

BOTTLED GOODS

BY SOPHIE VAN LLEWYN

- 'Bottled Goods' is written as a novella-in-flash. Why do you think the author chose this particular format? How would the narrative differ if it was written in a linear style?
- The novella contains different elements of magical realism. Find two examples of this and discuss how they contribute to/affect the narrative. What impact do you think they had on telling of the horror of Alina's situation?
- The story is set in Romania during Communism. What do you know about this period in European history in general, and Romanian history in particular? How is this historical period conveyed in the book?
- How much can you learn of Romanian culture from reading this novella?
- Different chapters in the book are written in different styles. Choose one and discuss what effect that style has on you as a reader. Or do you think a different style would have worked better in that instance?
- Saint Friday remains a mysterious figure throughout the book. What do you make of her? Who do you think she is and how does her presence help Alina (besides giving her the potion)? (See for example the chapter 'The Potion')
- It can be said that 'A Suitcase Full of Dreams' represents an allegory for the whole novella. Do you agree and why? What does the suitcase represent?
- The chapter 'The White Line' is quite a turning point in the novella. How is Alina feeling? Why has she chosen to act in that particular moment?