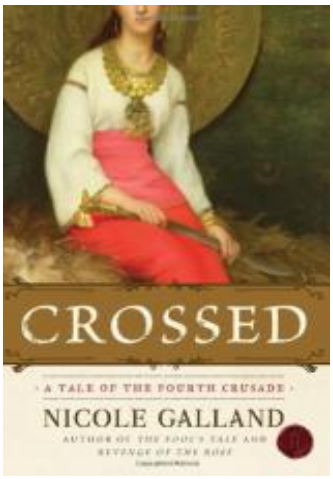
Crossed: A Tale of the Fourth Crusade

by Nicole Galland



About the Book

Venice, 1202. Tens of thousands of crusaders set sail for Jerusalem to liberate the great city from Muslim rule. Among them is a British vagabond grudgingly taken under the wing of a pious knight who believes that the mission is truly blessed by God. Before leaving, the vagabond rescues a woman pretending to be an Arab princess, hoping that under the protection of his benefactor knight, he can smuggle the young woman back to the Holy Land. However, this "holy" campaign sinks into tragic moral turpitude --- first in an attack on the Adriatic port city of Zara, and ultimately in the dramatic, disastrous sack of the seat of the Byzantine empire, Constantinople.

Galland, a Harvard graduate with a degree in Comparative Religion, personally retraced the entirety of the Fourth Crusade's infamous path while researching the book. The result is a rich and riveting tale replete with exotic settings, full-blooded and complex characters, and sparkling wit.

Discussion Guide

1. Discuss the title of the book. What are all the possible applications of the word *crossed* to the events and characters of the story?

2. Whom do you consider the most sympathetic character in the story? Why?

3. Which character behaves the most honorably throughout? Why?

4. If you were to find yourself in this story, which of the five main characters would you most resemble in outlook and action? (This might be a different response than questions 2 or 3.)

5. Discuss the differences of the two narrators --- in their character and background; their morality and values and belief-

systems; their story-telling styles.

6. Discuss Dandolo's comments near the end of the book about the fall of empires. Does this seem like a purely historical observation, or are there possible implications about today's world as well?

7. Discuss Jamila's dilemma of having to choose whether she will remain with a man she loves or return to her community. What do you think of the choice she makes, and what choice would you make in her position?

8. What do you think is implied by the end of the epilogue: that the Briton has found a way to join the Jewish community, or that he and Jamila have gone off on their own?

9. There are strong parallels between the Fourth Crusade and the current situation in Iraq, but the author emphasizes these parallels infrequently in the text itself. How often, if ever, did such parallels occur to you as you were reading?

10. Who is a better ruler, Dandolo or Boniface? Why?

Author Bio

Nicole Galland's spectrum of historical fiction (THE TALE, THE CROSSED, DIDO) Shakespeare (Iago) and contemporary-comic (STEPDOWN, PAPER) fiction (*New York Times* bestselling THE RISE AND FALL OF D.O.D.O. co-written with Neal Stephenson).

She has a MFA in Creative Writing from University College Dublin and loves teaching workshops on world creation. She has also w

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Publication Date: February 5, 2008

Paperback: 672 pages

Publisher: Harper Paperbacks

ISBN-10: 006084180X

ISBN-13: 9780060841805