



# **Bookclub-in-a-Box Discusses the Novel *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri**

*Marilyn Herbert*

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The Namesake tells the story of a newly married couple, Ashoke and Ashima Ganguli, who emigrate to the United States from India. Not long after they arrive, their first child, a son, is born and there is an immediate clash of cultures. In the Bengali tradition, the ritual of naming a baby can take up to forty-one days after birth. But in America, bureaucracy demands that the baby not be released from hospital without a name on his birth certificate. Luckily, Indian tradition allows for a pet or nickname to be chosen and, oddly, the parents choose the name Gogol after the Russian writer, Nikolai Gogol. The result of a name that connects Lahiri's Gogol to neither his American birth nor his Indian heritage is the beginning of a search for personal identity. This novel has been made into a wonderful film with the same name from director, Mira Nair. The guide to Lahiri's novel includes information on the following: Why is the namesake of an American-born child with Bengali roots a famous, but disturbed, Russian author? How do our names impact on who we are and who we become? What is the impact of immigration on both parents and children? How do Lahiri's skills as a short-story writer influence her presentation of the story? 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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