Holmes first suspects West's presence by thinking of him as a shark in the water: What he thought to be floating debris was revealed to be lurking danger. Where else in this novel do surface appearances prove deceptive? Who do you think is the real shark beneath the surface? Is it West, or he just another fin above the waves?
10. Brothers' knife plays a minor yet highly symbolic role in the story. How did the significance of this one object change throughout the story, and how does it fulfill West's penchant for symmetry?
11. The novel ends in a physical and metaphorical struggle between the three god-like men: Mycroft, West, and Goodman. In the end, who do you feel was triumphant? Why do you think Mary makes the choice she does? Do you agree with the author's decision to end the book in this way?