

**BOOK
CLUB
IN A BOX**

THE COMPLETE PACKAGE
FOR READERS AND LEADERS

DISCUSSES GINA B. NAHAI'S NOVEL

**MOONLIGHT
ON THE
AVENUE
OF FAITH**

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BOOK CLUB IN A BOX

**Bookclub-in-a-Box presents the
discussion companion for
Gina B. Nahai's novel**

Moonlight on the Avenue of Faith

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

This discussion companion for **Moonlight on the Avenue of Faith** 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 Moonlight on the Avenue of Faith

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BOOKCLUB-IN-A-BOX

Gina B. Nahai's Moonlight on the Avenue of Faith

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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: Magic Realism

Author Information

Political History

Jewish History

INTRODUCTION

Suggested Beginnings

1. *“My aunt Miriam the Moon tells me I must understand Roxanna’s departure as the fulfillment of a destiny she could never control, that abandoning me was ... the result of forces that had been in motion for centuries before I was born ...*

... Human beings are nothing more than the instruments of a callous Fate. Free will and conscious decisions are mere inventions of minds too feeble to accept the reality of our absurd existence. And so she says, I must forgive Roxanna ...” (p.6)

Lili is the last in a line of women who are fated to a destiny that they cannot control. Discuss this quotation in connection to the novel’s themes: destiny, choice, forgiveness.

2. Miriam the Moon is one of the novel's most interesting characters. She is described as beautiful, nurturing and warm, but her appearance contradicts these qualities.

Consider the contradiction between her personality and appearance. What is her role in reuniting Roxanna and Lili? Discuss her ability to endure the loss of her children without apparent bitterness and whether this impacts on her actions towards Lili.

3. When Roxanna escapes and lives in Istanbul, her magic fails her – she is lonely, poor and discouraged.

Why does Nahai abandon the technique of magic realism in favor of placing Roxanna under a realistic magnifying glass?

4. Miriam's tear jar is a beautiful symbol for holding pain, but it is interesting to note that not a single female character since Shusha has used the tear jar to cry about the major losses in her life.

What is the role of the tear jar in Roxanna's redemption?

5. In the novel, the women are more successful than the men at reinventing themselves.

Consider what Nahai is saying about the role of women, the relationship of women to men, and about motherhood.

6. The concept of exile is usually perceived negatively and emotionally, but often, exile can bring success.

Consider how each character faces his or her exile.

7. The themes of the novel suggest that one must reconcile one's past in order to keep faith with it. The key to doing this successfully is forgiveness.

Consider the novel's characters and how they relate to their individual past and present. Will they be successful in integrating their personal histories with their imminent future?

Novel Quickline

Moonlight on the Avenue of Faith takes place in Iran, Turkey, beginning in the 1930s, and in present day Los Angeles. One night, when her daughter Lili is five years old, Roxanna the Angel sprouts wings and vanishes into the sky. There is no goodbye, no explanation. Thirteen years pass, during which Lili suffers a lonely childhood and adolescence, and Roxanna becomes both poverty stricken and sick in Turkey. Eventually, they reunite in Los Angeles, where sorrow and regret meet up with forgiveness and destiny.

Key to the Novel

Magic Realism

- The term, magic realism, is a 20th century term originally applied to visual art, and as such, was illustrated through paintings that portray the complex relationship between the real, physical world and the symbolic concepts which the human mind tries to interpret. An example of this is Salvador Dali's famous work depicting time melting in a desert landscape.
- Literature adopted this format and added it to the narrative structure of the novel. Magic realism in literature is represented by such authors as Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Salman Rushdie, Toni Morrison, Isabel Allende, Lilian Nattel, and of course, Gina Nahai.
- Elements of magic realism, long present in human folklore and stories, are rooted in the Bible, in religious mysticism (eg. Kabbalah), and in the tales told by Scheherazade to her lover in **One Thousand and One Nights** (a staple of Persian literature).



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

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