

# **BOOK CLUB IN A BOX**

## **Bookclub-in-a-Box presents the discussion companion for Joseph Boyden's novel**

### **Three Day Road**

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

This discussion companion for **Three Day Road** has been prepared and written by Marilyn Herbert, originator of Bookclub-in-a-Box. Marilyn Herbert 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.

Assistance on this guide was provided by Anne Isenberg.

### **Bookclub-in-a-Box discussion companion for Three Day Road**

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**CONTACT INFORMATION: SEE BACK COVER.**

# BOOKCLUB-IN-A-BOX

## Joseph Boyden's Three Day Road

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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**

**Novel Quickline**

**Key to the Novel**

**Author Information**

**Background Information**

# INTRODUCTION

## Novel Quickline

Joseph Boyden has written an extraordinary novel that creeps quietly into our hearts and souls, on the moccasined feet of two Cree Indians.

The story is set near the beginning of the 20th century. Xavier is from Northern Ontario. Orphaned early, he is raised by his aunt, Niska, in the bush after she rescues him from a terrible residential school. Niska liberates Elijah, Xavier's friend, at the same time. The boys spend almost all of their time together, growing into adulthood.

When Canada goes to war, Xavier and Elijah volunteer for their country. They are expert bush hunters who will use their ancient skills to successfully track the enemy overseas. However, they quickly discover that war does not follow the same rules as the bush.

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It is a hellish world, filled with confusion and illogical rules and only Xavier returns from it. He is badly wounded, addicted to morphine and haunted by everything that happened overseas. Over the three days that it takes his aunt to bring him home to the bush, he and Niska relay their individual experiences through soundless, layered stories. (see *Narrators*, p.49)

## Key to the Novel

### Narrative Structure

- By using storytelling as the framework of the novel, Joseph Boyden allows Xavier and Niska to present the facts and details of Indian life at a pivotal time of change, when the historic First Nations people and their culture were beginning to disappear.
- Boyden makes unusual use of first person narrative. He has Xavier and Niska tell their stories in an unvoiced, implicit alignment. This structure captures the nuanced emotions of the story, while at the same time depicting the physical struggle of a three day paddle up the river. Boyden makes us feel we are in the canoe with them. (see *Writing Style and Structure*, p.49)

*I know that Xavier wants to talk to me. He goes so far as to let words come out of his mouth when he sleeps. He says very little when he's awake ... Words are all I have left now. I've lived alone so long that I realize I'm starved to talk. And so, as I paddle him gently with the river, I talk to him, tell him about my life. (p.82)*

**What are your thoughts about the narration of this novel? Do the two voices complement or conflict with each other? Is one more powerful or more interesting, or are they equal in the telling of the story?**

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

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print or PDF format, just visit:**

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