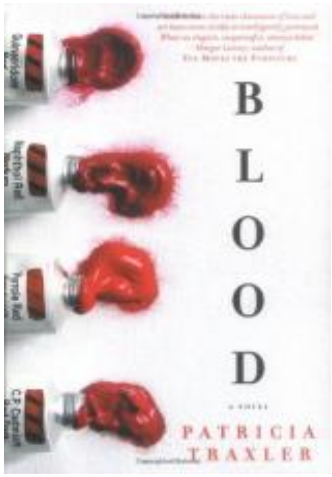
Blood

by Patricia Traxler



About the Book

Blood is equal parts auspicious literary debut, page-turner, and erotic novel about four people whose lives are intertwined during one year at Radcliffe College. Norrie is a painter who has accepted a prestigious fellowship at the college; she's excited to give up her job and live the artist's life for a time. She's also in the middle of an intense affair with a married man that consumes both their lives. Norrie also befriends two other fellows, a journalist and a poet. These three intense relationships quickly begin to infringe upon each other, and soon the quartet is hurtling toward some shocking?perhaps tragic?end. **Blood** is a triumph of suspense writing, a true psychological thriller about the nature of desire and the danger of love.

Discussion Guide

1. Discuss the color red and how it works throughout the book --- the red vase, the red blood, the red paint, the red wine. There are references to the smell of blood and the taste of it. What does red symbolize to Norrie? What does it symbolize to Devi?

2. Knowing how Norrie felt about her father's affair, why do you think she went ahead and had an affair with Michael? Do you think Michael ever planned to leave his wife for Norrie? Were you surprised when Norrie's mother confessed her understanding for her father's "intimacies?"

3. Traxler writes what it is like to be the "'other woman,' a term that makes clear that no matter how real the love, you're a spare --- like a summer house in the Hamptons or the shoes he saves for formal occasions; something he doesn't actually live with, but which he keeps just outisde his field of vision, his real life, in case he should need it." (page 2) Do you agree with her interpretation?

4. Discuss blood as a metaphor in this book. Norrie has creativity in her blood. Blood flows when Norrie has sex with

Michael and again when she loses the baby. When Devi is murdered there is blood. Is blood a symbol of something here? Is it passion? Is it loss?

5. What does painting mean for Norrie? She paints with great vigor when Michael is gone. How is her painting and her feeling about painting similar to or dependent on her feelings for Michael? "I kept painting though I knew what I saw on the canvas was not my best work, wasn't even really good, but I kept going all night, and if it was lousy this time I didn't care, it didn't matter, this was what I wanted, what I needed to do, and I had to have it, I was greedy for it the way I was greedy for Michael's body, but I did not have to covet this, for it was already mine, it was mine. (page 53)

6. Before each chapter there is text written in italics that tells its own story. Did you think these passages enhanced the story, or took away from it? Why do you think the author chose to include them?

7. Why do you think that Norrie chose to confide in Devi about Michael, but not Liz? Did she feel safer telling Devi? Why do you think that she look so long to tell Liz about Michael?

8. Look at the concept of friendship. Norrie had very different friendships with the women in her life --- Liz, Devi, Clara, Ida. Contrast these with her relationships with her relationships with men.

9. Talk about jealousy and its impact on this story: The depths of Clara's jealousy. The jealousy of Paul Monnard. The jealousy of Norrie for Brenda and the life she has with Michael.

10. Who did you suspect killed Devi before the killer was revealed? What clues did you see to back up your suspicion? Discuss each person's motives. How did the author keep the suspense going throughout the book?

11. The author, Patricia Traxler, is an award-winning poet. Do you see poetic influences in her writing that you are not accustomed to seeing in typical suspense writing?

Author Bio

Patricia Traxler was born in California and now lives in Kansas. An award-winning poet, she has published three volumes of poetry, and her fiction and poetry have appeared in such publications as *The Boston Review*, *Ploughshares*, *The Nation*, *The Kenyon Review*, *Slate*, and *Ms.* magazine. **Blood** is her first novel.

Critical Praise

"**Blood** is a powerful novel of obsession and desire....The characters are fascinating and repellant by turns, making this an unusual and intriguing read."

Blood

by Patricia Traxler

Publication Date: September 1, 2002
Paperback: 368 pages
Publisher: Minotaur Books
ISBN-10: 0312304013
ISBN-13: 9780312304010