

**BOOK
CLUB
IN A BOX**

THE COMPLETE PACKAGE
FOR READERS AND LEADERS

DISCUSSES PHILIP ROTH'S NOVEL

**THE PLOT
AGAINST
AMERICA**

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BOOK CLUB IN A BOX

Bookclub-in-a-Box presents the discussion companion for Philip Roth's novel The Plot Against America

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

This discussion companion for **The Plot Against America** 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 Plot Against America

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CONTACT INFORMATION: SEE BACK COVER.

BOOKCLUB-IN-A-BOX

Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America*

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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

Key to the Novel

Author Information

INTRODUCTION

Novel Quickline

It is 1940, and seven-year-old Philip Roth is reflecting on his childhood memories of the night that Charles A. Lindbergh is chosen by the Republican Party to run for the presidency of the United States. He is at home in his comfortable and familiar Weequahic neighborhood in Newark, New Jersey. The population consists of typical hardworking, blue-collar Americans, a good portion of whom happen to be Jewish. Philip's family includes his parents; his brother, Sandy; his cousin, Alvin; and his Aunt Evelyn. The neighbors include Seldon Wishnow and his mother. Things are pretty stable and pleasant for this community until the night that *"the Republicans nominated Lindbergh and everything changed."* (p.2) The precise changes that occur are the subject of this novel. They take place not only within the family and its community, but within the nation and possibly the world.

notes

Young Philip watches as his family and neighbors deal with the certainty of the dangers that will come via Lindbergh, an avowed anti-Semite, as he steps up to the highest job in the land. There is shock, there is awe, and there is fear. Roth takes this huge, political and historical, national and international narrative and pulls it directly down to personal eye level.

As a writer, Philip Roth has never shied away from very large issues and questions, and this novel is no exception. **The Plot Against America** strikes into the very heart of the reader, because it focuses on an ambiguous peril that seems to come from without and that threatens security within.

Keys to the Novel

Parallel History

- Philip Roth calls this novel a false memoir. He gives it an accurate historical and political backdrop by integrating real events and personal biographical facts, but he changes one thing: he makes Lindbergh the fictional president and then sits back and watches the ripples.
- Roth works from the boundaries of his known world. His real family is positioned among the people of 1940s Newark, whose thoughts and perspectives Roth remembers well. He also includes many well-known and influential personalities of the time. Roth was always observant as a child, and much of what he saw impacted him as an adult. Therefore, this novel is a parallel history: one that follows the parameters and boundaries of a specific time and place in Philip Roth's past, but with a single difference.



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

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