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Bookclub-in-a-Box Discusses The Finkler Question by Howard Jacobson (Book Club in a Box: The Complete Package for Readers and Leaders)

Marilyn Herbert, Samantha Bailey - co-writer

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In The Finkler Question, Howard Jacobson provocatively puts forward the stereotypical arguments of culture, religion, politics, and anti-Semitism, presenting both the Jewish and non-Jewish sides at once.
The story centers on Julian Treslove, a Gentile, so physically non-descript that people have trouble recognizing him. He has been wrongly identified as Brad Pitt and Colin Firth, but never Adam Sandler or Billy Crystal. Non-Jewish Treslove also has no distinct inner identity, so perhaps he can be forgiven for trying to find one as a Jew. It all begins when Treslove is violently mugged in front of a violin shop and believes that he is the victim of an anti-Semitic assault. After all, he had just come from dinner with his two close Jewish friends, Sam Finkler and Libor Sevcik. In some of the novel s funniest scenes, worthy of the humour of Woody Allen and Groucho Marx, Julian Treslove justifies his brush with aggression as an extreme case of mistaken identity.
Using his three distinctly different characters, Jacobson considers who is and isn t a Jew and whether or not Jews can be anti-Semitic. More significantly, Jacobson asks who (Jew or non-Jew) has permission to discuss these touchy topics. Jacobson juxtaposes his title, The Finkler Question, against the Jewish Question , the offensive phrase made famous by Hitler as he put forward his Holocaust s Final Solution. Jacobson lays out the whole conversation to be considered from all sides and perspectives. This novel was rewarded for its courageous outlook by being awarded the prestigious Man-Booker prize, 2010.
The Bookclub-in-a-Box guide for Harold Jacobson s book will spark discussion around the following topics: How can a Jew be defined and does one definition fit all? Can religious and cultural intolerance be overcome by Jews and non-Jews alike? Is it possible to discuss the Jewish question in a productive and rational manner, without falling victim to raw emotion?
Every Bookclub-in-a-Box 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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