

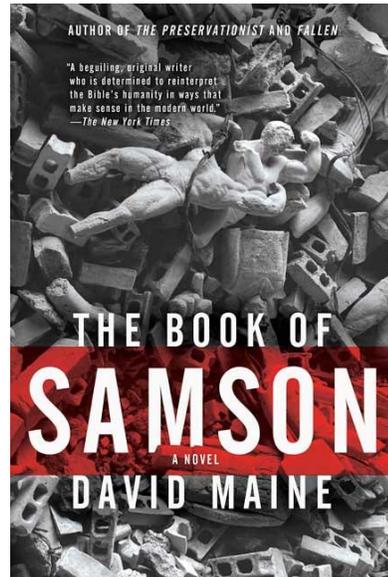
READING GROUP GUIDE

The Book of Samson

By David Maine

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About this Guide

The following author biography and list of questions about *The Book of Samson* are intended as resources to aid individual readers and book groups who would like to learn more about the author and this book. We hope that this guide will provide you a starting place for discussion, and suggest a variety of perspectives from which you might approach *The Book of Samson*.

About the Book

From the author of the acclaimed and provocative novels *Fallen* and *The Preservationist* comes a tale about a man who believes he is touched by the hand of God---then instructed by that God to slaughter his enemies. It is the story of “this worldly existence of men & brutes desire & unkindness” and of the woman, Dalila, who figures at the center of it all. In *The Book of Samson*, David Maine has created an unforgettable portrait, a unique and astonishing masterpiece that puts a face on a previously faceless icon.

About the Author

David Maine was born in 1963 and grew up in Farmington, Connecticut. He attended Oberlin College and the University of Arizona and has worked in the mental-health systems of Massachusetts and Arizona. He has taught English in Morocco and Pakistan, and since 1998 has lived in Lahore, Pakistan, with his wife, novelist Uzma Aslam Khan.



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Discussion Questions

1. Were you familiar with the Old Testament version of the Samson story (found in the Bible's Book of Judges) before reading this novel? If so, how is this version different? How is it the same?
2. Samson is commonly seen as a hero to Jews and Christians. Does he fit your idea of "hero" in this novel? If not, why not? If so, what qualities of a "hero" does Samson possess?
3. Is Dalila an admirable character, or a dishonorable one? Does she embody both positive and negative elements?
4. Compared to other books by author David Maine (*The Preservationist*, *Fallen*), this is the only novel that remains in one single character's point of view throughout. What is gained from this kind of one-sided storytelling? Is anything lost?
5. What purpose does the character of the priest, Meneth, play in the narrative?
6. Why doesn't the author use commas?
7. Samson's voice relies on certain speech quirks, for example when he lists nouns such as "hope & joy comfort & inspiration," or when he repeats phrases: "like words of fire in the nighttime sky." Do these quirks reveal anything about his character, or are they just annoyances?
8. The struggle between Israelites (Israelis) and Philistines (Palestinians) continues to this day. Did this novel cause you to consider that struggle with a new perspective?
9. Samson's final act is to knock down a big building and kill three thousand unbelievers, because he thinks God wants him to. Does this act have any correlation in today's world, and if so, does it suggest anything about the nature of religious faith and certainty?

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