

BOOK CLUB IN A BOX

Bookclub-in-a-Box presents the discussion companion for Philip Roth's novel Indignation

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

This discussion companion for *Indignation* has been prepared and co-written by Risa Drimmer, Adina Levin, and Marilyn Herbert, originator of Bookclub-in-a-Box. Marilyn Herbert is a teacher, librarian, speaker, and writer. 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.

For more information about the Bookclub-in-a-Box team, visit our website.

Bookclub-in-a-Box discussion companion for Indignation

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BOOKCLUB-IN-A-BOX

Philip Roth's Indignation

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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

Marcus Messner is the teenage son of a kosher butcher in Newark, New Jersey. He has worked alongside the father he adores most of his adolescent life. But suddenly, Messner Sr. is overtaken by an uncontrollable, obsessive fear of letting his only son go out into an unprotected world. Ironically, this fear compels Marcus to escape from the suffocating environment that his insular family has created, to one where he is in constant conflict with himself, others and the society in which he lives.

He moves from the constraints of his family to the restraints of a small, conservative Christian college in mid-western America under the backdrop of the Korean War. As the casualties mount, the Messners' lives begin to unravel. Marcus becomes the unintended victim of historical circumstances, chance, and his own indignation.

notes

Keys to the Novel

Indignation

- The novel's title is the prominent idea of the novel. The dictionary defines indignation as "anger or annoyance provoked by a sense of unfairness." It is an emotional reaction and sets the tone of the novel.
- Roth explores the question of who is indignant, about what, and why. In the midst of this, Marcus tries to challenge and channel his personal indignation.

Consider the extent of Philip Roth's own indignation and how he examines it through Marcus Messner and the others. What indignations have driven your own thoughts and actions?

Writing

- An important key to the novel is Roth's ability to convey many layers of meaning and to interconnect his themes and symbols. He achieves this interwoven structure through his use of alliteration, narrative style, juxtaposition, irony, and symbols.
- While weaving all the threads together, Roth manages to illustrate how each event, no matter how minor, impacts the outcome. The catalyst for Marcus's catastrophic, tragic demise begins with his father's sudden fear for his well-being. "*It's about life, where the tiniest misstep can have tragic consequences.*" (p.12) This is the overriding theme of the novel, which both foreshadows the future and reflects the past.

All of Roth's novels are complex in writing and structure. Which of his novels are you familiar with? Do you enjoy the complexity of his stories? Which of his books are your favorite or least favorite?



**Thanks for previewing this
Bookclub-in-a-Box discussion guide.**

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print or PDF format, just visit:**

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