

# READER'S GUIDE

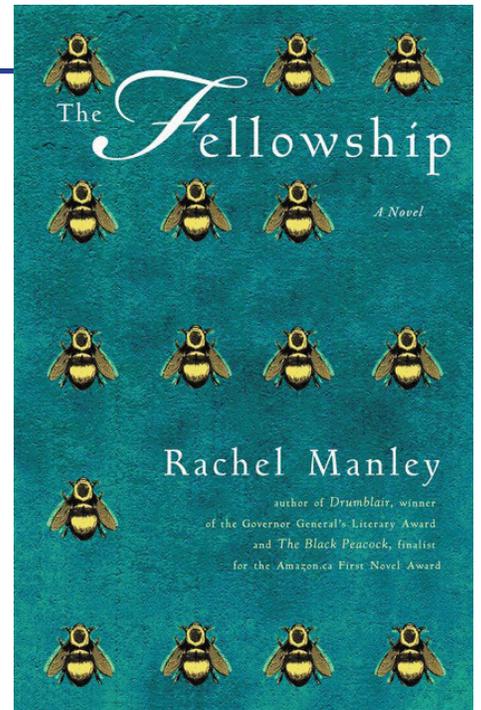
*The Fellowship* by Rachel Manley

## INTRODUCING *The Fellowship*

The recipient of a prestigious Gunter Fellowship, Jessica leaves behind Jamaica, the only country she's ever known, for Cambridge, Massachusetts, near the end of the twentieth century. In her fellowship year, she is to write a memoir about her father, a professor of mathematics at the University of the West Indies.

Attuned to watching for meaning below the surface of things, Jessica learns about the women with whom she shares her year, twenty women, all in middle age, all accomplished — considerably more accomplished than her slim volumes of poetry and one memoir allow her to feel.

Amidst the academic, artistic, and scholarly life of the Gunter Center, Jessica finds comfort and solace in a deepening friendship with her landlady, a retired economist whose life story she hears and records over the course of her fellowship year.



## IMPORTANT THEMES

### *Culture*

Before receiving her acceptance to the Gunter Center, Jessica says, “If I received a Gunter Fellowship and went to Cambridge, I’d go with a third-world attitude, not totally at ease in American culture” (page 6). Throughout the novel, Jessica makes comparisons between Jamaican and American culture.

### *Feminism*

Many of the women at the Gunter Center have put their careers on hold to be wives and mothers, but now they’re ready to rejoin the workforce. The Gunter Fellowship helps them to do that by giving them a year to work on career-related projects.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is the significance of the Gunter Center?
2. How has being raised by Grandy affected Jessica?
3. How have Jessica's notions of America changed from the beginning of the novel to the end?
4. Jessica says writing is therapeutic (page 52) and yet she struggles to write about Angus after his death. Why do you think this is?
5. Discuss Jessica's views on fiction (page 50).
6. Why do you think the author set the story at the dawn of the computer age?
7. On page 110, Charlotte asks what makes a woman modern. How would you answer this question?
8. What are some of the cultural differences Jessica has noticed between Jamaica and America?
9. Which of the fellows do you relate to the most? Why?



### ABOUT RACHEL

Rachel Manley is an author and poet. She is best known for her memoir, *Drumblair: Memories of a Jamaican Childhood* (winner of the Governor General's Literary Award for Nonfiction), which was inspired by life with her grandfather, Norman Washington Manley, founder of Jamaica's first national party. Her novel *The Black Peacock* was a finalist for the 2018 Amazon First Novel Award. Born in Cornwall, England, and raised in Jamaica, Manley now resides in Toronto.