

BOOK CLUB TO GO!

WELCOME

Welcome to Kirkwood Public Library's **BOOK CLUB TO GO!** For your convenience we have prepared these kits, which consist of multiple copies of the selected title, as well as a discussion guide.

We hope you will enjoy your experience and come back for more.

This discussion guide will be a helpful tool for everyone from the novice to the veteran book clubber. We have assembled some great information to help you prepare and lead your book club group – tips on how to read a book for discussion, tips on how to lead a book discussion, information about the book and the author, and discussion questions. We would like to thank the

Ann Arbor Library, the Manitowoc Public Library, the Mid-Hudson Library System and the

Warren Newport Public Library for the resources they have provided. Also included are additional books and web sites if you would like to see more information on book discussions, as well as titles for further reading.

The book club kits circulate for six weeks to allow time for everyone to read the book in preparation for the discussion. As the library patron who has checked out this kit, you will be responsible for collecting the materials and returning the full kit to the library.

Please visit our web site http://www.kirkwoodpubliclibrary.org/book_club_kits.asp to

search our catalog or visit our Information Services Desk for additional titles.

Again, we hope you enjoy your experience!

Sponsored in part by Stifel Nicolaus

Book Club To Go titles include:

- All the Numbers
- Amish Grace
- Animal, Vegetable, Miracle
- Astrid & Veronika
- Atonement
- The Bonfire of the Vanities
- Centaur in the Garden
- Chocolat
- Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time
- The Dead
- The Death of Ivan Ilyich
- Devil in the White City
- Disgrace
- The Dive from Clausen's Pier
- The Double Bind
- Eat, Pray, Love
- Empire Falls
- The English Patient
- Eventide
- Farewell to Manzanar
- Garden Spells
- Gilead
- The Glass Castle
- The Great Gatsby
- Guernsey Literary & Potato Peel Pie Society
- Hours
- House of Sand and Fog
- In Cold Blood
- Into the Wild
- The Jane Austen Book Club
- Jazz
- Kaaterskill Falls
- The Kite Runner Life of Pi
- Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language
- Loving Frank
- Maytrees
- The Memory Keeper's Daughter
- The Mermaid Chair
- Middlesex
- Moonflower
- My Antonia
- My Sister's Keeper
- On Chesil Beach
- Other Boleyn Girl
- Out of Egypt
- Paula
- The Pilot's Wife
- Pride and Prejudice
- Reading Lolita in Tehran
- Rise and Shine
- Sense & Sensibility
- The Shipping News
- Snow Falling on Cedars
- Songs Without Words
- Thousand Acres

- A Thousand Splendid Suns
- Three Cups of Tea
- The Time Traveler's Wife
- To Kill a Mockingbird
- Travels with Charley: In Search of America
- Water for Elephants
- Whistling Season
- The World Below
- The Year of Magical Thinking

BOOK CLUB TO GO!

Reader's Guide

Tips on How to Read a Book for Discussion

- Ask yourself questions: Read carefully, and imagine yourself in the story. Think about the style and structure of the book. Does it have personal meaning for you?
- Make notes on a pad or notebook as you go. This may slow your reading, but saves time searching for key passages later.
- Ask tough questions of yourself and the book.
- Analyze themes: What is the author trying to say in the book?
- Get to know the characters: Consider their faults and motives and what it would be like to know them.
- Notice the book's structure: Do the chapters begin with quotes? How many people tell the story? Is the book written in flashbacks? Does the order make sense to you?
- Compare to other books and authors:
Themes often run through an author's works. Comparing one author's book with another's can help you decide how you feel about the book.

(Ann Arbor District Library)

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Discussion Leader Guide

Tips on How to Lead a Book Discussion

- Prepare ahead of time. Read the book, biographical information about the author and book reviews. Prepare 10-15 open-ended questions ahead of time or use the questions included with your Book Club To Go Kit.
- Have a comfortable seating arrangement.
- Begin by introducing yourself and, if people are not all familiar with each other, have them go around and introduce themselves.
- Think of yourself as a facilitator. Try to begin with a provocative question and step back. Avoid closed-ended questions like "Did you like the book?"
- Your job as a leader is to maintain the focus and keep the discussion moving.
- Be a good listener and observer. Listen for quiet members and try to draw them into the discussion. Watch for someone anxious to get into the conversation and help them to find a gap in the conversation.
- Push members beyond "I just didn't like it" statements. Ask them to describe why a book was unappealing. Books that inspire strong reactions—positive and negative—lead to some of the best discussions.
- Respect everyone's opinion. Not everyone will like the book. When there are differing views, encourage discussion about the reasons for liking or disliking a book. Let it be known that the group is non-judgmental and everyone's opinion is valued. Often the best discussions happen when there is less agreement.
- Balance the discussion between personal thoughts and responses to the book. Groups that spend a lot of time reminiscing personal reflections are no longer book discussion groups.
- Don't use the discussion questions as if it were an exam. Rather use them as conversation starters.
- Choose a favorite passage or two from the book. Reading aloud can bring a new perspective to the passage.
- Don't worry too much about short silent periods, but be prepared with your own notes to get the discussion started again.

- Be sure to end on time, summarize the points made during the session and thank everyone for their participation.

(Mid-Hudson Library System)

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FURTHER BOOK DISCUSSION RESOURCES

Books

- *The Book Club Companion: A Comprehensive Guide to the Reading Group Experience*, by Diane Loevy

Kirkwood Public Library 374.22 LOEVY

- *The Book Group Book: A Thoughtful Guide to Forming and Enjoying a Stimulating Book Discussion Group*, [edited by] Ellen Slezak

Held by other libraries in the Municipal Library Consortium

- *The Go on Girl! Book Club Guide for Reading Groups: Works Worth Reading, Chats with Our Favorite Authors, Tips for Starting and Sustaining a Literary Circle, Questions and Topics to Get you Talking . . . and More!*, by Monique Greenwood, Lynda Johnson and Tracy Mitchell-Brown

Held by other libraries in the Municipal Library Consortium

- *Good Books Lately: The One-Stop Resource for Book Groups and Other Greedy Readers*, by Ellen More and Kira Stevens

Held by other libraries in the Municipal Library Consortium

- *How to Organize a Steinbeck Book or Film Discussion Group*, by Susan Shillinglaw and Harold Augenbraum

Kirkwood Public Library 813.52 SHILL

- *The Kid's Book Club: Lively Reading and Activities for Grades 1-3*, by Desiree Webber and Sandy Shropshire

Held by other libraries in the Municipal Library Consortium

- *The Kids' Book Club Book: Reading Ideas, Recipes, Activities and Smart Tips for Organizing Terrific Kids' Book Clubs*, by Judy Gelman and Vicki Levy Krupp

Kirkwood Public Library 028.55 GELMA J

- *The Mother-Daughter Book Club: How 10 busy mothers and daughters came together to talk, laugh and learn through the love of reading*, by Shireen Dodson

Kirkwood Public Library 372.41 DODSO J & 374.2 DODSO

- *Read 'Em Their Rights: A Handbook for Mystery and Crime Fiction Book Discussions*, by Gary Warren Niebuhr

Held by other libraries in the Municipal Library Consortium

- *The Reader's Choice: 200 Book Club Favorites*, by Victoria Golden McMains

Kirkwood Public Library 372.44 MCMAI

- *Reading Group Choices: Selections for Lively Book Discussions*, [edited by] Mark Kaufman and Donna Paz

Held by other libraries in the Municipal Library Consortium

- *The Reading Group Handbook: Everything You Need to Know, From Choosing Members to Leading Discussions*, by Rachel W. Jacobsohn

Kirkwood Public Library 374.22 JACOB

- *Reading Raps: A Book Club Guide for Librarians, Kids and Families*, by Rita Soltan

Kirkwood Public Library 027.62 SOLTA J

- *Recipe for a Book Club: A Monthly Guide to Hosting Your Own Reading Group: Menus & Recipes, Featured Authors, Suggested Readings and Topical Questions*, by Mary O'Hare and Rose Storey

Kirkwood Public Library 374.22 OHARE

Web Sites

- NoveList

<http://www.kirkwoodpubliclibrary.org/information.asp> and click on the NoveList icon



- LitLovers

<http://litlovers.com/>

- Reading Group Guides

<http://www.readinggroupguides.com/content/index.asp>

- Reading Group Choices

<http://www.readinggroupchoices.com/>

- Manitowoc Public Library

<http://www.manitowoc.lib.wi.us/readers/guides/bookdiscussionkits.htm>

- Warren Newport Public Library

<http://www.wnpl.info/BookDiscussion/index.htm>

- Ann Arbor Library

<http://www.aadl.org/node/10322>

BOOK CLUB TO GO!

The Double Bind

By Chris Bohjalian

Introduction

When college sophomore Laurel Estabrook is attacked while riding her bicycle through Vermont's back roads, her life is forever changed. Formerly outgoing, Laurel withdraws into her photography and begins to work at a homeless shelter. There she meets Bobbie Crocker, a man with a history of mental illness and a box of photographs that he won't let anyone see. When Bobbie dies suddenly, Laurel discovers that he was telling the truth: before he was homeless, Bobbie Crocker was a successful photographer who had indeed worked with such legends as Chuck Berry, Robert Frost, and Eartha Kitt. As Laurel's fascination with Bobbie's former life begins to merge into obsession, she becomes convinced that some of his photographs reveal a deeply hidden, dark family secret. Her search for the truth will lead her further from her old life—and into a cat-and-mouse game with pursuers who claim they want to save her.

(litlovers.com)

About the Author

Chris Bohjalian is the author of eleven novels, including the *New York Times* bestsellers, *Skeletons at the Feast*, *The Double Bind*, *Before You Know Kindness*, *The Law of Similars*, and *Midwives*.

His next book, *Secrets of Eden*, will be published on February 2, 2010.

Chris won the New England Book Award in 2002, and his novel, *Midwives*, was a number one *New York Times* bestseller, a selection of Oprah's Book Club, a Publishers Weekly "Best Book," and a New England Booksellers Association Discovery pick. His work has been translated into over 25 languages and twice become movies ("*Midwives*" and "*Past the Bleachers*").

He has written for a wide variety of magazines, including *Cosmopolitan*, *Reader's Digest*, and the *Boston Globe Sunday Magazine*, and has been a Sunday columnist for *Gannett's Burlington Free Press* since 1992. Chris graduated from Amherst College, and lives in Vermont with his wife and daughter.

(chrisbohjalian.com)

Reviews

"Bohjalian is a master of literary suspense.... His are the sorts of books people stay awake all night to finish." —*The Washington Post Book World*

"Artfully crafted, terrifying.... Laurel is an unforgettable, vulnerable, complicated character." —*Los Angeles Times*

(readinggroupchoices.com)

Further Reading

Skeletons at the Feast by Chris Bohjalian

The Thirteenth Tale by Diane Setterfield

The Buffalo Soldier by Chris Bohjalian

Midwives by Chris Bohjalian

Garden Spells by Sarah Addison Allen

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The Double Bind By Chris Bohjalian

Possible Discussion Questions

1. Chris Bohjalian begins the novel with a very matter-of-fact description of a brutal attack. Later in the novel, he writes about Laurel, “She preferred black and white [photography] because she thought it offered both greater clarity and deeper insight into her subjects. In her opinion, you understood a person better in black and white” [p. 37]. Compare Laurel's analysis of photography to the writing style of the author, particularly in the prologue.
2. Bohjalian introduces the world of *The Great Gatsby* seamlessly into his characters' lives, and Fitzgerald's themes resonate deeply within *The Double Bind: the death of the American Dream*, repeating the past, and self-reinvention, to name a few. Discuss how each author (Fitzgerald and Bohjalian) explores these themes, and examine any others that stood out for you.
3. In a feat of narrative turnaround, *The Double Bind* ends with a shocking revelation. Did you find yourself reviewing the novel or rereading it to experience it anew? Did you find the treatment of F. Scott Fitzgerald's characters to be more or less significant in light of the revelation?
4. Discuss Bohjalian's treatment of homelessness, both as a reality and as an abstraction or social issue. Did *The Double Bind* change your thoughts and views on the plight of the homeless in America? If so, how?
5. Why did Laurel, as the author writes, allow Talia to “remain a part of her life when she had consciously exiled herself from the rest of the herd” [p. 134]?
6. We learn from Bohjalian that the phrase “double bind” is a psychiatric term for a “particular brand of bad parenting [that] could inadvertently spawn schizophrenia” [p. 215]. What else, in light of Laurel's history, might the title of the book refer to?
7. Is Laurel's imagined life for Bobbie—and all his psychiatric problems—a way for her to express her own psychotic break? Is the Bobbie Crocker that the reader gets to know really a facet of Laurel's personality?

8. Through most of the book the reader believes, along with Laurel, that she escaped certain rape—and that her ability to hold on to her bike saved her. But after the attack, she gives up biking. Discuss the play between the conscious and subconscious mind—a delicate balance that must have underlined all of Laurel's actions—in this abandonment of the very thing she'd convinced herself was her savior.
9. In what ways is Dan Corbett's tattoo of the devil as a skull with horns reminiscent of the billboard of the pair of eyes that overlooks the Valley of Ashes in *The Great Gatsby*? Is there other imagery in the novel that echoes Fitzgerald's tropes?
10. “For the first time, [Katherine] began to wonder if she'd made a serious mistake when she'd given Laurel that box of old photos” [p. 150]. Were the photos the catalyst for Laurel's downfall? Would Laurel have eventually suffered a similar psychological breakdown without the introduction of the photos?
11. How was Laurel able to block out what really happened to her when she carried real physical scars of the mutilation to remind her of it? Were there clues in the narrative that part of her did know what happened all along?
12. Laurel suffered a horrendous attack and managed to go on to do great work for the most neglected members of society. Does her breakdown have a negating effect on the seemingly heroic work that came before it? Why or why not?

(readinggroup.com)