

BOOK CLUB IN A BOX

THE COMPLETE PACKAGE
FOR READERS AND LEADERS

DISCUSSES ALICE SEBOLD'S NOVEL

THE LOVELY BONES

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BOOK CLUB IN A BOX

Bookclub-in-a-Box presents the discussion companion for Alice Sebold's novel The Lovely Bones

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

This discussion companion for **The Lovely Bones** 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. For more information about the Bookclub-in-a-Box team, visit our website.

Bookclub-in-a-Box discussion companion for The Lovely Bones

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CONTACT INFORMATION: SEE BACK COVER.

BOOKCLUB-IN-A-BOX

Alice Sebold's *The Lovely Bones*

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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 Yourself

INTRODUCTION

Suggested Beginnings

Novel Quickline

Key to the Novel

Author Information

INTRODUCTION

Suggested Beginnings

1. *The Lovely Bones* seems to fit in the genre of magical realism, but in reality it is more like imaginative realism. The story has elements that lie just outside the certainty of our experience.

How does this affect your response to the story?

2. The novel appears to be structured as a murder mystery but does not focus on Susie's murder. Instead, it concentrates on the effects the murder has on others.

Does this technique successfully relate to the telling of the story? Is the reader prepared?

3. The five stages of grief according to Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's book, *On Death and Dying*, are the following: denial and isolation, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.

Compare these five stages of grieving to the grieving process that Susie's loved ones go through in the novel. (see Central Premise, p.27)

4. The novel is filled with clichés and simplified language.

What is it about these common expressions that appeals to readers? Is this writing style effective? Why is it used?

5. T.S. Eliot said, “*It is worth dying to find out what life is.*”

Connect this thought to the novel.

Novel Quickline

Susie Salmon is fourteen when she is murdered. In the realm of our experience, this should mean that Susie has tragically disappeared and can no longer be in contact with anyone. But this is not the world according to Susie or Sebold. Their world is one of imaginative realism, where Susie tells us her story from heaven.

We watch Susie and listen as she makes the transition from her earthly life to her heavenly one. With Susie, we observe how her family copes with the horrific loss of a child. We observe the very common stages of grief that they necessarily experience, and like Susie, we wait to see if they successfully transcend this experience and are able to continue with the job of living.

What is different about the story told in **The Lovely Bones** is that Susie herself must go through this transition. She is in the inbetween, no longer on Earth, but not yet in her final heaven. Sebold takes everyone, Susie and her family, through a maturation process. She especially includes the reader, who is not allowed the luxury of detached observation. We must join the Salmon family on their emotional journey.



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

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print or PDF format, just visit:**

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