

BOOK CLUB IN A BOX

**Bookclub-in-a-Box presents the
discussion companion for
Camilla Gibb's novel**

The Beauty of Humanity Movement

Novel published by Doubleday Canada, a division of Random House of Canada Limited, Toronto. 2010.

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Quotations used in this guide have been taken from the text of the hardcover edition of *The Beauty of Humanity Movement*. 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 Jo-Ann Zoon. For more information about the Bookclub-in-a-Box team, visit our website.

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BOOKCLUB-IN-A-BOX

Camilla Gibb's *The Beauty of Humanity Movement*

READERS AND LEADERS GUIDE	2	Betrayal/Forgiveness	64
INTRODUCTION		Lost/Found	66
Novel Quickline	7	Communism/Capitalism	67
Keys to the Novel	8	WRITING STYLE AND STRUCTURE	
Author Information	11	Framework	73
IN HER OWN WORDS: Q&A WITH CAMILLA GIBB	17	Setting and Flashbacks	74
CHARACTERIZATION		Voice	74
Old Man Hung	37	Sensory Detail	74
Binh	39	SYMBOLS	
Tu	41	Pho	77
Maggie	43	Flowers	78
Lan	45	Fruit	79
Phuong	47	Tigers	80
Dao	49	Quiet	81
FOCUS POINTS AND THEMES		Shoes	82
Balance of Yin and Yang	55	LAST THOUGHTS	
Economy	55	Historical Fiction	85
Beauty/Ugliness of Humanity	56	The Real Vietnam	86
Memory	58	Dramatic Tension	87
Family/The Outsider	60	Suggested Beginnings	88
Legacy/Suppression of Art	62	FROM THE NOVEL (QUOTES)	95
		ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	103

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

“An intensive course in Vietnamese history, Gibb’s poised and thoughtful novel does not flinch from horror but is also open to the beauty of this scarred country.”

– Jane Housham, *The Guardian* (UK)

The mystery and beauty of modern day Vietnam is skillfully unveiled in *The Beauty of Humanity Movement*. Camilla Gibb’s fourth novel takes its title from a short-lived group of artists and intellectuals who spoke out against some of Ho Chi Minh’s policies, following the country’s liberation from colonial rule.

Set in the recent past amidst the vibrancy of Hanoi, *The Beauty of Humanity Movement* tells the story of a country undergoing extraordinary change. Gibb weaves together a tale of love, loss and redemption, while exploring the legacy of art and the meaning of family, defined *“not always by bloodlines but by the heart.”* (Random House)

notes

At the heart of this story is Old Man Hung, one of the few remaining witnesses to the circle of outspoken artists and intellectuals who congregated in the café he inherited, and lost, many years before. Now living in a Hanoi shantytown, Hung struggles to find new ways to feed his neighbours, especially during a time when people are so hungry they sometimes eat their own lice. Also to be fed are the loyal customers who track the movements of his illegal cart for their daily bowl of the best pho (traditional Vietnamese noodle soup) in the region. Among the regulars are Binh and Tu, the son and grandson of Hung's mentor Dao, a poet and member of The Beauty of Humanity Movement, who was killed by the Communists on his way to a re-education camp.

With a failing memory and the great love of his life lost, Hung's days seem to be nearly over until a chance encounter with Maggie, a young Vietnamese-American art curator who comes to Hanoi in search of clues about the life of her father, an artist who disappeared during the Fall of Saigon. For 80-year-old Hung, Maggie's appearance evokes painful memories of the woman he turned his back on 40 years before, but whose curious beauty and betrayal still haunt him.

As Hung embarks on a journey through the past — from the intellectual ferment of the 1930s, through to French colonization, Japanese occupation, the oppressive practices that followed in the wake of liberation, and the bitter years of the Vietnam War — Hung's extended family is there to ensure a future marked by hopeful optimism.

Keys To The Novel

The Beauty of Humanity Movement is about the ideals, the vision, and the flaws of humanity. As such, the novel links people, remembrances, and perspectives in an effort to balance and fuse them into a single entity. The novel's main metaphor is pho, the national soup, made from layering individual elements and flavors. (see **Pho**, p.77)

notes



**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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