

BOOK CLUB IN A BOX

THE COMPLETE PACKAGE
FOR READERS AND LEADERS

DISCUSSES ELIZABETH HAY'S NOVEL

A STUDENT OF WEATHER

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BOOK CLUB IN A BOX

Bookclub-in-a-Box presents the discussion companion for Elizabeth Hay's novel A Student of Weather

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Quotations used in this guide have been taken from the text of the hardcover edition of **A Student of Weather**. All information taken from other sources is acknowledged.

This discussion companion for **A Student of Weather** 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.

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A Student of Weather
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CONTACT INFORMATION: SEE BACK COVER.

BOOKCLUB-IN-A-BOX

Elizabeth Hay's *A Student of Weather*

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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

INTRODUCTION

Suggested Beginnings

1. From the very first page, Hay's symbols, images and references are tightly woven together and difficult to separate. In the novel's opening paragraph, there are at least five references to things that will appear later in the story.

Some nights she still goes over every detail, beginning with the weather and proceeding to the drop of blood on the old sheet - her quick wish for a man with straight white teeth and red lips - and then his arrival. His voice outside, her hand on the coin of frostbite on his cheek, his gift of an apple. (p.1)

Find the symbols and consider Hay's writing style on its own or in comparison to other writers you have enjoyed.

2. The characters in the novel range from the beautiful Lucinda and the mysterious Maurice to the homely Norma Joyce.

For which character do you have sympathy? For which, not? How effectively has Hay led you in either direction?

3. Norma Joyce had a twin brother, Norman, who died when she was two. This incident takes place before the novel opens.

Why has Hay created this character and why is Norma Joyce given his name? Consider how guilt has become Norma Joyce's companion in place of this sibling.

4. In the barn scene (p.62) Norma Joyce is attacked.

Is this attempted rape? Is this man a drifter, or is he someone Norma Joyce knows? Consider why this incident is placed in the novel and what it contributes to the story.

5. Norma Joyce has an adulterous relationship with her boss, Frank, and in so doing betrays her friend, Hilda, Frank's wife.

Consider this relationship in contrast to her relationship with Maurice. Is the reader meant to sympathize with Norma Joyce or not?

6. Norma Joyce had a mixed and troubled relationship with her father.

Why does Norma Joyce take such good care of Ernest, when he so clearly favors Lucinda?

7. **Why does Lucinda have to die? Whose fault is this accident – Lucinda's, Norma Joyce's?**

8. **If the coin of frostbite is meant to "mark" someone's sin (Maurice), what is the meaning of the echo of the coin on Johnny's face?**

9. Norma Joyce is a strong survivor.

How does her strength of character fit into Hay's presentation of the Darwinian theory of survival?

Novel Quickline

A Student of Weather takes place in three locations: rural Saskatchewan; Ottawa, Ontario; and New York City. The novel deals with two sisters who fall in love with the same man. During the 1930s, Maurice Dove is sent to the Canadian prairies to study their drought-stricken weather patterns. He meets the beautiful Lucinda, who is then eighteen years of age, and her younger sister, Norma Joyce, aged nine.

The novel follows the girls through their individual (perceived and real) relationships with Maurice over a forty-year span during which time they move from Saskatchewan to Ottawa to New York.

The novel discusses the attraction and potential clash of opposite forces in love and in nature and is set against the symbolic backdrop of weather.

In an article by Anjali Kapoor, Elizabeth Hay is quoted as saying:

Visually weather is endlessly fascinating, always changing and it affects our mood so deeply. Weather is at the root of so much historical drama - it determines why people move and where they move to. They leave one drought-stricken area for another and the reason for that is the weather - so it shapes our lives and it shapes the movement of people over time.

The study of weather in this novel is the catalyst for the study of people's reactions and interactions with each other. Hay's novel explores the movement and fluctuation of human emotions.



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

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print or PDF format, just visit:**

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