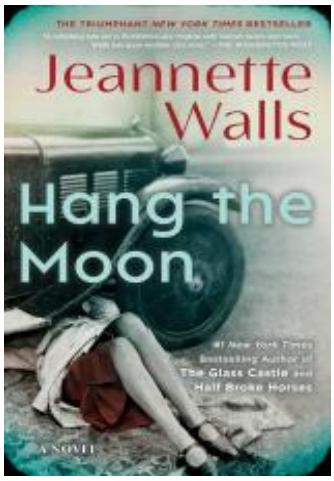
Hang the Moon

by Jeannette Walls



About the Book

From Jeannette Walls, the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of THE GLASS CASTLE, comes a riveting new novel about an indomitable young woman in Virginia during Prohibition.

Most folk thought Sallie Kincaid was a nobody who?d amount to nothing. Sallie had other plans.

Sallie Kincaid is the daughter of the biggest man in a small town, the charismatic Duke Kincaid. Born at the turn of the 20th century into a life of comfort and privilege, Sallie remembers little about her mother, who died in a violent argument with the Duke. By the time she is just eight years old, the Duke has remarried and had a son, Eddie. While Sallie is her father?s daughter, sharp-witted and resourceful, Eddie is his mother?s son, timid and cerebral. When Sallie tries to teach young Eddie to be more like their father, her daredevil coaching leads to an accident, and Sallie is cast out.

Nine years later, she returns, determined to reclaim her place in the family. That?s a lot more complicated than Sallie expected, and she enters a world of conflict and lawlessness. Sallie confronts the secrets and scandals that hide in the shadows of the Big House, navigates the factions in the family and town, and finally comes into her own as a bold, sometimes reckless bootlegger.

You will fall in love with Sallie Kincaid, a feisty and fearless, terrified and damaged young woman who refuses to be corralled.

Discussion Guide

1. There are two very different epigraphs that open the book: one from Queen Elizabeth I and another from Rex Walls, the author?s father. Discuss how these quotes set up your reading experience and how they relate to the overall story.

2. Upon Sallie?s return to the Big House, the Duke makes it her job to ?bring out the Kincaid? in her stepbrother Eddie (page 44). What does it mean to be a Kincaid? Besides the Duke and Sallie, are there any characters that also display classic ?Kincaid? traits?

3. Consider the Duke?s phrase ?I?ll treat you fair, but I won?t treat you special? (page 74). What do you think of this principle? How does it show up throughout the story? Are there any moments that contradict this idea?

4. As Sallie grows up, there are several times she can be seen emulating her father. For example, she parrots the way he says ?Steady? when trying to teach Eddie to drive the Defiance Coaster. What lessons does Sallie take away from her father? At what point does she come into her own and deviate from his education?

5. Eddie is as much his mother?s son as Sallie is her father?s daughter. He is withdrawn, intelligent and soft-tempered. What does this contrast between siblings reveal about the family? What does it reveal about Sallie?

6. The idea of family is hugely important in HANG THE MOON. How do family bonds influence the events of the novel? Is blood thicker than water, so to speak? What relationships stood out to you the most?

7. Marriage is a major theme throughout the novel, and a big question for Sallie, who is ?not sure [she?ll] ever want to get married? (page 34). How is marriage represented in HANG THE MOON? How does marriage differ between the time period in the book and now?

8. Sallie has two love interests: Tom Dunbar, her childhood friend, and Lieutenant Douglas Rawley. How does each man influence her actions? Before the end of the novel, were you rooting for one or the other of these very different men?

9. For much of the book, Aunt Faye seems like a pitiable and weak-hearted character in need of defense. However, we learn more as the story goes on. How does your view of Aunt Faye transform over the course of the novel?

10. Many of the characters in HANG THE MOON could be described as morally gray. How would you arrange the characters on a moral spectrum from good to bad? Does anyone fall more clearly on one side or the other for you?

11. Abraham Crockett is a man with as much charisma and pride as Duke Kincaid himself, though he does not have the same wealth and power. What does his narrative add to the overall story? What would we lose from the reading experience if Abraham were absent?

12. Sallie cares a great deal about heirlooms. She keeps her mother?s moonstone necklace, she secures Jane?s sterling silver hairbrush so that Eddie can have ?something of his mama?s? (page 53), and she acknowledges how much the Kincaid jewels might mean to Mattie. Why do you think Sallie places so much importance on these items?

13. Overcoming long-held grudges and breaking generational curses are key to the plot of HANG THE MOON. For example, the feud between the Bonds and Kincaids can be traced back to a land dispute between the families? grandfathers. In the face of these conflicts, what does Sallie do that helps her succeed where others have failed?

14. Though Sallie is used to being the biggest fish her side of the pond, Georgette Rheims? wealth blows her out of the water. Georgette dredges up insecurities Sallie never knew she had and shares some harsh truths. Imagine how

differently things may have turned out had Georgette never contacted Sallie. Do you think her husband?s assessment of her motivations is accurate? Or is there more to the story?

15. Think about all the women in the story --- Sallie, Aunt Faye, Jane, Kat, Mattie, Gloria, Georgette and others --- and think about how they either buck or conform to traditional gender roles. How have these women?s lives been shaped by their own choices versus the desires of the men around them?

16. At the end of the novel, Sallie has a flashback to a memory of her mother that had been long forgotten, and she wonders if it is truly a memory or just wishful thinking. What do you think? Does it change the conclusions Sallie draws from her experiences one way or the other?

Author Bio

Jeannette Walls graduated from Barnard College and was a journalist in New York. Her memoir, THE GLASS CASTLE, has been a *New York Times* bestseller for more than eight years. She is also the author of the instant *New York Times* bestsellers THE SILVER STAR and HALF BROKE HORSES, which was named one of the 10 best books of 2009 by the editors of *The New York Times Book Review*. Walls lives in rural Virginia with her husband, the writer John Taylor.

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