

BOOK CLUB IN A BOX

Bookclub-in-a-Box presents the discussion companion for J.M. Coetzee's novel Disgrace

Novel published by Vintage 2000, London. First published in Great Britain, 1999, by Martin Secker & Warburg.
ISBN: 0-09-928952-0.

Quotations used in this guide have been taken from the text of the paperback edition of *Disgrace*. All information taken from other sources is acknowledged.

This discussion companion was written by Marilyn Herbert, B.Ed. She is the founder of Bookclub-in-a-Box and an international speaker with more than 30 years experience as a teacher and school librarian. Bookclub-in-a-Box is a unique guide to current fiction and classic literature intended for book club discussions, educational study seminars, and personal pleasure.

Bookclub-in-a-Box discussion companion for Disgrace

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This guide reflects the perspective of the Bookclub-in-a-Box team and is the sole property of Bookclub-in-a-Box. Guide first published in 2005.

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BOOKCLUB-IN-A-BOX

J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*

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BOOKCLUB-IN-A-BOX

Readers and Leaders Guide

Each Bookclub-in-a-Box guide is clearly and effectively organized to give you information and ideas for a lively discussion, as well as to present the major highlights of the novel. The format, with a Table of Contents, allows you to pick and choose the specific points you wish to talk about. It does not have to be used in any prescribed order. In fact, it is meant to support, not determine, your discussion.

You Choose What to Use.

You may find that some information is repeated in more than one section and may be cross-referenced so as to provide insight on the same idea from different angles.

The guide is formatted to give you extra space to make your own notes.

How to Begin

Relax and look forward to enjoying your book club.

With Bookclub-in-a-Box as your behind the scenes support, there is little for you to do in the way of preparation.

Some readers like to review the guide after reading the novel; some before. Either way, the guide is all you will need as a companion for your discussion. You may find that the guide's interpretation, information, and background have sparked other ideas not included.

Having read the novel and armed with Bookclub-in-a-Box, you will be well prepared to lead or guide or listen to the discussion at hand.

Lastly, if you need some more "hands on" support, feel free to contact us.

What to Look For

Each Bookclub-in-a-Box guide is divided into easy-to-use sections, which include points on characters, themes, writing style and structure, literary or historical background, author information, and other pertinent features unique to the novel being discussed. These may vary slightly from guide to guide.

INTERPRETATION OF EACH NOVEL REFLECTS THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE BOOKCLUB-IN-A-BOX TEAM.

Do We Need to Agree?

THE ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION IS NO.

If we have sparked a discussion or a debate on certain points, then we are happy. We invite you to share your group's alternative findings and experiences. You can contact us via our website (www.bookclubinabox.com), by email (info@bookclubinabox.com), or by phone (1-866-578-5571). We would love to hear from you.

Discussion Starters

There are as many ways to begin a book club discussion as there are members in your group. If you are an experienced group, you will already have your favorite ways to begin. If you are a newly formed group or a group looking for new ideas, here are some suggestions.

- Ask for people's impressions of the novel. (This will give you some idea about which parts of the unit to focus on.)
- Identify a favorite or major character.
- Identify a favorite or major idea.
- Begin with a powerful or pertinent quote. (Not necessarily from the novel.)
- Discuss the historical information of the novel. (Not applicable to all novels.)
- If this author is familiar to the group, discuss the range of his/her work and where this novel stands in that range.
- Use the discussion topics and questions in the Bookclub-in-a-Box guide.

If you have further suggestions for discussion starters, be sure to share them with us and we will share them with others.

Above All, Enjoy Yourself

INTRODUCTION

Novel Quickline

Keys to the Novel

Author Information

INTRODUCTION

Novel Quickline

David Lurie, a teacher, father, and writer, twice-divorced and currently single, has committed a disgraceful act: he has seduced a student in his communications class at Cape Technical University, and he has done so, by all appearances, against her will.

A harassment complaint is issued against him. Although the university gives Lurie an opportunity to put this incident behind him and carry on in his position, Lurie simply does not act on it.

Lurie rashly leaves his job and his home and goes to stay temporarily with his daughter, who owns a small farm in eastern South Africa. She is living a simple and solitary life, raising some crops and boarding dogs. At the farm, as Lurie tries to figure out where his life should next go, a second abrupt incident throws not only his life but his understanding of it into turmoil.

Nothing is as simple as it seems. Each word and sentence has been calculated to create a subtle impact. There are many layers of understanding and meaning to this small but powerful novel.

Keys to the Novel

Illusion, Appearance

- The truth of a situation or an event must be considered through the perspective of the participants. Because a single perspective can still be illusory, Coetzee presents multiple points of view through several stories, each of which is simply an enlargement of the one before. (see **Parallels and Juxtaposition**, p.54)
- He starts with the simple relationship of Lurie and Soraya. The illusion, for both the reader and for Lurie, is that Soraya is under Lurie's control: he pays, she appears, they have sex — a simple arrangement. As we find out within a few pages, the reality of the relationship is quite different. Lurie is anything but in control.
- Coetzee then takes us through the parallel stories of the novel's other female characters: Melanie, Lucy, and even Byron's Teresa. He shows the dual nature of how these relationships present themselves.
- Coetzee's goal is to bring the reader to the realization that each of these relationships is a microcosm of the complex relationships that exist within the population of South Africa, especially between whites and blacks.

Power *Boundaries, Change, Balance*

- Successful relationships depend upon an acceptance of where the boundaries of those relationships are drawn. When the boundaries in
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**Thanks for previewing this
Bookclub-in-a-Box discussion guide.**

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print or PDF format, just visit:**

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