

# BOOK CLUB IN A BOX

THE COMPLETE PACKAGE  
FOR READERS AND LEADERS

DISCUSSES BARBARA KINGSOLVER'S NOVEL

# THE POISONWOOD BIBLE

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# **BOOK CLUB IN A BOX**

## **Bookclub-in-a-Box presents the discussion companion for Barbara Kingsolver's novel The Poisonwood Bible**

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

This discussion companion for **The Poisonwood Bible** 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 Poisonwood Bible**

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# BOOKCLUB-IN-A-BOX

## Barbara Kingsolver's *The Poisonwood Bible*

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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**

**Keys to the Novel**

**Author Information**

**Historical Overview**

# INTRODUCTION

## Suggested Beginnings

1. Traditional narration uses only one voice, either the first person or the third person. There are five narrators in *The Poisonwood Bible*, all of them female; each with a different voice, language pattern, and rhythm.

**How successful, or confusing, or interesting, is this method? What is Kingsolver's purpose? Do you have a favorite narrator?**

2. The history of the Congo is emotionally charged, complicated, and long. There are already many famous books of fiction and countless items of analysis concerning the Congo. Barbara Kingsolver is jumping into that analytical arena with this novel, which discusses the American missionary movement in Africa.

**Has Kingsolver offered a unique, balanced and/or accurate perspective? How appropriate is it for a white American woman, Kingsolver, or her character, Leah, to comment on and criticize the situation in the Congo?**

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notes

3. The Price family saga ends on Page 414.

**Should the novel have ended here as well?**

4. The character of Adah is extremely interesting, not only for her articulate and creative use of language, but also because of her physical and emotional handicap. She limps and she rarely speaks.

**Discuss this character and her role in the novel.**

5. There are no male narrators in the novel.

**Discuss the significance of their absence. Would the reader have benefited from their perspective? Consider Kingsolver's treatment of these men.**

## Novel Quickline

Orleanna Price, the mother of four girls (Rachel, Leah, Adah, Ruth May) and wife of Nathan Price (a Baptist preacher), finds herself dropped in the middle of the jungle in the heart of Africa in 1959. This missionary family comes to the Congo with what they believe to be honorable intentions: to help the people live a “better” life and to save their “heathen” souls.

We live with the Price family for the year they spend in Kilanga, and then we follow them in and out of Africa and America for the next three-and-a-half decades.

Meanwhile, a political drama of tremendous magnitude is unfolding around them. We watch as the fledgling Congo gains its independence from Europe, and we see how the United States becomes involved. As we get to know each of the Price women – and through their eyes, Nathan – we catch glimpses into the lives of the rural Congolese, of the missionary movement,





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

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