

BOOK CLUB IN A BOX

THE COMPLETE PACKAGE
FOR READERS AND LEADERS

DISCUSSES KIM EDWARD'S NOVEL

THE MEMORY KEEPER'S DAUGHTER

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**Bookclub-in-a-Box presents the
Novel Notes Mini-Guide
discussion companion for
Kim Edwards' novel
The Memory Keeper's Daughter**

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Quotations used in this guide have been taken from the text of the paperback edition of *The Memory Keeper's Daughter*. All information taken from other sources is acknowledged.

This discussion companion for *The Memory Keeper's Daughter* 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 Memory Keeper's Daughter**

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CONTACT INFORMATION: SEE BACK COVER.

BOOKCLUB-IN-A-BOX

Kim Edwards' *The Memory Keeper's Daughter*

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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

Novel Quickline

Keys to the Novel

Author Information

Background Information

An Amazing Story

Arthur Miller

INTRODUCTION

Kim Edwards has written a very competent and insightful novel using the idea of secrecy as a moral backdrop for people's motives, choices, behavior, and interactions. **The Memory Keeper's Daughter** places its characters in the timeset of the 1960s and '70s, an era of heightened political consciousness, civil liberties, and social action.

The times were changing and people needed to keep pace with those changes. Women were making strides and feminism was on the rise. So, too, was child-centered education. The school system was beginning to recognize and support children with special needs. In the case of this novel, Kim Edwards focuses on children born with Down syndrome, a disability that the society of the time would have preferred to keep out of sight.

The birth of David and Norah Henry's Down syndrome child raises the first of many ethical dilemmas that the characters face: *when is it right to keep a secret? Sometimes, ever, never?*

notes

Novel Quickline

As the story opens, David and Norah Henry have been married for one year and Norah is expecting their first child. She goes into labor just as the world outside becomes the victim of a sudden and unusual winter storm. The Henrys make it to the hospital, but Norah's doctor does not. David, who is an orthopedic surgeon, has to deliver his own child with only the assistance of his nurse, Caroline Gill.

In the 1960s, having a baby was a hands-off situation for many women. In fact, they were often put to sleep, only to wake after the birth process was complete. For this reason, Norah does not immediately know that she has given birth to twins. The first baby, Paul, is healthy; the second, Phoebe, is born with Down syndrome. At that time, there was very little social or psychological support for parents who chose to keep their children at home. Babies like Phoebe were not expected to live long because of heart complications related to the syndrome. As a doctor, David Henry would be familiar with the research and the risks.

In addition to his immediate medical concerns, David remembers the fragile state of his mother's emotional health and how her life was ultimately destroyed by the early death of his sister, June, a child born with heart problems of a different kind. He wants to spare Norah the pain and anguish of raising a child that she is destined to lose and he hopes to keep Paul from suffering the loss of a sibling. So David does the unthinkable – he asks Caroline to take the child to an institution where she could live out the remainder of her life. In the meantime, Norah is told that her daughter has died.

Caroline complies with David's request for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that she is a little bit in love with David. But the institution in which she is meant to leave the baby is so cold and impersonal that she cannot bring herself to abandon Phoebe there. She too acts impulsively. When the family holds a memorial service to officially mark the baby's death, Caroline runs away to raise Phoebe as her own child.

All the while the snow keeps falling in that first chapter, providing the perfect cover for the secrets yet to come. (see *Snow*, p.52)

notes



**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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