

BOOK CLUB IN A BOX

Bookclub-in-a-Box presents the discussion companion for Joseph Boyden's novel Through Black Spruce

Published by Anchor Canada, 2004, a division of Random House of Canada Limited. ISBN: 0-385-65980-6

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

This discussion companion for *Through Black Spruce* 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 Through Black Spruce

ISBN 10: 1-897082-64-9

ISBN 13: 9781897082645

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BOOKCLUB-IN-A-BOX

Joseph Boyden's *Through Black Spruce*

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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 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

Keys to the Novel

Narrative Structure

Author Information

Background Information

INTRODUCTION

Novel Quickline

- Will is a charming, easygoing man with an alcohol problem, and blames himself for the deaths of his wife and two sons. He was supposed to fix the electrical box in his house, but didn't get around to it. Because of this absent-minded mistake, a fire broke out and burned down his house with the family inside. Will witnessed the aftermath from the air while on his way back home from a flight.
- Will's nieces, Annie and Suzanne, are his sister Lisette's children. Suzanne had run away with Gus, the younger brother of Will's nemesis, Marius Netmaker. The two were living a highly dangerous life in Montreal and New York where Suzanne worked as a fashion model. She has now disappeared, however, and the family worries that she is in danger or dead.

- This is the backstory to the novel that opens with Will lying in coma after a particularly devastating and final attack by Marius. Annie, who had been searching for Suzanne, has returned to be with Will; she is literally trying to talk him back into consciousness. Our two protagonists, Will and Annie, guide us through the novel as he unveils the details behind his hospitalized situation and she pieces together Suzanne's tale.
- Their voices form the dual strands of narrative in the book. Together, they illustrate the dramatic power of silent communication, which is a large part of Aboriginal culture and personality, while emphasizing the storytelling component of a long and respected oral tradition. These elements parallel the silent narratives of Niska and Xavier in Boyden's other novel, *Three Day Road*.
- In each of Boyden's books, the characters work through their struggles by reaching out to the other's consciousness and awareness.

Keys to the Novel

Trilogy

- Starting with *Three Day Road*, Boyden hopes to present a trilogy; *Through Black Spruce* is the series' second installment. After the first novel, Boyden felt that Xavier Bird had more to say and felt that, like real families, Boyden's characters would live on through their children and grandchildren.
- Will Bird, Xavier's son, is now a 55-year-old former bush pilot. He is the first of two narrators in *Through Black Spruce*; Annie, his sister's daughter, is the second. The novel presents another character link from *Three Day Road*: Marius Netmaker is the grandson of



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

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print or PDF format, just visit:**

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