

[bookclubinabox.com](http://bookclubinabox.com)

[info@bookclubinabox.com](mailto:info@bookclubinabox.com)

1-866-578-5571

# BOOK CLUB IN A BOX

## Winter Newsletter 2009

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Dear Bookclub-in-a-Box Subscriber,



The end of the year is a time to reflect on past events, restore spent energies, and relish new ideas and directions.

With that in mind, **Bookclub-in-a-Box** is making changes.

Our website is under construction and we look forward to a new and exciting look in the coming weeks. In the meantime, everything you need is still in place.

Our first Novel Notes guides are available in digital form. Order them as downloadable PDFs and be well-prepared for your discussion or study of [The Book of Negroes](#) (Someone Knows My Name) by Lawrence Hill and [The White Tiger](#) by Aravind Adiga.

**Bookclub-in-a-Box** is moving into its own presentation space in central Toronto where people can gather, discuss, and enjoy more about literature and other arts. Watch for your invitation to our open house.

Remember to use **Bookclub-in-a-Box** discussion guides to complement and extend your point of view.

*My best regards,  
Marilyn*

# Novel Notes

## The Book of Negroes and The White Tiger

*The new Novel Notes guides are designed as an outcome of the actual presentations and discussions led by Marilyn Herbert in the many groups that she facilitates. The format approximates the order of the meeting and is less formally organized than a fully published guide.*

*Most Novel Notes guides will be released as fully printed texts that will also be available for purchase in PDF form. Our goal is to get new titles out to you as fast as possible.*

### **The Book of Negroes**, novel by Lawrence Hill

This special Canadian novel goes by a different name in the United States – **Someone Knows My Name**.

Hill tells the story of a young girl, Aminata Diallo, who was born free in 18th century Africa. One day she is captured by slave traders and shipped across the ocean to be enslaved by white owners. Aminata's story spans the globe and reaches from Africa to North America to England and back to Africa. The circle of Aminata's life forms the structure of the novel.

During the course of the story, we learn about the horrors and the immorality of slavery. We become uncomfortably familiar with the hardships that these people endured at the hands of others. Slavery is not a new story, but Lawrence Hill tells it in a uniquely new way.

Buy this Novel Notes discussion ([The Book of Negroes](#)) in PDF form at the low cost of \$6.25. Membership discounts and gift coupons apply.

### **The White Tiger**, novel by Aravind Adiga

The White Tiger is an extraordinary glimpse into the soul of India, told through the lively voice of an Indian "entrepreneur." The novel's protagonist, Balram, has escaped out of the darkness of poverty stricken rural India into the light of the country's new middle-class. Because Balram is smart and knowledgeable, he is marked for greatness with the term, the "white tiger." Just as that animal is rarely seen in the jungle, so too is Balram hidden away in his urban jungle.

Aravind Adiga presents a cautionary tale, meant to demonstrate to his Indian countrymen the consequences of continuing along current economic and technological pathways. Progress is good, but must depend on a solid infrastructure and base.

The novel's tone seems lighthearted, funny and satiric, but the message is biting and shocking.

Buy this Novel Notes discussion ([The White Tiger](#)) in PDF form at the low cost of \$6.25. Membership discounts and gift coupons apply.

## Looking forward ...

### [www.bookclubinabox.com](http://www.bookclubinabox.com)

Our successful website is in the process of being reorganized and updated. We are in transition and ask for your patience. In the meantime, we have more to offer than ever before and hope you easily find what you're looking for.

- The extensive Bookclub-in-a-Box [booklist](#) is now in accordion form so that the titles can be found quickly.
- A future blog will be added to the site with literary updates, book suggestions and reviews.

If you have any other ideas or suggestions, we would love to hear them. Contact us at [info@bookclub-in-a-box.com](mailto:info@bookclub-in-a-box.com).

In the meantime, continue to visit the website and purchase our comprehensive discussion guides.

### **Bookclub-in-a-Box TALKS!**

In February 2010, Bookclub-in-a-Box will open its unique Toronto-based discussion "salon" - a place to enjoy other people's company and conversation about books and more. The address will be available in January's open-house invitation.

A schedule of discussions, presentations, and classes will be posted on the website. The range of topics will include literature, classic and contemporary; films; history, biography, and memoirs. We will have storytelling and bookclubs for children and adolescents, young mothers, men and women. We will offer writing classes as well.

We have lots more exciting ideas and hope that if you live in or near Toronto, Canada, you will make use of our new home.

# Books, Food, Drink

Survey and Prizes

**Last summer, Bookclub-in-a-Box conducted a survey to consider the link between eating and reading.**

**We had wonderful responses that are summarized below.**

**You were asked to comment on the following statements:**

- **Food is an important component of every meeting.**
- **Drink (soft drink, coffee, wine) is an important part of a meeting.**
- **Snacks interfere with the discussion.**
- **Food presentation is a competitive sport.**
- **Refreshments lead to refreshed conversations.**

**This is what you told us:**

The majority of respondents favor having food and drink at a meeting, but some of you do not. Food presentation is sometimes competitive, but is mostly under control.

The negative reasons were interesting and insightful, ranging from considering food a distraction to being sensitive to people who may have food issues, especially allergies.

The positive feedback centered on familiar feelings. The offering of refreshments helps to break the ice and sets everyone at ease. If people connect socially at the outset of the meeting, then the group relaxes and is ready for the discussion of the novel. Food offers a sense of community, much like the family dinner table. Everyone feels more welcome with a plate of cookies and a pot of coffee at hand. People coming from work do not face conversation on an empty stomach.

You like coffee, tea, water, and wine. Cookies and sushi are special favorites and themed food and drink is popular. Sharing recipes is a well-liked activity and you favor snacks before, during and/or after the meeting!

Thank you for participating!

## What you are reading ...

- **The Glass Castle** (Jeanette Walls)
- **The Lost Symbol** (Dan Brown)
- **Wetlands** (Charlotte Roche)
- **House of the Scorpion** (Nancy Farmer)
- **Sweeping Up Glass** (Carolyn Wall)
- **The Lost Child** (Julie Myerson)
- **City of Thieves** (David Benioff)
- **Anna Karenina** (Leo Tolstoy)
- **The Cellist of Sarajevo** (Steven Galloway)
- **[The People of the Book](#)** (Geraldine Brooks) Bookclub-in-a-box guide available
- **The Secret Scripture** (Sebastian Barry)

## What we are reading ...

- **The Elegance of the Hedgehog** (Muriel Barbery)
- **The Outlander** (Gil Adamson)
- **Nocturnes** (Kazuo Ishiguro)
- **The Children's Book** (A.S. Byatt)
- **Alice in Wonderland** (Lewis Carroll)
- **The Winter Vault** (Anne Michaels)
- **The Space Between Us** (Thrity Umrigar)
- **The Flying Troutmans** (Miriam Toews)
- **Every Man Dies Alone** (Hans Fallada)

**Enjoy your books and keep in touch.**

**The Bookclub-in-a-Box team.**