

BOOK CLUB IN A BOX

THE COMPLETE PACKAGE
FOR READERS AND LEADERS

DISCUSSES IRÈNE NÉMIROVSKY'S NOVEL

SUITE FRANÇAISE

1-866-578-5571

BOOKCLUBINABOX.COM

INFO@BOOKCLUBINABOX.COM

**THIS PDF GUIDE IS NOT FOR
DISTRIBUTION OR RESALE.**

BOOK CLUB IN A BOX

Bookclub-in-a-Box presents the discussion companion for Irène Némirovsky's novel Suite Française

Published by Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2006. Translated by Sandra Smith, 2006. ISBN: 1-4000-4473-1

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

This discussion companion for *Suite Française* 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 Adina Herbert. For more information about the Bookclub-in-a-Box team, visit our website.

Bookclub-in-a-Box discussion companion for Suite Française

ISBN 10: 1-897082-46-0

ISBN 13: 978-1897082-46-1

This guide reflects the perspective of the Bookclub-in-a-Box team and is the sole property of Bookclub-in-a-Box.

2007 BOOKCLUB-IN-A-BOX - AG
2008 BOOKCLUB-IN-A-BOX - JU

Unauthorized reproduction of this book or its contents for republication in whole or in part is strictly prohibited.

CONTACT INFORMATION: SEE BACK COVER.

BOOKCLUB-IN-A-BOX

Irène Némirovsky's *Suite Française*

READERS AND LEADERS GUIDE 2

INTRODUCTION

Novel Quickline	7
Keys to the Novel	8
Author Information	12

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The French/German Relationship and Vichy	21
“Resistance”	22

CHARACTERIZATION

Characterization	27
The Péricands	28
Corte	32
The Michauds	33
The Villagers	34
The Germans	38

FOCUS POINTS AND THEMES

Social Upheaval, Change	43
Mother Nature, Human Nature	45
Portrait of Resistance	47
Collaboration	49
Heroism	50

WRITING STYLE AND STRUCTURE

The Writing Process	53
Hindsight-Foresight	55
Psychological Fiction	57
Mood, Irony	57
Unfinished Business	58
War and Music	59

SYMBOLS

Music	63
Weather, Nature Imagery	65

LAST THOUGHTS

Goals and Intentions	69
An Overwhelming Task	70
Plans for Captivity	71
Controversy	72
Legacy	76
Suggested Beginnings	79

FROM THE NOVEL (QUOTES)83

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS. 93

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

INTRODUCTION

Novel Quickline

It is 1940 and the Germans are poised to enter Paris but have not yet arrived. In anticipation of the Germans' arrival, the people of Paris pack up to leave. There is no thought of staying, no thought of setting up a defense. Panic and chaos is the order of the day. Némirovsky paints a satiric and sad portrait of the Parisians, as they step all over themselves and others in their attempt to escape the unimaginable – the destruction of their beloved Paris: an event that never happened.

Némirovsky originally planned a work of five parts, but she only had time to complete two. This book is divided into two connected stories: *Storm in June* and *Dolce*. Part one describes the exodus from Paris and concentrates on the Péricand family, Gabriel Corte, Charles Langelet, and the Michauds.

notes

Némirovsky skewers all but the Michauds for their self-centeredness and self-absorption. Part two is softer, as its title suggests, and focuses on the relationship between a young Frenchwoman, Lucile Angellier, and Bruno von Falk, the German officer boarding in her home. Lucile is faced with the decision of choosing love over honor when a villager kills a German soldier, and the villager's wife seeks to hide him in Lucile's home. It is these questions of allegiance and pride that plague and confuse the villagers of the novel and all of France.

Némirovsky wrote this book in the years between 1940 and 1942. She recorded for posterity what she saw around her – the events and people's reactions to them. This beautifully written novel is a close-range, eyewitness account of war. Némirovsky explores the kinds of decisions people make in a time of war that demonstrate their character. She does this with a heightened understanding of human behavior and an instinctively literary mind that utilizes some techniques and methods that will be used only years after she is gone. (see *Hindsight–Foresight*, p.55)

Keys to the Novel

A Portrait of the Novel

To understand why *Suite Française* has captured the world's imagination, the novel must be looked at from three sides – a) the author (her history and personality); b) the French people of the day (their behavior and political history); and c) the book itself (its background mystery and literary structure).



**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:**

www.bookclubinabox.com/discussion-guides