

# Bookclub-in-a-Box Discusses Abraham Verghese's novel, Cutting for Stone: The Complete Package for Readers and Leaders (Book Club in a Box: The Complete Package for Readers and Leaders)

Marilyn Herbert, Carol Verburg



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Cutting For Stone is very simply one of the best books ever written and read. The narrative begins in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, when twin boys, Shiva and Marion, are born to a nun (who dies) and a surgeon (who runs away). The babies, conjoined at the head, are successfully separated immediately after birth. Despite their ominous beginning, they are raised by two Indian doctors and have a relatively peaceful childhood within the environment of a mission hospital, nicknamed Missing. Their loving community consists of Matron (head of the hospital), Almaz and Rosina (two servants), Rosina's daughter, Genet (born shortly after the boys), and a host of other wonderful and memorable characters. The original conjoinment and separation of the boys becomes the operating theme of the novel and we are given situation after situation in which to consider the concepts of fusion and partition. One day, political troubles with neighboring Eritrea erupt, and one twin, Marion, is forced to escape to America. Thus begins the second half of the novel, a literary doppelganger. The plot is complex, fast-paced, and emotionally moving. Bookclub-in-a-Box looks at all that Verghese provides: history (Ethiopia and Eritrea), medicine (blood and liver disease), psychology (the search for identity), sociology (human relationships) and philosophy (of both science and religion). The narrative's real facts and descriptions are especially interesting for their thematic implications. Every Bookclub-in-a-Box printed discussion guide includes complete coverage of the themes and symbols, writing style and interesting background information on the novel and the author.

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