

Unpacking *Boxes*

Literary Analysis Discussion Guide

1. What does the title *Boxes-The Trappings of Society and Relationships* convey? How well does it describe the message and content of the novel? What challenges would the duality of the novel, the escape and social commentary, present challenges for creating a title? How well do the cover graphics convey the content of the novel?
2. How is the theme of “boxes” carried throughout the novel? How many times is a phrase using the word “boxes” or a derivative used ?
3. The genre of *Boxes-The Trappings of Society and Relationships* could be described in several ways as listed below. Which do you believe is most accurate and why? Which other genre or description would you use?
 - Mystery or detective fiction
 - Literary fiction
 - Uplifting, upmarket fiction
 - Adventure fiction
 - Social commentary
 - Self-help fiction
 - Quirky love story
 - A story of redemption
4. The author’s intent is to blend a page-turning plot and a literary novel with many layers of meaning. How well did he succeed?
5. Explore the plot development that moves characters “from boxed-in lives to new beginnings” as described on the back cover.

Character	How Boxed In	How Broke Out	Cause for Change
Tim Adams			
Angelica Dante			
Luciano Dante			
Bella Gray			
Hunter Davis			
Peter Hu			
Carlo Volpe			
Masterman			
Ricardo Mendez			

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6. Many names describe a character, represent an archetype, or foreshadow the plot. What is the intended meaning in each of these names?

Name	Meaning	Name	Meaning
Tim		Gray	
Adams		Hunter	
Masterman		Eva	
King		Faustino	
Angelica		Volpe	
Dante		Talco	
Luciano		Delores Pagara	
Michael		St. Rocco	
Gabriella		Courtland	
Bella		Mortek	

7. Allusions are references that add meaning through direct or indirect association with real people, characters, or events. Explore the sample allusions below. Can you find others in *Boxes*?

Allusion	Reference	Meaning
Harry Houdini		
<i>Catch 22</i>		
Dominic Corlione		
Clarence Thompson		
Leona Hadley		
Jack Lagosi		
Marnie Hanson		
Garden of Gethsemane		
Jim Cronan		
30 credit cards		

8. The author also uses numbers to add meaning. Sometimes they can be deciphered by simple alphanumeric codes. Others are more obvious, such as Eva's license plate number: URD146. (Say it aloud several times.) How about P.O. Box 8945 or 451-20-8 boards from Meteor?

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9. Some descriptions foreshadow upcoming events in the storyline. Consider the examples below.

Can you find more in *Boxes*?

Foreshadowing
The Hatbox Café located in a former butcher shop
Angelica wondering why her parents were so generous to Bella
“...a very sharp temper, but never before had he cut her so deeply.”
Confession of the “murderous gambler”
Dante’s prized Mercedes S-280
Angelica’s dream about a honeymoon drowning
Peter Hu’s steaming cup of tea with Bella
Angelica’s drop of blood on the white napkin

10. The novel is set in 1998 in Philadelphia. Why do you believe the author chose that time and place for a story about society and relationships? Why is it set before the dawning of the new millennium and the horror of 9/11?

11. How does the city of Philadelphia play a role as a character in the novel? Or does it remain in the background merely as a setting?

12. How believable are the characters? How true are their actions based on what you come to believe about them?

13. Confessional scenes are used as a literary device to add information about characters and their actions. How does this contribute to the theme and plot?

14. Why did the story include Tim’s forays into the personal ads? What does that tell us about him? How might that add depth or interest to the story?

15. Why do you believe the author chose to use music and revised lyrics in Tim’s head as a literary device? Do you believe it adds to or detracts from the story?

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16. Below are the songs that came into Tim’s head throughout the novel. How might each add meaning or move the plot along based on its new lyrics?

Song	Purpose
“Live for Today”	
“Puff the Magic Dragon”	
“The Wells Fargo Wagon”	
“Got to Get You into My Life “	
“Eleanor Rigby”	
“A Mighty Fortress is Our God” (Two versions)	
“Got to Get You into My Life” (Different lyrics)	
“She’s Gone”	
“Come Sail Away”	
“Leaving on a Jet Plane” (Three versions)	
“City of New Orleans” (Multiple versions)	
“Boy You’re Gonna Carry That Weight”	
“Homeward Bound”	
“City of New Orleans” (Different lyrics)	
“Somewhere”	
“Tapestry”	
“Windmills of Your Mind”	
“The Candy Man”	
“Money”	
“Vietnam Protest Song”	
“Live for Today (Different lyrics)”	

17. After seeing these songs in order and reviewing their revised lyrics, can the basic story be told solely from the lyrics from Tim’s head?

18. You are now a book reviewer. How would you summarize your experience with *Boxes-The Trappings of Society and Relationships*?