

# BOOK CLUB IN A BOX

THE COMPLETE PACKAGE  
FOR READERS AND LEADERS

A NOVEL NOTES DISCUSSION OF

LORI LANSENS' NOVEL

# THE GIRLS

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# **BOOK CLUB IN A BOX**

**Bookclub-in-a-Box presents the  
Novel Notes Mini-Guide  
discussion companion for  
Lori Lansens' novel  
The Girls**

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

This discussion companion for **The Girls** 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 Girls**

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# BOOKCLUB-IN-A-BOX

## Lori Lansens' *The Girls*

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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**

## NOVEL NOTES

Novel Notes is a Bookclub-in-a-Box mini-guide available only in PDF, downloadable electronic form. It may be used in the same way as a full Bookclub-in-a-Box discussion guide and, in fact, has many of the same features. (see *Readers and Leaders guide*, p.2) We hope you are entertained by Lori Lansens' novel, our notes, and your discussion.

## INTRODUCTION

### Novel Quickline

In 1974, Rose and Ruby Darlen are born, joined at the head with no possibility of surgical correction. They are adopted by the nurse in attendance, Lovey, and her husband, Stash. Raised first in a rural and then in a small town neighborhood, the girls have a compact circle of people with whom they interact.

Everyone knows them, and their upbringing is as normal and loving as can be expected under the circumstances. Their school life and adolescent experiences are fairly common with two striking exceptions – Rose's encounter with Frankie Foyle and the family's trip to Slovakia. They continue into adulthood working and living independently, and contributing productively to their community.

Each girl tells the story in her own words and each balances the other's perspective against her own. Rose means for the story to be her autobiography, but as Ruby wonders, how can Rose tell the story of her personal life when it is so bound up with her sister's? (see *Autobiography*, p.24)

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notes

## Keys to the Novel

### The Girls: A Character Novel

- First and foremost, this book is a character novel about two girls, Rose and Ruby, who happen to be conjoined twins. They see themselves as separate beings and so do we, but they have more than two personalities – they have three. The third is the conjoined essence of their physical and psychological being, and it cannot be separated out. Their conjoinment is a form of symbiosis, *“an instinct to cooperate which [makes] them efficient and ensure[s] their survival.”* (p.121) (see Symbiosis, p.22)

*... my sister and I are affixed, our faces not quite side by side, our skulls fused together in a circular pattern running up the temple and curving around the frontal lobe. If you glance at us, you might think we're two women embracing, leaning against the other tete-à-tete, the way sisters do.* (p.2)

- One likes sports, the other history. One is a writer, the other watches film and television. One is brunette, the other auburn-haired. One is beautiful, the other's face is misshapen. One carries the other with *“her arm forever around [her] neck.”* (p.3)

### The Girls: An Autobiography

- Rose composes her story using literary techniques, and, like any story-teller, probably embellishes much of it, while Ruby pares down her tale to its bare essentials. Each sister fills in some of the missing blanks, and the end result is that we have two perspectives that try to make the story whole.



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

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print or PDF format, just visit:**

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