
Martin County Library System Book Discussion Kit:

The Bomber Mafia: A Dream, a Temptation, and the Longest Night of the Second World War by Malcolm Gladwell

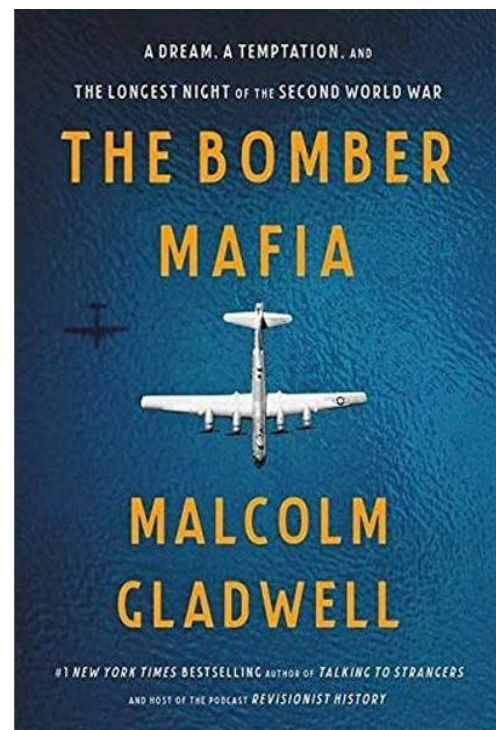
Included in the Kit:

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Book Summary:

In *The Bomber Mafia*, Malcolm Gladwell weaves together the stories of a Dutch genius and his homemade computer, a band of brothers in central Alabama, a British psychopath, and pyromaniacal chemists at Harvard to examine one of the greatest moral challenges in modern American history.

Most military thinkers in the years leading up to World War II saw the airplane as an afterthought. But a small band of idealistic strategists, the “Bomber Mafia,” asked: What if precision bombing could cripple the enemy and make war far less lethal?



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Bomber Mafia by Malcolm Gladwell

In contrast, the bombing of Tokyo on the deadliest night of the war was the brainchild of General Curtis LeMay, whose brutal pragmatism and scorched-earth tactics in Japan cost thousands of civilian lives, but may have spared even more by averting a planned US invasion. In *The Bomber Mafia*, Gladwell asks, “Was it worth it?”

Things might have gone differently had LeMay’s predecessor, General Haywood Hansell, remained in charge. Hansell believed in precision bombing, but when he and Curtis LeMay squared off for a leadership handover in the jungles of Guam, LeMay emerged victorious, leading to the darkest night of World War II. *The Bomber Mafia* is a riveting tale of persistence, innovation, and the incalculable wages of war.

Source: Author's website (<https://www.gladwellbooks.com>)





Bomber Mafia by Malcolm Gladwell

Meet the Author:

Appearing on the *Time Magazine's* 100 most influential people, Malcolm Gladwell is a Canadian journalist based in New York. In addition to being a bestselling author of four books, Gladwell is also a speaker and has been on job as a staff writer for *The New Yorker* since 1996. His books, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Make a Big Difference* (2000), *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking* (2005), *Outliers: The Story of Success* (2008), and *What the Dog Saw: And Other Adventures* (2009) have all



appeared on *The New York Times* bestsellers list. His works deal with research in the areas of psychology, social psychology and sociology. On June 30, 2011, Gladwell was appointed to the Order of Canada.

Malcolm Gladwell was born in Fareham, Hampshire, England on September 3, 1963 to Graham Gladwell, a British mathematics professor and Joyce, a Jamaican psychotherapist. When he was six, Malcolm moved to Elmira, Ontario, Canada with his family. In Canada, Malcolm's father taught mathematics and engineering at the University of Waterloo where Malcolm sometimes went with his father wandering around the offices and exploring libraries which sparked an early interest of reading and literature in him. During his high school years, Malcolm was an exceptional middle-distance runner. He won the 1500 meter title at the 1978 Ontario High School 14 year old championships in Kingston, Ontario. In 1982, Malcolm interned at the National Journalism Center in Washington, D.C. Two years later in 1984, Malcolm graduated from the University of Toronto's Trinity College with a degree in history.



Bomber Mafia by Malcolm Gladwell

Since his grades were not acceptable to enter a graduate school, Gladwell decided to pursue a career in advertising. However, here too he faced rejection and was not accepted in any advertising agency. He moved to Indiana where he was offered a position at *The American Spectator*. During this time, Gladwell also began writing for *Insight on the News*. By 1987, Gladwell's name was appearing on *The Washington Post* where he was covering business and science. He worked at *The Washington Post* till 1996 when he shifted to *The New Yorker*.

Gladwell's first assignment at *The New Yorker* was to write a piece on fashion. Gladwell chose to write about a man who manufactured low price t-shirts instead of writing a piece on high fashion. His work in *The New Yorker* was appreciated by the readers and he gained recognition with two articles in particular, *The Tipping Point* and *The Coolhunt*, both written and published in 1996. The articles later became the basis for his first book, *The Tipping Point*. Gladwell received an amount of \$1 million for this book.

In addition to being recognized and appreciated for his works, Gladwell has also been acknowledged with prestigious honors such as the American Sociological Association's first Award for Excellence in the Reporting of Social Issues in 2007, an honorary degree from University of Waterloo in 2007 and another honorary degree from the University of Toronto in 2011. Currently, Malcolm Gladwell continues to write for *The New Yorker*. He also serves as a contributing editor for sports journalism website, *Grantland*.

Source: Famous Authors
(<https://www.famousauthors.org/malcolm-gladwell>)



Bomber Mafia by Malcolm Gladwell

Discussion Questions:

1. What was the most memorable part of this book for you? Why did it make an impression?
2. Read your favorite passage from the book out loud and explain why you liked it or what it made you think about.
3. Did the author attempt to take a stance on this issue, or was the book relatively impartial? Why do you think this?
4. How did the author's voice or opinions shape your understanding of this subject?
5. Was this non-fiction book fun to read, or was it a little dry? Did the author need to "spice it up" or "tone it down"? How could they have managed that?
6. How did this book change your views on the subject matter it presented? Are your opinions different now than they were before reading the book?
7. What do you think of the people or person who appeared in the book (if any). Discuss their motivations and character. Are they "good", "bad" or something in between?
8. What made this book different than other books on this subject? Do you think it is better or worse than other books on this subject matter?

Source: The Book Club Guide Blog
(<https://www.book-club-guide.com/book-club-questions.html>)

Recipes:

WWII Cake

- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1 cup water
- 1 cup raisins
- 2 tablespoons oil or 2 tablespoons margarine
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon, ground
- 1/2 teaspoon clove, ground
- 1 1/2 cups flour
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 cup walnuts, chopped



Place the brown sugar, water, raisins, oil, cinnamon, and cloves in a heavy-bottomed saucepan and bring to a boil. Cook gently for 5 minutes, then remove from the heat and let cool until the mixture is comfortably warm to your finger. While the mixture is cooling, preheat the oven to 350F. Grease and flour an 8x4-inch baking pan. Sift together the flour, salt, baking powder, and baking soda. Add them to the cooled sugar mixture, beating until no drifts of flour are visible and the batter is smooth. Stir in the walnuts. Spread evenly in the baking pan and bake for 25-30 minutes, or until a broom straw inserted in the center of the cake comes out clean. Let cool in the pan for 10 minutes, then turn onto a rack to cool completely.

Source: Food.com
(<https://www.food.com/recipe/ww2-war-cake-1881>)

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Roy Rogers Drink

- 1/2 to 1 ounce grenadine, to taste
- 6 ounces cola
- Maraschino cherry, for garnish

Gather the ingredients. Pour the grenadine into a collins glass filled with ice. Top with cola. Stir well. Garnish with a maraschino cherry. Serve and enjoy.



Source: The Spruce Eats

(<https://www.thespruceeats.com/easy-roy-rogers-recipe-759797>)

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