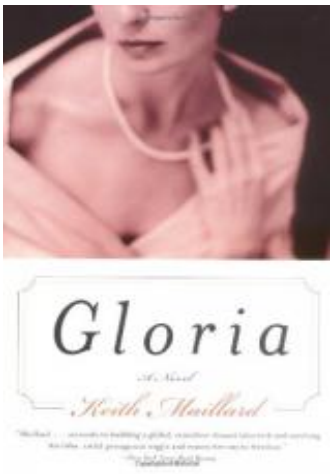
Gloria by A Novel

by Keith Maillard



About the Book

"Let me know who I really am." For Gloria Cotter, this is a prayer. It's 1957 and Gloria knows who she is supposed to be -- the proper daughter of a wealthy West Virginia steel executive, sorority girl, prom queen, and recent graduate from college, ready to assume her next role, that of wife.

But beneath the society girl veneer, Gloria longs for something else, though she's not sure what. All she knows is that ordinary girls are not supposed to be interested in sex without marriage. And they're especially not supposed to want to move to New York City and get a Ph.D. in English literature when they've got a rich, good-looking boyfriend eager to make them his wife. But now she's graduated from college and the world is waiting for her.

A story set in John O'Hara territory, **Gloria** is a vivid portrayal of class and gender in an era when challenging assumptions seemed un-American. It is also about friendship, loyalty, sexuality, and love, and an unflinching look at the dynamics of family. But mostly, this is the story of Gloria and her last summer at home before setting out for the larger world.

Discussion Guide

1. Gloria finishes college and comes home to a decision that is pivotal to her future: Will she marry and become the good wife or go off to graduate school in New York? Are you surprised at her choice?

2. Gloria's mother both loves and hates her -- "There was her damned daughter." Does Gloria understand her mother's behavior toward her? Is Laney a good mother? Was Laney's mother a good mother?

3. Gloria is dark-skinned in a light-skinned family. How does this define her as an outsider in her own family?

4. Gloria goes through a harrowing rite to join her college's sorority. She then thrives in Delta Lambda's atmosphere of exclusivity and prescribed rules of behavior, ultimately becoming its president. Why do you think a woman of unusual intellectual abilities and interests succeeds so well in the repressive and oftentimes shallow atmosphere of a sorority? Who does Gloria need more: her sorority sisters or her intellectual friends?

5. Alcohol plays interesting roles in **Gloria**, from its bonding effect for Gloria and her grandmother to Laney's addiction to Gloria's near social ruin at her hometown's country club. How have attitudes toward alcohol changed since the 1950s?

6. Billy Dougherty is Gloria's father's war buddy, an adulterer, a sexual predator, and a loose cannon in Raysburg. What role does Billy Dougherty play in the Cotter family and within the greater story?

Author Bio

Keith Maillard was born and raised in Wheeling, West Virginia, the inspiration for the fictional town of Raysburg in which his novel, **Gloria**, is set. Five of his previous seven novels also take place there. He now lives in Vancouver with his wife and two daughters and teaches creative writing at the University of British Columbia.

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