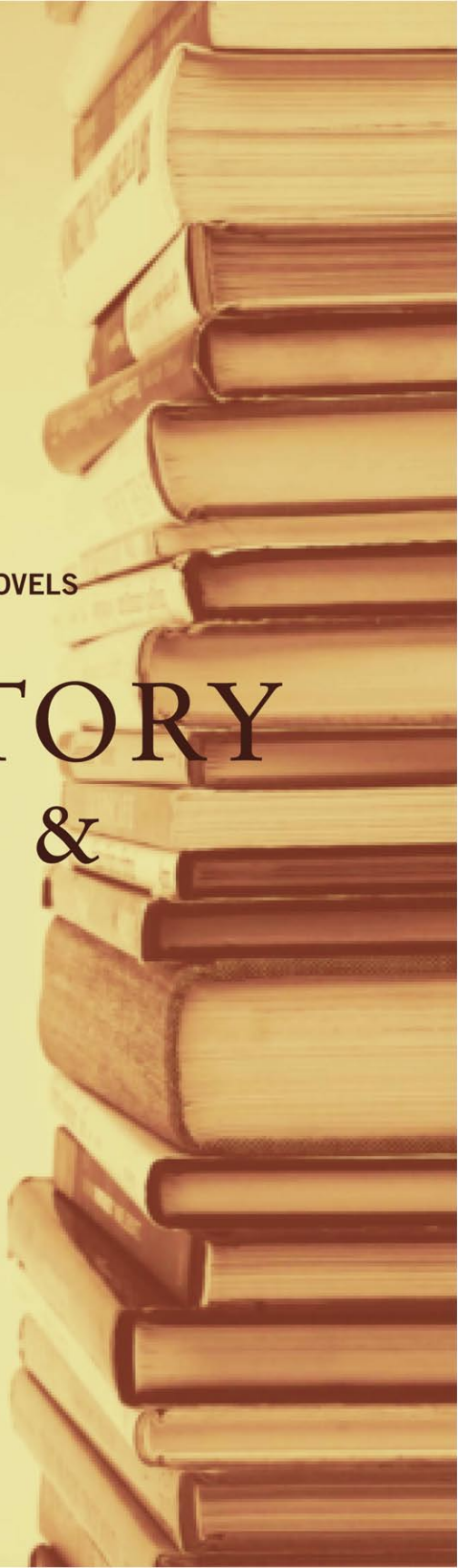


# BOOK CLUB IN A BOX

THE COMPLETE PACKAGE  
FOR READERS AND LEADERS

DISCUSSES NICOLE KRAUSS' TWO NOVELS

# THE HISTORY OF LOVE & GREAT HOUSE



# BOOK CLUB IN A BOX

**Bookclub-in-a-Box presents the  
2-in-1 companion for  
Nicole Krauss' novels  
*The History of Love and Great House***

*The History of Love* published by W.W. Norton & Co.,  
New York, 2005. Paperback ISBN: 0-393-06034-9

*Great House* published by W.W. Norton & Co.,  
New York, 2010. Hardcover ISBN: 978-0-393-07998-2

Quotations used in this guide have been taken from the texts of the above editions of *The History of Love* and *Great House*. All information taken from other sources is acknowledged.

This discussion companion was written by Aaron Kreuter and Marilyn Herbert, B.Ed. Herbert is the founder of Bookclub-in-a-Box and an international speaker with more than 30 years experience as a teacher and school librarian. 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**

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## Nicole Krauss' The History of Love and Great House

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## Nicole Krauss' *The History of Love and Great House*

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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](http://www.bookclubinabox.com)), by email ([info@bookclubinabox.com](mailto: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 Yourselves**

# **INTRODUCTION**

**Novel Quickline**

**Keys to the Novel**

**Author Information**

# INTRODUCTION

## The 2-in-1 Guide to Nicole Krauss

You are holding in your hands the first-ever joint Bookclub-in-a-Box guide! Inside you will find two mini-guides to the novels of American author Nicole Krauss: first we'll cover *The History of Love* (2005), and in the second half of the guide, *Great House* (2010). While each of our other guides is a stand-alone companion to its book, use this guide for either one or both of Krauss' novels—there is even a special section at the end with discussion prompts comparing the two. We hope you enjoy this unique offering.

### Author Information

- Nicole Krauss was born in 1974 as a child of privilege in a prosperous Jewish community on Long Island. She was educated at Stanford University and Oxford (in England), where she studied literature and art history. The art aspect of her education is seen clearly in the visual nature of her writing.
- Her initial foray into writing was through poetry, but she prefers writing novels. The first of her three books is called *Man Walks into a Room*, and tells the story of a man with amnesia who must reconstruct his past in order to understand his present. The second, *The History of*



*Love*, was shortlisted for the 2006 Orange Prize and Krauss was named one of *Granta* magazine's 2007 best young writers of the year. Her latest book, *Great House*, published in 2010, was nominated for the National Book Award.

- Nicole Krauss is married to the author Jonathan Safran Foer (*Everything is Illuminated; Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*). They live in Brooklyn with their two children.
  - Krauss has lived in New York, where she grew up; California, where she went to Stanford; London, where she completed her Masters; and Israel, where she stayed with her family for five months as part of the International Writers Festival in 2010. These locations appear throughout her fiction.
  - There is a whole new contingent of young Jewish writers appearing on the literary scene who have both old and new things to say and who do it in a completely different way from the literary role models of the past. Krauss is in good company with her husband, along with writers like Dara Horn (*The World to Come; All Other Nights*), Anne Michaels (*Fugitive Pieces*), Myla Goldberg (*Bee Season*), Nathan Englander (*What We Talk About When We Talk About Anne Frank*), Michael Chabon (*The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay; The Yiddish Policemen's Union*), and others. These authors have proven themselves as risk-takers: not only in their choice of themes, but also in plot construction, character formation, narrative voice and writing style.
  - In Krauss' two most recent novels (the two covered in this guide), there is a definite similarity in themes (death, loss, time, age, the Holocaust, Jewish culture and tradition). Her focus includes unique writing structures and experiments with narrative tone. Where *The History of Love* is quirky and whimsical, *Great House* is more dark and foreboding.
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# The History of Love

## Novel Quickline

Octogenarian Leo is lonely in an absolutely physical and visceral way. He is in the twilight of his life and constantly contemplates his death; his greatest fear is to die unnoticed and invisible. But Leo's fight against anonymity begins to resolve itself as we tag along in the paralleled story of 14-year-old Alma. We follow the tracks that lead her to both Leo and the meaning behind his only novel, *The History of Love*, written at a time when Leo was young and the world was still whole.

Once, Leo lived across the ocean, in a time and place prior to the Holocaust, when love vanished along with so many people. Leo lost not only the book, but also the object of his love, a girl named Alma who was then in her teenage years. Leo, now an old man, has lived his entire life in the shadow of that first love.

In New York, there is another Alma, aged 14. Her father had once found a Spanish version of *The History of Love* in a bookstore and he too fell in love with that Alma—so much so that the fictional Alma was his daughter's namesake. It is in these parallel stories that Leo and the young Alma try to find each other: Leo looks for his irretrievable love, while Alma searches for the idea that captured her dead father's heart.

*The History of Love* is an extraordinary look at the many layers and meanings of love in an effort to describe this elusive emotion and to make the world a little less lonely.

## Keys to the Novel

- The title of this novel, *The History of Love*, has such a grandiose, exaggerated tone to it that a reader might feel that it should contain all of life's final and definitive answers, as if it were a really good piece of non-fiction. And yet, as Leo tells us, he knows nothing. No one in the book does.



**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:**

**[www.bookclubinabox.com/discussion-guides](http://www.bookclubinabox.com/discussion-guides)**