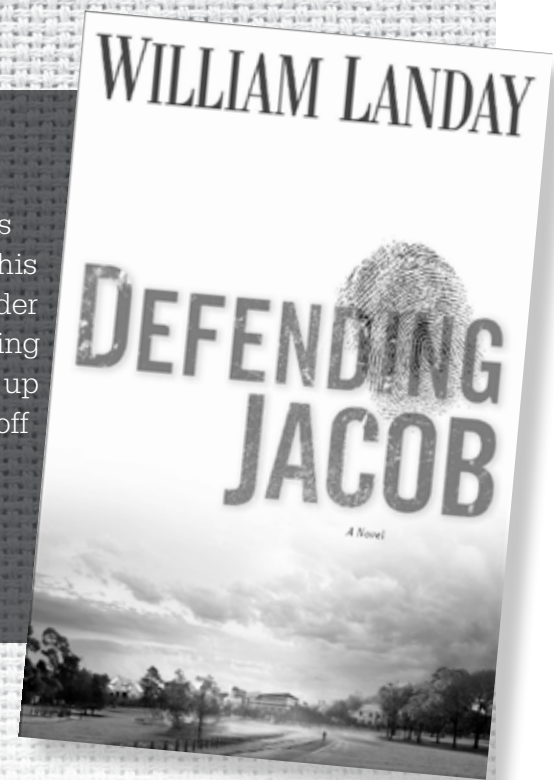


Book Club in a Bag

“Parental devotion and its limits lie at the heart of this gripping, emotional murder saga.... The shoking ending will have readers pulling up their bedcovers to ward off the haunting chill.”

— *People Magazine*



Kalamazoo
Public Library

kpl.gov/book-club-in-a-bag



William Landay is an American novelist, whose novel, *Mission Flats*, was awarded the 2003 John Creasey Dagger (now called the New Blood Dagger) as the best debut crime novel of 2003 by the British Crime Writers Association. His second novel, *The Strangler*, was shortlisted for the Strand Magazine Critics Award as the best crime novel of 2007.

Landay graduated from Yale University and Boston College Law School. Prior to becoming a writer, he served for eight years as an Assistant District Attorney in Middlesex

County, Massachusetts. (From Wikipedia.)

Book Summary

Andy Barber has been an assistant district attorney in his suburban Massachusetts county for more than twenty years. He is respected in his community, tenacious in the courtroom, and happy at home with his wife, Laurie, and son, Jacob.

But when a shocking crime shatters their New England town, Andy is blindsided by what happens next: His fourteen-year-old son is charged with the murder of a fellow student. Every parental instinct Andy has rallies to protect his boy. Jacob insists that he is innocent, and Andy believes him. Andy must. He's his father.

Yet as damning facts and shocking revelations surface, as a marriage threatens to crumble and the trial intensifies, as the crisis reveals how little a father knows about his son, Andy will face a trial of his own—between loyalty and justice, between truth and allegation, between a past he's tried to bury and a future he cannot conceive.

Award-winning author William Landay has written the consummate novel of an embattled family in crisis—a suspenseful, character-driven mystery that is also a spellbinding tale of guilt, betrayal, and the terrifying speed at which our lives can spin out of control. (From the publisher.)

Discussion Questions

1. How would you have handled this situation if you were Andy? Would you make the same choices he made? Where would you differ the most?

2. Before and during the trial, how would you have handled the situation if you were Laurie? Do you feel she made strong choices as a mother and a wife?

3. Is Andy a good father? Why or why not?

4. Do you believe Jacob is guilty?

5. Is Jacob a product of his upbringing? Do you think he is he a violent person because his environment makes him violent, or do you think he has violent inclinations since birth?

6. Bullying is such a hot topic in today's media. How did the author incorporate it into the story, and do you think it's role had anything to do with Jacob's disposition? How do you think people should stop adolescent bullying?

7. How much of a factor did Jacob's age play into your sympathies for him or lack thereof? If Jacob were seventeen, would you view him differently? What about nine?

8. Do you think Neal Logiudice acts ethically in this novel? What about Andy? What about Laurie?

9. What was the most damning piece of evidence against Jacob? Was there anything that you felt exonerated him?

10. If Jacob hadn't been accused, how do you think his life would have turned out? What kind of a man do you think he would grow up to be?
