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When the Universe Pivots

Suggested Book Discussion Questions

1. There are many secrets in the story — those that Alice and Sylvie are hiding from each other, as well as secrets that exist beyond their knowledge. What do you think is the significance of there being so many secrets in the story?
2. The story is told from two points of view — Alice and Sylvie's — how do these different viewpoints affect the advancement of the plot? Which character do you relate to more and why?
3. Alice and Sylvie's immersion in Seereer culture is a large part of the story. What did you learn about Seereer culture and history? Did it surprise you?
4. One of the secrets that Alice alludes to is her relationship with Emile. What role does Emile's character play in the story? How do his life experiences in America compare with what Alice and Sylvie are experiencing in Senegal? What are your thoughts about this?
5. The story uses a mixed timeline that weaves the 1800s into the modern era (the early 1990s and 2008-2009). How does the mixed timeline affect the way the story unfolds?
6. The author integrates elements of mysticism into the story's theme, particularly with the character of Chaz and Alice and Sylvie's experiences with the Seereer beliefs of *pangool* and *ngusi*. What do you think was the author's intention in including these elements?
7. Alice and Sylvie both have been affected deeply by the loss of Hope. What role does loss play throughout the story?
8. What is the archetype of Ouma Peta's character? Why do you think the author designed her character using this archetype?
9. Alice's character cites work from her Ph.D. research that is based on the historical research of real academics. What impact, if any, did this have on you as a reader?
10. What do you think the book's title, "*When the Universe Pivots*," signifies in the story? In what ways does it relate to the story's themes?