

BOOK CLUB IN A BOX

Bookclub-in-a-Box presents the discussion companion for Kathryn Stockett's novel **The Help**

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

This discussion companion was written by Marilyn Herbert, B.Ed. She 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.

This guide was co-written by Rona Arato. For more information about the Bookclub-in-a-Box team, visit our website.

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BOOKCLUB-IN-A-BOX

Kathryn Stockett's *The Help*

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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), by email (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 Yourself

INTRODUCTION

Novel Quickline

Keys to the Novel

Author Information

INTRODUCTION

Novel Quickline

It is 1962 in Jackson, Mississippi and 22-year-old Skeeter has just graduated from Ole Miss. She comes home with a diploma, but no husband, in a world where her friends are all married and raising children, with the help of their black maids. Skeeter does not fit the mold. At a time and place where the ideal white woman is petite with carefully groomed straight hair and even more carefully groomed manners, Skeeter is tall and outspoken, with wild and curly hair. Her mother wants Skeeter to wed; Skeeter wants to be a journalist.

While Skeeter was at school, her beloved Constantine, the maid who raised her, mysteriously disappeared and no one, especially her mother, will tell Skeeter what happened and where Constantine has gone.

notes

Skeeter's best friend and former roommate, Hilly, is president and self-proclaimed leader of the Junior League. Hilly has come up with a "Home Sanitation Health Initiative" that would require every white home to have a separate "colored" bathroom. This preventative measure would ensure that the help would not share the family toilet. Hilly explains:

"All these houses they're building without maid's quarters? It's just plain dangerous. Everybody knows they carry different kinds of diseases than we do." (p.10)

The friends are part of a bridge group that also includes Elizabeth Leefolt, whose maid Aibileen helps Skeeter in her first journalistic job as the writer of a weekly cleaning advice column. Skeeter knows nothing about taking care of a home.

Minnie is Aibileen's best friend. With the heart of a lion and a sassy mouth, Minny gets fired from position after position. She finally finds a job with a brassy newcomer, Celia Foote, whose efforts at friendship are constantly rejected by the Junior League women.

Skeeter, Aibileen, and Minny come together when Skeeter sets out to tell the maids' stories from their point of view. But in Jackson, where a colored boy is blinded for accidentally using a whites only bathroom, and Civil Rights activist Medgar Evers is shot in his driveway in front of his children, this is a dangerous undertaking. They must work in secret to protect their project, their jobs, and even their lives.

Keys to the Novel

Narration

- The novel is written in first-person narrative and alternates between the three main characters: Skeeter, Aibileen, and Minny. For Aibileen, Minny, and the other maids, Stockett has used a black



**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:**

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