

bookclubinabox.com

info@bookclubinabox.com

1-866-578-5571

BOOK CLUB IN A BOX

Spring Newsletter 2009

Bookclub-in-a-Box Speaks Out	1
The Uncommon Reader (review)	2
New Guide (Bennett); Notable Books	3
Circus Stories	4

Dear Bookclub-in-a-Box Subscriber,



Spring is a refreshing and optimistic time for planting flowers in our gardens and new books on our reading shelves.

Our newest guide is for Alan Bennett's funny and enchanting novel, **The Uncommon Reader**. On p.2 you will find a brief review and on p.3, our special pricing for this guide. In addition, we suggest other book titles for your interest.

In our last issue, we brought you details of Parade Magazine's unique contest for Sara Gruen's novel, **Water For Elephants**. Bookclub-in-a-Box hosted its own draw for prizes. On p.4 read excerpts from the entries of our five winners.

Keep on reading great novels and continue discussing them openly in your bookclubs, classrooms, and offices, as well as privately in your favorite reading spot. Remember to use **Bookclub-in-a-Box** discussion guides to complement and extend your point of view.

My best regards,

Marilyn

Marilyn Herbert (director)

The Uncommon Reader

the novel by Alan Bennett

She'd never taken much interest in reading. She read, of course, as one did, but liking books was something she left to other people. It was a hobby and it was in the nature of her job that she didn't have hobbies. Jogging, growing roses, chess or rock-climbing, cake decoration, model aeroplanes. No. Hobbies involved preferences and preferences had to be avoided; preferences excluded people. One had no preferences. Her job was to take an interest, not to be interested herself ... 'Is one allowed to borrow a book?' (p.6, 7)

One night, the Queen follows her dog out into the yard behind the palace kitchen and finds a portable bookmobile van in the driveway. Curious, she enters and meets both the librarian and a young kitchen assistant named Norman. After a short conversation, the Queen borrows a book and starts off on her great reading adventure. Having never before been a practising reader, the Queen goes through various stages of literacy – basic reading, reflecting, evaluating, and writing. This new pursuit causes hilarious havoc both in the palace and beyond.

Alan Bennett is one of Britain's most beloved playwrights and novelists and is lovingly referred to as a national treasure. Two of Bennett's works have achieved great success in North America, both as plays and as films.

The Madness of King George (1995), starring Helen Mirren, won the Academy Award for best art direction. Mirren went on to play Elizabeth II in Stephen Frear's film, **The Queen**. Frears is a good friend of Alan Bennett. **The History Boys** was performed on Broadway and won a total of six Tony awards in 2006. It became an equally successful film.

The Uncommon Reader is a story told with much humor and dignity. While it pokes gentle fun at the monarchy, it talks about reading, readers and writers with warm and critical wit. Bennett challenges our basic notions of these topics. Bennett's tiny book celebrates the fact that one of life's greatest pleasures is literacy and it begins with reading. This is truly a novel fit for a queen.

Enjoy reading the book and using the Bookclub-in-a-Box discussion guide. See p.3 for purchase details.

Special Pricing for the Bennett guide.

Contact Marilyn for more information. info@bookclubinabox.com 1-866-578-5571 (Toronto local 416)

Our newest discussion guide to Alan Bennett's absolutely delightful book, [The Uncommon Reader](#), has been posted on the Bookclub-in-a-Box website. Both the novel and our guide are guaranteed to make you smile.

All readers know that reading is important, but when was the last time you truly deliberated the depth of the concept of reading and the unique nature of being a reader?

The Bennett book is small in size and pages, but is exceptionally large in ideas. It is the perfect book for a book club discussion, a classroom exploration of literacy, and a personal glimpse at the pleasure of reading.

On our website, order the guide and follow our [Amazon link](#) to order the novel.

Our introductory special is as follows:

- Buy the [printed](#) guide for **\$16.90** and pay **no shipping fee**.
- Buy the [PDF](#) guide for **\$5.98** and download it immediately.

These prices are in effect for a limited time only.

Notable Books

We recommend the following great novels. They are all wonderful and pertain to different aspects of WWII and the Holocaust. Some of them will become future Bookclub-in-a-Box discussion guides.

The Book Thief (Markus Zusak)

Fault Lines (Nancy Huston)

The Reader (Bernhard Schlink)

The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas (John Boyne)

The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society (Mary Anne Shaffer and Annie Barrows)

Circus Stories

Thank you to all who participated in the Bookclub-in-a-Box Toronto version of the U.S. based Parade Magazine sweepstakes contest for Sara Gruen's fantastic novel **Water for Elephants**.

Our five winners each received a copy of the novel **Water for Elephants** signed by Sara Gruen; a copy of the [Bookclub-in-a-Box](#) discussion guide for [Water for Elephants](#); and a **Bookclub-in-a-Box** [coffee mug](#).

Enjoy these excerpts from their entries.

- The idea of "circus" became redefined for me last year ... We arrived a little before show time, and ... crossed a sort of swinging, creaking bridge that simply spanned a dry creek, and entered into the vast coolness of the main canvas tent. ... We were directed to our seats by a little child ... in a clown suit the color of a robin's egg. As we sat down, he or she offered each of us a striped candy ribbon to suck on while we watched the show. [C.J.]
- Hmmm – my experience with going to the circus ... When I was little it seemed they came to town (I lived in a small one) almost every year, and all us kids would go and sit on wooden benches and be entertained. I remember the fanfare, clowns, elephants balancing on two legs, acrobats riding elephants or walking the trapeze and lions jumping through flaming rings. It was so exciting ... Poor animals – not much of an existence for them. I'd rather see them roaming free! [A.H.]
- The thrill of a circus is watching the children's faces light up as the elephants, clowns, jugglers, performing dogs, and trapeze artists do their acts. However, I now feel the circus is rather sad, because the life of the performers is such a vagrant life My memories of a circus go way back to England, where my family and I often attended the traveling circus with great glee. Now it all seems a bit cruel to the animals and a hardship for the performers. [D.W.]
- My eldest uncle's eldest son went to the circus in the middle 1940s and never came home. With that as guidepost, my father took me to the circus every year when it arrived in Cape Breton for just short of a week ... My future was set. I never ran away with the circus ... [H.D.]
- I don't think I have ever been to a circus..... country fairs, yes....., but not to a circus with three rings and lions, elephants, clowns, and sawdust and a sleazy master of ceremonies. And I was probably the only child that didn't have dreams of running away and joining the circus. That life held no attraction for me whatsoever. So, no circus stories from me. Just a lament ... [of being deprived] of this rite of passage. [M.K.]

At [Bookclub-in-a-Box](#), we like to have a measure of fun with our serious reading and so we will send you notice of other activities that you can participate in. We look forward to your involvement. Thanks for your support.

[The Bookclub-in-a-Box team.](#)