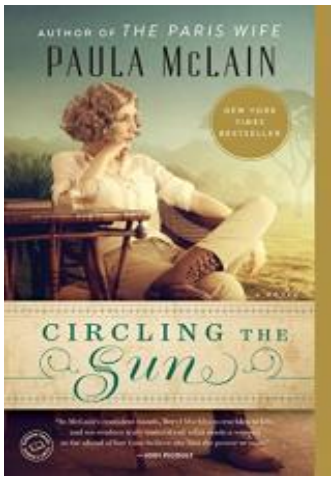
Circling the Sun

by Paula McLain



About the Book

Paula McLain, author of the phenomenal bestseller THE PARIS WIFE, now returns with her keenly anticipated new novel, transporting readers to colonial Kenya in the 1920s. CIRCLING THE SUN brings to life a fearless and captivating woman --- Beryl Markham, a record-setting aviator caught up in a passionate love triangle with safari hunter Denys Finch Hatton and Karen Blixen, author of the classic memoir OUT OF AFRICA.

Brought to Kenya from England as a child and then abandoned by her mother, Beryl is raised by both her father and the native Kipsigis tribe who share his estate. Her unconventional upbringing transforms Beryl into a bold young woman with a fierce love of all things wild and an inherent understanding of nature?s delicate balance. But even the wild child must grow up, and when everything Beryl knows and trusts dissolves, she is catapulted into a string of disastrous relationships.

Beryl forges her own path as a horse trainer, and her uncommon style attracts the eye of the Happy Valley set, a decadent, bohemian community of European expats who also live and love by their own set of rules. But it?s the ruggedly charismatic Denys Finch Hatton who ultimately helps Beryl navigate the uncharted territory of her own heart. The intensity of their love reveals Beryl?s truest self and her fate: to fly.

Set against the majestic landscape of early-20th-century Africa, McLain?s powerful tale reveals the extraordinary adventures of a woman before her time, the exhilaration of freedom and its cost, and the tenacity of the human spirit.

Discussion Guide

1. At the beginning of the book, Beryl reflects that her father?s farm in Njoro was ?the one place in the world I?d been made for.? Do you feel this is a fitting way to describe Beryl?s relationship with Kenya, too? Did she seem more suited?more made for?life there than the others in her circle? Is there a place in your life that you would describe the

same way?

2. While it is clear he loved his daughter, do you feel Beryl?s father was a good parent? Do you think Beryl would have said he was? Did you sympathize with him at any point?

3. Beryl is forced to be independent from a very young age. How do you think this shaped her personality (for better or for worse)?

4. After Jock?s drunken attack, D fires Beryl and sends her away. Do you understand his decision? Despite all the philandering and indulgent behaviors of the community, do you feel it?s fair that Beryl was being judged so harshly for the incident?

5. How would you describe Beryl and Denys?s relationship? In what ways are they similar souls? How does their first encounter --- outside, under the stars at her coming out party --- encapsulate the nature of their connection?

6. Karen and Beryl are two strong, iconoclastic women drawn to the same unobtainable man. Do you understand how Beryl could pursue Denys even though he was involved with Karen? Did you view the friendship between the women as a true one, despite its complications?

7. Why do you believe the author chose the title ?Circling the Sun?? Does it bring to mind a particular moment from the novel or an aspect of Beryl?s character?

8. When Beryl is quite young, she reflects that ?softness and helplessness got you nothing in this place.? Do you agree with her? Or do you think Beryl placed too much value on strength and independence?

9. When Beryl becomes a mother herself, she is determined not to act as her own mother did. Do you feel she succeeds? How does motherhood spur her decision to exchange horse training for flying? Could you identify with this choice?

10. After Paddy the lion attacks Beryl, Bishon Singh says, ?Perhaps you were never meant for him.? Do you think that Beryl truly discovered what she was meant for by the end of the novel?

Author Bio

Paula McLain is the *New York Times* bestselling author of six novels, including THE PARIS WIFE, CIRCLING THE SUN and LOVE AND RUIN, as well as two collections of poetry and a memoir. Her work has been published in over 35 countries and featured in *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *Town & Country*, *Real Simple* and elsewhere.

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