

**BOOK  
CLUB  
IN A BOX**

THE COMPLETE PACKAGE  
FOR READERS AND LEADERS

DISCUSSES DAVID GROSSMAN'S NOVEL

**TO THE  
END OF  
THE LAND**



# BOOK CLUB IN A BOX

## Bookclub-in-a-Box presents the discussion companion for David Grossman's novel To the End of the Land

Hardcover novel published by McClelland & Stewart, Toronto, 2010. Originally published in Israel by HaKibbutz HaMeuchad Publishing House, Ltd., Tel Aviv, 2008.

Translation by Jessica Cohen.  
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Quotations used in this guide have been taken from the text of the hardcover edition of *To The End of the Land*. All information taken from other sources is acknowledged.

This discussion companion was written by Aaron Kreuter and Marilyn Herbert, B.Ed. Herbert 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. For more information about the Bookclub-in-a-Box team, visit our website.

### Bookclub-in-a-Box discussion companion for To The End of the Land

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# BOOKCLUB-IN-A-BOX

## David Grossman's *To the End of the Land*

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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](http://www.bookclubinabox.com)), by email ([info@bookclubinabox.com](mailto: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 Yourselves**

# **INTRODUCTION**

**Novel Quickline**

**Keys to the Novel**

**Author Information**

**Background Information**

# INTRODUCTION

## Novel Quickline

*During this eternal moment, she, and faraway Ofer, and everything that occurs in the vast space between them, are all deciphered in a flash of knowledge, like a densely woven fabric ... (p.72)*

*To the End of the Land* is the story of a woman attempting to deal with the everyday realities of life in modern-day Israel, a life lived out against the background of wars, occupations, intifadas, and the ever-present spectre of the Israeli army. Ora, a middle-aged Israeli woman, has watched her two boys make it through their mandatory military service without getting harmed. However, when Ora's younger son Ofer volunteers for a major battle — mere weeks after being discharged and days before he and Ora are supposed to go on a mother-son hiking trip in the north of Israel — Ora cannot deal with the pressure of sitting at home and waiting for the possible news of Ofer's death to reach her.

She takes her and Ofer's backpacks and, along with Avram, an old lover, she heads up into the Galilee. Away from the news, without cellphones, virtually severed from the outside world, they hike the country, telling their intertwined stories. Grossman paints a sweeping portrait of a family completely embroiled in the unescapable Israeli reality of the army.

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notes

The novel believes in what Grossman calls the “fullness of life” and, at the same time, it honestly represents the violence, complexity and demoralizing effect of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. At its core, *To the End of the Land* is a treatise on the importance of human relationships — in all their messy, emotional truth — in surviving life in a war-torn country, where the existential threat to the life of oneself and one’s loved ones is omnipresent. *To the End of the Land* is a love story, a drama, a war story, a family story, a female story, and, perhaps most importantly, a story about the importance of stories.

## Keys to the Novel

- *To the End of the Land* is a big, sweeping novel and an intimate family portrait, while at the same time being a deeply compelling exploration of modern Israel. For readers without detailed knowledge of Israeli politics, geography, or culture, the novel can seem quite daunting. However, at its core the book is also about “the fullness of life.” In the beautifully evoked scenes of domestic life, in the stories Ora tells about her children, the novel celebrates what is universally human. A good way into the novel is to let these stories wash over you, remind you of your own childhood/parenthood, and fill you with a new perspective of the “fullness of life.”
- The Israel Trail: For most of the novel, Ora and Avram are hiking on the Israel Trail in the Golan Heights and the Galilee. The Israel Trail is a hiking route that traverses Israel in a north-south orientation. It goes from Dan in the very north of Israel to Eilat in the very south, going through forest, mountain, desert, and urban landscapes in its almost 1000-kilometer journey. The pathway is maintained by the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel and, from end to end, takes about five months to complete. Grossman himself hiked the portion of the trail featured in the novel as research. The hike becomes a way for Ora and Avram to get reacquainted and escape from the news, from history, and from the army. As Ora says to Avram near the novel’s end, “*We’ll have to hike the whole country three times to fit everything in.*” (p.446)



## Author Information

- David Grossman is one of Israel's most prominent authors. Alongside Amos Oz and A.B. Yehoshua, he is now considered part of the old-guard of Israeli literature, and holds an honoured spot in Israeli culture. Grossman, while still a Zionist (meaning he believes in Israel's right to exist and to defend itself), has been vocally critical of Israel's government and its policies, in particular regarding the occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. For giving voice to these concerns, Grossman is a national hero to many in Israel.
- Grossman was born in 1954 in Jerusalem, and has lived the majority of his life in that city and its environs. Grossman has a B.A. from Hebrew University, and is married to Michal Grossman, who is a psychologist. They have three children, named Yonatan, Ruth, and Uri. (Uri died in 2006; more below).
- Grossman has written many novels, children's books, and non-fiction books. His translated novels include *The Smile of the Lamb* (original 1983, translation 1991); *See Under: Love* (original 1986, translation 1989); *The Book of Intimate Grammar* (original 1992, translation 1994); *Be My Knife* (original 1998, translation 2001); *Someone to Run With* (original 2000, translation 2004); and *Her Body Knows: Two Novellas* (2005).
- Most of Grossman's fiction deals with the effect of historical events (such as the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and the Holocaust) on the individual. He is ever curious about what happens to people in certain dramatic and traumatic situations and wonders how they cope. In an interview in *Publishers Weekly*, Grossman says that: "*The subject that captures and fascinates me the most is that clash between the individual and the arbitrariness of outside events, of governments, of the Holocaust, of machines, of the human body. The individual can redeem and redefine himself in front of that arbitrariness. For me, every book has been a part of the answer.*" (Handelzalts)



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

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