

BOOK CLUB IN A BOX

THE COMPLETE PACKAGE
FOR READERS AND LEADERS

DISCUSSES AUDREY NIFFENEGGER'S NOVEL

THE TIME TRAVELER'S WIFE

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BOOK CLUB IN A BOX

Bookclub-in-a-Box presents the discussion companion for Audrey Niffenegger's novel The Time Traveler's Wife

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Quotations used in this guide have been taken from the text of the paperback edition of *The Time Traveler's Wife*. All information taken from other sources is acknowledged.

This discussion companion for *The Time Traveler's Wife* 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.

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CONTACT INFORMATION: SEE BACK COVER.

BOOKCLUB-IN-A-BOX

Audrey Niffenegger's *The Time Traveler's Wife*

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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

Suggested Beginnings

Novel Quickline

Key to the Novel

Author Information

Punk

Goth

Rainer Maria Rilke

INTRODUCTION

Suggested Beginnings

1. The *Time Traveler's Wife* is often advertised as a science fiction story. **Into what category would you place this novel – science fiction? romance? fantasy? drama? Is there another category that would fit better?**

2. Niffenegger's book bends time, but not with the use of technology. Time is an arbitrary, man-made measure and the reader must choose whether or not to accept the belief that time in the novel does indeed bend and that Henry can travel back and forth. This idea is based on the difference between possibility and plausibility.

When deciding whether or not to believe in Henry as a time traveler, consider the difference in the definitions of "possibility" and "plausibility".

3. Niffenegger is primarily a product of the eighties, the period in which she grew up. She is a young and edgy artist and writer who believes that to portray life, her work should embody an element of strangeness and should include a slight change in the universe as we know it.

Who is her audience? Is this primarily a women's story, or can men also find something familiar in the characters and plot?

4. Brad Pitt purchased the film rights for this novel and is a co-producer. The film stars Rachel McAdams (Clare) and Eric Bana (Henry)

Now that you have read the book, have you seen the film? If so, decide if it lives up to your imaginative expectations. Discuss the idea of transforming literature to film.

5. Many writers use themselves as models for their characters. While *The Time Traveler's Wife* is not a biography in any way, there are bits and pieces of Niffenegger in her characters.

In which character(s) do you see Niffenegger?

6. Claire is a cubist artist, which means that her portraits show the individual features of the person in a rearrangement of their separate pieces into an abstract form. Niffenegger does the same in the novel. She breaks time into its individual features and reorganizes them randomly.

In what way can this technique contribute to how we understand relationships? Consider Niffenegger's combined artistic/literary style in your discussion of the novel's themes and characters.

7. Despite the debate about which literary genre this novel fits into, Niffenegger claims she has written the ultimate love story.

Do you agree or disagree?

8. Henry feels strongly that one should not knowingly interfere with the future, yet this is just what he does with the lottery tickets.

Consider this contradiction. Is Henry's action wrong or immoral? If you could read the future, what would you do in Henry's situation?

9. The most momentous event in Henry's life was his mother's death. Nothing could have prevented that, but Henry visits her from time to time.

Is this time travel, memory or imagination?

10. One of the novel's ideas is about "causality", the domino effect that leads from one event to another. In other words, every decision we make has an impact.

If Henry decided to stay in Ingrid's present, would she have lived? What effect would there have been if Henry had willingly told Clare all she wanted to know about the future? If you could know the future, would you make changes? What might they be?

11. Clare spends much of her life waiting for Henry to return. Niffenegger says that true love, even when interrupted, will be rewarded some day.

Is this a satisfactory outlook for our present times? Is there another reason why Clare only sees Henry in her very old age?

12. Henry's time travel visits to his mother are fulfilling and painful at the same time. He loves to talk to her, even as a stranger. Perhaps it is a renewed opportunity for Henry to imagine what he would say to her now that he is grown.

Consider the idea of a new chance. Would you use it, if it were offered? What might you say?

Novel Quickline

This is a love story of a married couple, Henry de Tamble, a punkish librarian, and Clare Abshire, an artist with a patient, serious demeanor. The story sounds ordinary so far, but like any unique love affair, this story is anything but ordinary. In Niffenegger's hands, theirs is a love story that strives to prove that love exceeds the physical boundaries of earth and body and that it exceeds the metaphysical boundaries of time.



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

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print or PDF format, just visit:**

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