

BOOK CLUB IN A BOX

**Bookclub-in-a-Box presents the
discussion companion for
Khaled Hosseini's novel**

A THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS

Novel published by Viking Canada, The Penguin Group. Toronto, 2007. ISBN 13: 978-0-670-06491-5.

Quotations used in this guide have been taken from the text of the hardcover edition of *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. 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.

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Bookclub-in-a-Box discussion companion for A Thousand Splendid Suns

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This guide reflects the perspective of the Bookclub-in-a-Box team and is the sole property of Bookclub-in-a-Box.

BOOKCLUB-IN-A-BOX

Khaled Hosseini's A Thousand Splendid Suns

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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

A Thousand Splendid Suns tells the story of the developing relationship between two very different women against the backdrop of Afghanistan before and during the Soviet invasion, through the arrival and reign of the Taliban, and beyond 9/11. We meet Mariam first. She is the illegitimate daughter of a wealthy businessman and his housekeeper, Nana. Early in her life, Nana tells Mariam, “*A man’s accusing finger always finds a woman.*” (p.7) Mariam discovers the truth of this statement when she is forced at the age of 15 to marry Rasheed, a shoemaker who is decades older than her.

Later in the story we are introduced to the much younger Laila who is born around the time that Mariam and Rasheed are married. Her family lives next door. As Laila grows up, she and her best friend, Tariq, fall in love. Tariq’s gentle personality gives us hope that Mariam’s mother’s harsh words are false. That optimism, however, is soon shattered when Laila, also at the age of 15, is taken into Mariam’s home as Rasheed’s second wife.

The stories merge as the two women form a strong bond while struggling to survive the violence of both Rasheed and the Taliban.

Keys to the Novel

To fully appreciate Hosseini's frame of reference for Afghanistan, it is important to look at the two novels that he has written to date because they present both genders in the population. The books complement each other in characters and theme.

The Kite Runner offers a portrait of two Afghan boys who represent the country's sons. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* does the same for the two women who represent Afghanistan's daughters.

The Two Stories

The Kite Runner

- The timespan of this book runs from the early 1970s to the Taliban rule in the 1990s. The protagonists are two boys: Amir, the legitimate son of a wealthy father, a Pashtun Sunni; and Hassan, who we later discover to be the illegitimate son of the same father, but who has been raised as the son of his servant Ali, a Shi'a Hazara.
- The boys are close as children, but Amir deals heavily with what he perceives to be his father's ambivalence towards him. He has the sense that his father prefers Hassan to be his emblematic son.
- A violent act changes both their lives and the boys eventually separate. With the arrival of the Soviets, Amir and his father are forced to flee the country while Hassan and his father, Ali, stay behind. Amir and his father make their way through Pakistan to the United States, where they join a community of other Afghan émigrés. Although they carry few physical goods with them, Amir has a lot of emotional baggage, including his treatment of and skewed relationship with Hassan.



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

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print or PDF format, just visit:**

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