

BOOK CLUB IN A BOX

Bookclub-in-a-Box presents the discussion companion for Paula McLain's novel

The Paris Wife

Novel published in hardcover by Bond Street Books, a registered trademark of Random House of Canada, 2011.

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Quotations used in this guide have been taken from the text of the hardcover edition of *The Paris Wife*. 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 Samantha Bailey, with assistance by Graeme Bayliss. For more information about the Bookclub-in-a-Box team, visit our website.

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The Paris Wife

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BOOKCLUB-IN-A-BOX

Paula McLain's *The Paris 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 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

Key to the Novel

Author Information

INTRODUCTION

Novel Quickline

1920 was the start of a new and exciting decade. The First World War had just ended, and life was changing for both men and women. Despite America's prohibition era, life seemed more free than ever. Hidden inside the speak-easies and private homes, people celebrated life and living. They drank and danced their way into forgetting the torment of the previous decade of war.

Under the lights of this American stage, 29-year-old Hadley Richardson met a dynamic and intense 21-year-old Ernest Hemingway and they fell in love. The story of their romance and subsequent marriage is captured in *The Paris Wife*, a novel based on the true story of Hemingway's first wife.

As the pages turn, Hadley engages us in her life with Ernest until both the marriage and the story draw to a heartwrenching close.

notes

Key to the Novel

In Paula McLain's novel, Ernest Hemingway is not yet a famous writer and we are treated to a personal perspective of the man behind the iconic persona, as told by the primary woman in his life at the time: the young and innocent Hadley Richardson. She is Hemingway's first wife during his sojourn in Paris.

The novel's style and structure is the successful key that unlocks Hadley's story. While it is Hadley's voice we hear throughout, McLain often uses Hemingway's strong and simple writing style to contain that voice. By using Hadley's words and thoughts, McLain shows how completely overwhelmed she was by her husband, to the point where she submerged her own interests, struggles, and passions in favor of his.

The evolution of Hadley Richardson from being Ernest Hemingway's first wife to becoming a woman of her own is McLain's remarkable achievement. She places Hadley as the lead character in her husband's life and work. (see **Writing Style and Structure**, p.41)

Author Information

- Before this book, Paula McLain already had experience in the field of memoir-writing. Not only has she written *The Paris Wife* (2010), the memoir-style novel about Ernest Hemingway's first wife, but she has written her own real memoir, *Like Family: Growing Up in Other People's Houses* (2003).
- McLain was born in 1965, the second of three sisters in Fresno, California. In 1970, the girls were abandoned by their parents. Dad was in jail for robbery, and Mom disappeared with a boyfriend. Until McLain was 18 years old, she and her siblings lived in a series of foster homes, some good and others not. It was only the last foster home, belonging to Bub and Hilde Lindbergh, that they stayed in for 11 years. The three sisters did not remain close to or even in

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**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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