

BOOK CLUB IN A BOX

THE COMPLETE PACKAGE
FOR READERS AND LEADERS

DISCUSSES EDWARD P. JONES' NOVEL

THE KNOWN WORLD

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BOOK CLUB IN A BOX

Bookclub-in-a-Box presents the discussion companion for Edward P. Jones' novel THE KNOWN WORLD

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

This discussion companion for **The Known World** has been prepared and written by Marilyn Herbert, originator of Bookclub-in-a-Box. Marilyn Herbert, B.Ed., 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.

Assistance for this project was provided by Adina Herbert. For more information about the Bookclub-in-a-Box team, visit our website.

Bookclub-in-a-Box discussion companion for The Known World

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CONTACT INFORMATION: SEE BACK COVER.

BOOKCLUB-IN-A-BOX

Edward P. Jones's *The Known World*

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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 bookclub.

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. (See Contact Information)

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 with us. You can respond on-line at our website or contact us through our Contact Information. We would love to hear from you.

Discussion Starters

There are as many ways to begin a bookclub 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 Yourselfes

INTRODUCTION

Novel Quickline

Keys to the Novel

Author Information

INTRODUCTION

Novel Quickline

While the world of slavery has been gone from North America for over one hundred and fifty years, the mistreatment and abuse of other human beings continues in all parts of our known world. Edward P. Jones' accomplishment in this Pulitzer prize-winning novel is to weave together the threads of our past and present worlds by bringing the reader into the domain of those people who lived and died before our current time.

The story centers around Henry Townsend, a black slave master, his family, his community and his possessions – his slaves. Henry dies and everyone wonders what will happen next. Will Caldonia, his widow, sell the plantation and the slaves? Will their situation go from being known and accepted to one that is unknown and much worse?

notes

Jones has drawn a map of Manchester County showing its many citizens – the white and black owners, the law enforcers, the white and black neighbors and friends, the slaves and their children, and a host of others who pass through.

The story follows all the characters in their thoughts, daily actions and interactions. Jones leaves us to think about a time in history that is not black or white, but has many other layered shades of color.

Keys to the Novel

Structure

- **The Known World** is constructed in ways that parallel the Bible, the book that was so central to the lives of each of the characters at that time. Each story and each character is presented as part of a genealogy weaving through the generations that history unfolds for us. Slaveowner begets slave: Robbins begets Henry, Henry begets Moses and so the story goes. (see *Biblical Counting*, p.27; *Story Within a Story*, p.45)

Legacy

- One of the overriding questions that pervade this novel is whether it is right for black people to own black slaves. People like Maude defend their decisions using the age-old answer of “legacy” – “*It is up to us to protect our name, our future, our legacy.*” But is that legacy a bitter one? Are there other ways of using such a legacy? (see *Legacy*, p.39)



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

**If you'd like to purchase the full guide in
print or PDF format, just visit:**

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