
7. What passages strike you as insightful, even profound? Perhaps a bit of dialog that's funny or poignant or that encapsulates a character? Maybe there's a particular comment that states the book's thematic concerns?

8. Is the ending satisfying? If so, why? If not, why not...and how would you change it?

9. If you could ask the author a question, what would you ask? Have you read other books by the same author? If so how does this book compare. If not, does this book inspire you to read others?

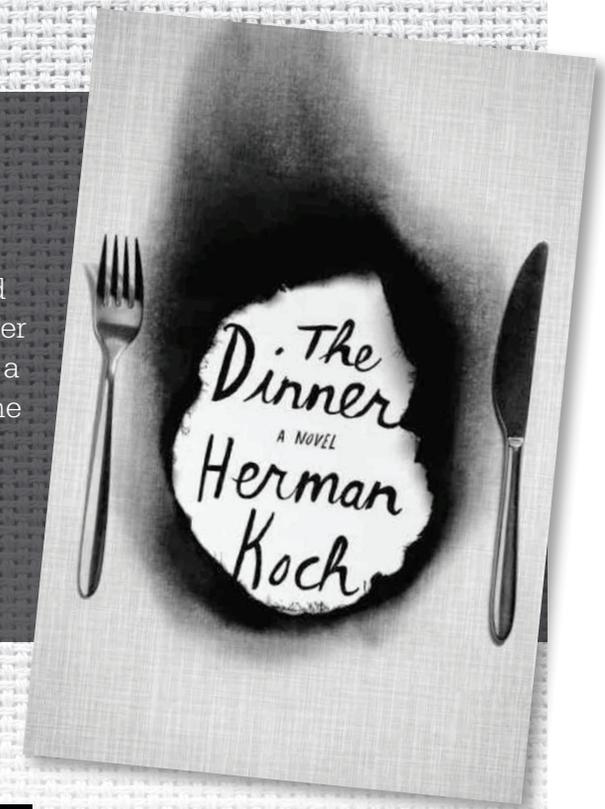
10. Has this novel changed you—broadened your perspective? Have you learned something new or been exposed to different ideas about people or a certain part of the world?

Discussion Questions

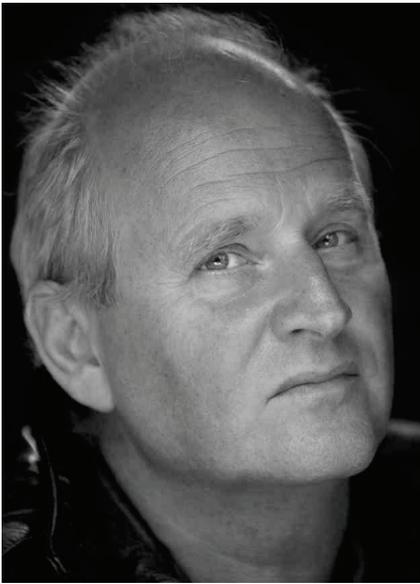
“A cunningly crafted thriller that will never allow you to look at a serviette in the same way again.”

- *Litlovers.com*

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Herman Koch is a Dutch writer and actor. He has written short stories, novels, and columns. His best-selling novel *The Dinner* (2009) has been translated into 21 languages. He has acted for radio, television, and film. He co-created the long-running TV series *Jiskefet* (1990–2005).

Koch was born in Arnhem, Netherlands. His family moved to Amsterdam when he was two years old. He went to the Montessori Lyceum Amsterdam from which he was expelled. Although his native language is Dutch, he also speaks English, German, and Spanish.

Book Summary

An internationally bestselling phenomenon: the darkly suspenseful, highly controversial tale of two families struggling to make the hardest decision of their lives—all over the course of one meal.

It's a summer's evening in Amsterdam, and two couples meet at a fashionable restaurant for dinner. Between mouthfuls of food and over the polite scrapings of cutlery, the conversation remains a gentle hum of polite discourse—the banality of work, the triviality of the holidays. But behind the empty words, terrible things need to be said, and with every forced smile and every new course, the knives are being sharpened.

Each couple has a fifteen-year-old son. The two boys are united by their accountability for a single horrific act; an act that has triggered a police investigation and shattered the comfortable, insulated worlds of their families. As the dinner reaches its culinary climax, the conversation finally touches on their children. As civility and friendship disintegrate, each couple show just how far they are prepared to go to protect those they love.

Tautly written, incredibly gripping, and told by an unforgettable narrator, *The Dinner* promises to be the topic of countless dinner party debates. Skewering everything from parenting values to pretentious menus to political convictions, this novel reveals the dark side of genteel society and asks what each of us would do in the face of unimaginable tragedy. (From the publisher.)

Discussion Questions

1. How did you experience the book? Were you engaged immediately, or did it take you a while to “get into it”? How did you feel reading it—amused, sad, disturbed, confused, bored...?

2. Describe the main characters—personality traits, motivations, inner qualities.
 - Why do characters do what they do?
 - Are their actions justified?
 - Describe the dynamics between characters (in a marriage, family, or friendship).
 - How has the past shaped their lives?
 - Do you admire or disapprove of them?
 - Do they remind you of people you know?

3. Do the main characters change by the end of the book? Do they grow or mature? Do they learn something about themselves and how the world works?

4. Is the plot engaging—does the story interest you? Is this a plot-driven book: a fast-paced page-turner? Or does the story unfold slowly with a focus on character development? Were you surprised by the plot's complications? Or did you find it predictable, even formulaic?

5. Talk about the book's structure. Is it a continuous story...or interlocking short stories? Does the time-line move forward chronologically...or back and forth between past and present? Does the author use a single viewpoint or shifting viewpoints? Why might the author have chosen to tell the story the way he or she did—and what difference does it make in the way you read or understand it?

6. What main ideas—themes—does the author explore? (Consider the title, often a clue to a theme.) Does the author use symbols to reinforce the main ideas? (See our free LitCourses on both Symbol and Theme.)
