



The White Giraffe by Lauren St. John

Recommended Ages:
8–12

Summary: After a fire kills her parents, eleven-year-old Martine must leave England to live with her grandmother on a wildlife game reserve in South Africa, where she befriends a mythical white giraffe. Martine sees the white giraffe one stormy night from her bedroom window. When a local woman tells her that she has “the gift,” Martine begins to sense that there is something very unique and special happening. From that moment, she begins her journey to save the animal from poachers.

Discussion Questions: Spoiler alert! Some of the questions contain key elements of the plot. Do not read if you don’t want to know what happens!

1. What country does Martine live in when the book begins? Where does her grandmother live?
2. Identify three animals that live on the game reserve at Sawubona. List one fact you learned about each of these animals.
3. According to Grace, what is “the gift” that Martine possesses? Describe one way in which Martine uses this gift during the story.
4. Based on what you read in chapter 16, why does Martine think the poachers must have close ties to Sawubona?
5. In chapter 5, why does Tendai tell Martine that he shouldn’t have taken her to see Grace?
6. Late in the story, what two objects are stolen from Martine? What happens as a result of these objects being stolen?
7. Imagine you have come to live at Sawubona for a while. What do you think you would enjoy most about your life there? What would you enjoy least?
8. When Martine first meets Alex du Preez, she doubts that he has empathy with animals. Using examples from the text, identify a character in the book who you think does have empathy with animals and explain why you chose this character.
9. Martine overhears one of the poachers saying to his companion, “If we don’t deliver this thing very soon, M . . .” Based on what you learn later in the book, who do you think “M” is?
10. Reread the description of Martine’s dream in the first chapter. How is this dream connected to later events in the story? Why do you think the author chose to begin the book with this dream?

11. In chapter 20, Gwyn Thomas explains that Martine had been kept away from Sawubona to protect her from hardship and danger. What do you think might have been different if Martine had never come to Africa?
12. At the beginning of chapter 8, the narrator says that in her early days at Sawubona, Martine “felt as if she were under going some sort of test, almost as if she was being prepared for something.” In your own words, explain what you think the challenges of Sawubona are preparing her for. Be sure to describe how Martine changes during her time in Africa.
13. Gwyn Thomas says that she does not know why Veronica changed her will. Describe what Veronica changed in her will. Explain why you think she changed her mind.
14. Early in the story, Grace tells Martine, “Be very careful. The gift can be a blessing or a curse. Make your decisions wisely.” Explain whether you think the gift is a blessing or a curse for Martine. Using examples from the text, explain whether you think Martine makes her decisions wisely.
15. According to Grace, Martine and the white giraffe are “twin souls.” Based on what you know about the relationship between Martine and Jemmy, do you think this is an accurate statement? If so, describe one way in which Martine and Jemmy are similar. If not, explain why you disagree with the statement.

Adapted from Scholastic.com.