

KAREN

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

WHITE

"Bee amazed. *Flight Patterns*
is sure to create a buzz!"

—#1 New York Times
Bestselling Author
DEBBIE MACOMBER

flight patterns

Book Club Kit

flight patterns

Discussion Questions

- 1 The title *FLIGHT PATTERNS* has many layers of meaning that only become clear after you've read the novel. What do you think the title represents?
- 2 Many people collect china or have pieces that have been handed down in their family through generations. Do you have a china collection and, if so, do you know its history? Is knowing its history particularly meaningful to you?
- 3 Georgia and Maisy grew up knowing that their mother, Birdie, was mentally ill, but it doesn't seem to be something that is openly discussed in the family, even between the sisters. Is there a stigma in talking about mental illness? Is this something you think you would be able to discuss with either family or friends?
- 4 One of the themes in *FLIGHT PATTERNS* is family and what people do in the name of family, to protect their families. Many of the characters in *FLIGHT PATTERNS* have done extreme things to protect their families—whether it's Giles sending Colette away, Georgia giving a precious gift to Maisy, or Ned protecting his wife long after her death. Do you feel that this is realistic? Would you go to the same extremes for your family?
- 5 Bees and beekeeping are important elements throughout *FLIGHT PATTERNS*. What do you think the bees represent to the different characters?
- 6 After caring for the bees almost religiously for most of his life, Ned does something destructive towards the bees, nearly burning down the house and killing his granddaughters. Why do you think Ned acted the way he did?
- 7 Birdie has been acting for her entire life, despite not having a career on the stage or screen—who do you think the real Birdie is?
- 8 Becky discovers a truth about herself accidentally. Is this something that Maisy should have told her about before? Why or why not?
- 9 We find out that Ned is the one who sent in Giles Mouton's name to Yad Vashem, to be recognized and honored for what he did during World War II. Do you think this helps to mitigate some of the guilt he bears in Giles's death?
- 10 Birdie's inability to cope with her past and her emotional instability lead to her being a neglectful mother to both Georgia and Maisy. Do you think she deserves forgiveness from her daughters now that they know the truth of her damaged personal history?



Southern Queen Bee

Refreshing, delicious, and oh-so-beautiful, the Southern Queen Bee was made to refresh and delight. It might also create a little buzz. This signature cocktail, created by the award-winning Olde Blind Dog Irish Pub in Milton, GA, is a carefully crafted blend of blueberries, honey, simple syrup, and Southern gin. The drink was inspired, sampled, and approved by “the Queen of Southern Fiction,”* author Karen White. You’re sure to love this summertime refresher, served over ice and topped with club soda, lime, and fresh mint. Enjoy with friends or while indulging in a good book. Also delicious served as a virgin drink, minus the gin.

Here’s to summertime . . . and being the queen.

* The Huffington Post

STEP 1

BLUEBERRY HONEY SIMPLE SYRUP

- 1/2 cup Honey
- 1 cup Water
- 4 sprigs Fresh Mint
- 1 whole Lemon
- 1 cup Blueberries (fresh or frozen)

- 1) Cut lemons into quarters.
- 2) Combine honey, water, mint, and lemon; steep over medium heat for 15-20 minutes.
- 3) Remove from heat and strain.
- 4) Add strained syrup to a high speed blender, add blueberries and pulverize until smooth and blueberries are completely broken down. The syrup should be smooth and a deep purple color. Cool.

STEP 2

SOUTHERN QUEEN BEE DRINK

- 1.5 oz Gin (Old 4th Distillery Gin)
- 1.5 oz Blueberry Honey Simple Syrup

- 1) In a tall glass filled with ice, add ingredients.
- 2) Shake or stir until well incorporated and frothy.
- 3) Top with club soda and garnish with lime and fresh mint.
- 4) Enjoy on your front porch with a good book!





Q&A WITH KAREN WHITE

What inspired you to write a book about a woman who is fascinated by china patterns?

I always try to put one of my passions into each book. In *The Time Between*, it was the passion for piano music and a 1926 Mason & Hamlin concert grand (my personal piano), and in *Flight Patterns*, I picked china. My mother, born and raised in the Mississippi Delta, selected her china pattern at a young age, as was the custom. When I was 12, we moved to London, England, and I got to pick my own set of china—thus beginning a life-long obsession with china. After seven years, not only did I have two sets of my own china (Carlyle by Royal Doulton and Christmas Tree by Spode), but my mother had accumulated seven more patterns of her own! My first job after college was in an executive training program for a small department store chain in the Washington, DC, area where I found myself as the department manager of

their china, crystal, and silver department, where my obsession really blossomed. It got to the point where I could identify a china manufacturer just by looking at the shape of a teacup. There's just something about china and the story it tells. My most prized possession is the last remaining dinner plate of my great-grandmother's wedding china. It's a piece of our family history I can hold in my hand and pass on to the next generation.

Have you always been interested in bees/beekeeping? Did the recent dire conditions that bees are facing influence your decision to include them in the book?

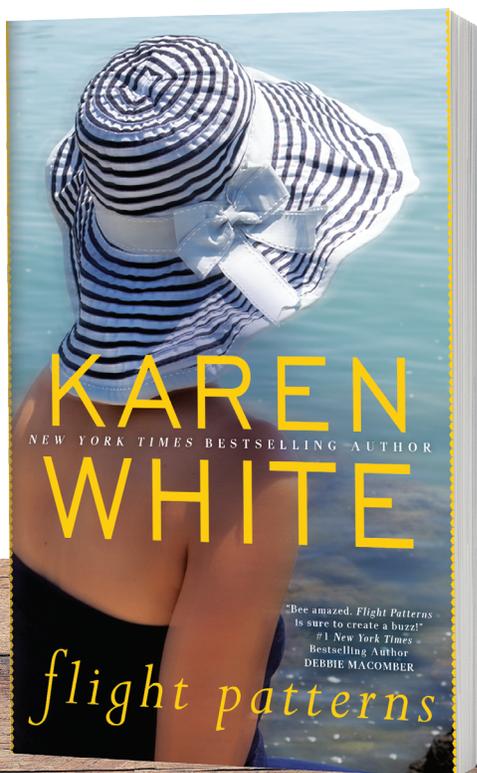
To be honest, I've always been afraid of bees—well, ever since when I was six years old and stepped on one while barefoot in my front yard and got stung. But when I was reaching into the simmering stewpot in my head where I like to toss book ideas, I remembered something I'd seen or read about honeybees—most likely because they've been in the news a lot lately because of their drastically diminishing numbers. So I started doing a little preliminary research to see if bees and beekeeping might be something I could use in the book that had begun to formulate in my mind. The first thing I learned is that honeybees shouldn't be able to fly. Their bodies are too big, and their wings too small. But nobody ever told that to the honeybees so they fly anyway. The second thing I learned is that worker bees (all female) can fly within a five-mile radius of their hive and always find their way back home. The clincher was when I read that to protect the hive from a wasp who has invaded the hive, the worker bees will flutter their wings to get the temperature inside the hive to a specific degree—hot enough to kill the wasp. But if they go just one degree higher, it will kill the bees. *Flight Patterns* is about homecoming, and finding one's way, and what people will do to protect what they love. And the bee theme fit perfectly.

I love that the book is set in the South, and anyone, not those who come from/live in the South, can appreciate the story and understand the struggles every member is dealing with and is facing. What is it about the South that evokes such a great setting that plays so well with the plot of the book?

I agree—there's something about the South that people all over the country are attracted to. Maybe it's the long line of great Southern writers (Harper Lee, Margaret Mitchell, William Faulkner, Flannery O'Connor just to name a few) whose beautiful storytelling and writing made it easier for the rest of us by getting the country's attention. Although both of my parents are Southerners, I never lived in the South growing up. But I did visit Mississippi and Florida every summer to see my extended family, finding myself immersed in what it was like to live in a small Southern town and be a member of an extended—and colorful!—Southern family. It is the voices of my aunts and cousins and maternal grandmother that I hear when I create my strong Southern female characters. I loved kicking off my shoes and running downtown Indianola, Mississippi, with my cousins and being recognized as “Catherine Anne's girl.” I sometimes think that had I been raised in a small Southern town I might not have noticed the nuances and peculiarities (and I mean that in a good way) of what being Southern meant. Maybe it's the heat and humidity and the flying and crawling critters you don't find above the Mason-Dixon line. Maybe it's something in the water. Or maybe it's a shared history that's as storied and twisted as the Apalachicola River. Whatever it is, I'd like to bottle it and take a sniff from it every time I begin a book.

How did you conceive the story? Especially with the twist, how do you know how/when to plan it?

I wish I knew the answer to this! I don't pre-plan or pre-write—although I do a lot of thinking about my setting and the internal and external conflicts of my primary character before I sit down to write. And then I just write, the story evolving as I go along. I tend to write books like I read them—without knowing how they end. I never wanted to read a book in which I knew how it ended, so why would I want to write like that? Somebody once described the way I write as “driving in fog with the headlights on.” This means I can see a little bit in front of me but not the whole road. I might get snatches of light in the distances every once in a while, but I will say that my endings are usually as much a surprise to me as they are to my readers! I normally get an idea of the “twist” halfway through the book, and sometimes nearer the beginning, and then I spend the rest of the book trying to figure out how to make it happen. Not the easiest way to write, and I wish I could do it any other way, but this is the way that seems to work best for me.



Where would the characters be ten years from now?

Happy! I like to write the kinds of books I like to read—meaning I want my emotions to be dragged over the coals, and I want to read about damaged and flawed characters. But by the end of the book, I don't need everything wrapped up in a nice yellow ribbon, but I do need to know—in both reading and writing—that the characters aren't the same as they were in the beginning of the book. They have learned, and changed, and grown, and are better off mentally, physically, and/or spiritually at the end of the book. That, to me, is a satisfying read. It also means that by the time I leave the characters on the last page, they have what it takes to have happy lives. Which is why I rarely bother them for a sequel.

Are any of the characters based on someone from real life or from a world of characters you wanted to write about?

No. Not intentionally, anyway! My characters are always from my imagination, although I wouldn't be surprised if I borrowed snippets from people I know. I do like to explore various personality elements in my main characters—sometimes allowing them to be my alter-ego. They're usually braver and smarter and stronger than I am. Which is one of the reasons why I love to write!



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