

# BOOK CLUB IN A BOX

THE COMPLETE PACKAGE  
FOR READERS AND LEADERS

DISCUSSES GERALDINE BROOKS' NOVEL

## PEOPLE OF THE BOOK

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# **BOOK CLUB IN A BOX**

## **Bookclub-in-a-Box presents the discussion companion for Geraldine Brooks' novel**

### **People of the Book**

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

This discussion companion for **People of the Book** 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.

This guide was co-written by Erin Balser. For more information about the Bookclub-in-a-Box team, visit our website.

### **Bookclub-in-a-Box discussion companion for People of the Book**

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# BOOKCLUB-IN-A-BOX

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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**

**Keys to the Novel**

**Author Information**

**Background Information**

# INTRODUCTION

## Novel Quickline

*When he set it down on the bench I saw it was sealed in several places with stamped wax and adhesive papers. I passed him my scalpel. He broke the seals and eased open the lid. He unwrapped several sheets of silk paper. And then he handed me the book. (p.13)*

If the Sarajevo Haggadah could speak, what extraordinary stories it would tell. It has traveled through countries and centuries, used and threatened by people of different cultures and religions. Australian book conservator Hanna Heath is called to Sarajevo in 1996 to inspect the condition of the haggadah, which has been recovered after spending years in an underground vault. The UN agreed to fund its restoration. The book is a physical icon of survival and freedom for the people of Sarajevo. Its redemption will boost the city's morale after years of devastating war.

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notes

The novel heads in a number of directions, backwards and forwards in time, telling the stories of the “people of the book.” Starting in present time, Hanna discovers a number of interesting things: the plain binding does not match the opulence of the book’s contents and a piece of butterfly wing, blood, salt and wine stains, a single cat hair are all found within its pages. Each of these items acts as a vehicle to imagine where the book has been and who were the people that handled it. In other words, each item tells a story about the book’s history and the people who were part of it.

## Keys to the Novel

### People of the Book

- Jews have always been known as “the people of the book,” due, in part, to their relationship with the Torah and Jewish written law. The Five Books of Moses form the base of the Jewish faith, supported by many other religious and philosophical texts exploring ideology and practice.
  - To truly understand the people behind the Sarajevo Haggadah, it is important to understand the historical context surrounding each of their stories. While the chronicle presented in the novel is imagined, it is based on whatever factual evidence is known about the authentic historic book. Brooks uses the lens of history to fill in the story and bring the haggadah to life.
  - Each narrative in **People of the Book** circles a period of persecution in Jewish history. The novel is as much a story about the Jewish people as it is a story about the Sarajevo Haggadah itself. It represents Jewish struggles and triumphs, traditions and beliefs.
  - This story is also about the other people “behind the book”, those who were responsible for its creation, protection and restoration.
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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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