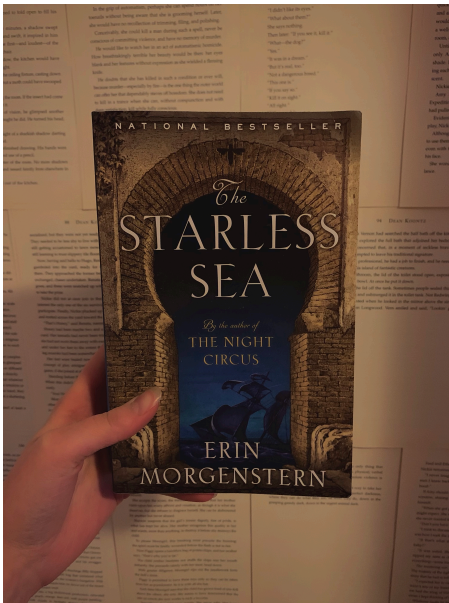


Rachel Smid
Creative Writing 12
March 8, 2022

The Starless Sea by Erin Morgenstern

A formal review



Near the center of the earth, there is a place, only accessible through painted doors few have the chance to open. Access is given to the few who pass the tests in the world above. *The Starless Sea* is a labyrinth of books, architecture, and magic, set in present-day America. This story flips between the story of a modern grad student, Zachary Ezra Rawlins and a mysterious book known as *Sweet Sorrows* and the stories it holds. Zachary, shaken after stumbling upon a book in his school library. The book recounts a story of him as a child where he left a painted door without attempting to open it, missing his chance to enter the magical world of the Starless Sea. Consumed by curiosity and regret, he travels to New York to attend a masked party where he discovers a stunning storyteller, Dorian, a mysterious masked woman, Mirabel; and a single-eyed Allegra whose sacrifice allowed her to see into the future. Allegra has long foreseen the destruction of the

Starless Sea as Zachary travels to the Starless Sea per a literary party, and it then entered into a battle to save the Starless Sea from its ruination.

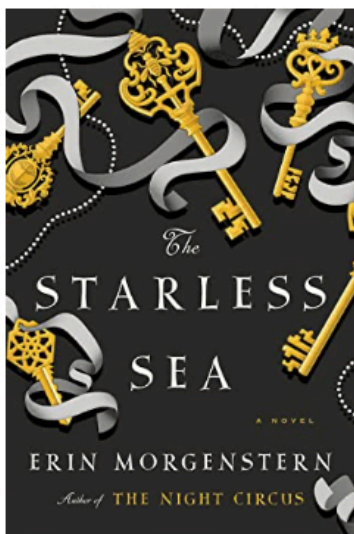
Eight years after the debut of her award-winning novel *The Night Circus*, Erin Morgenstern's second novel *The Starless Sea* brings to life another world as did its predecessor. Morgenstern intertwines multiple narratives into a single story where the reader is passed back and forth with ease as they attempt to tie all the ribbons together. The reader never truly knows in which story they will find themselves next and with which characters. This novel combines facets of myths, fairy tales, and legends;



whether to tell a character's back story, nightmares, or self-contained fairytales. All mingling to paint a picture of the past, present, and future of the Starless Sea.

Crammed with symbolism, foreshadowing, and imagery, this is a book favoured by the imagination. Though the themes of this novel resemble those of fairytales, this is not a book for children. This is a story of murder, sacrifice, and destruction and should not be considered light reading. This novel reimagines the classic world-building typically found in fantasy novels by incorporating fantastical aspects and symbols that are not always clearly understood, such as the sea of honey and the symbol of bees. Yet, there is a beauty to the ambiguity of such symbols and objects. The story and its meaning exist for the interpretation of the reader. — or perhaps they are merely well-covered plot holes. The vagueness of this novel may be endearing or maddening, leaving many readers conflicted in their opinions. For readers who favour world-building and imagery, the characters in this novel will take you with them to the starless sea.

Author photograph: Morgenstern, Erin. "About." Erin Morgenstern, <https://erinmorgenstern.com/about/>.



Want to Read

Rate this book



The Starless Sea

by Erin Morgenstern (Goodreads Author)



Rachel's review



bookshelves: [books-on-my-shelf](#)

Oct 31, 2021

I would like to start by saying I read this book five months ago and I am still thinking about it. Especially the story about Fate and Time. I was originally nervous to read this book. I had read *The Night Circus*, and I loved it (I read it twice in a month). So I had high expectations for this book and did not want to be let down. It was worth the read!

The thing I appreciate most about Erin Morgenstern's writing is how intelligent it is. The world-building, magic systems, and characters in this novel are complex, and the imagery of the story is stunning (as expected). Everything in this book seemed so real, which made the story even easier to fall in love with.

The only drawback in the novel was that I felt the story dragged at times. Out of her two books (*The Night Circus* and *The Starless Sea*), I prefer *The Night Circus*, but I easily recommend both. Though saying that, I love books that make you think and focus and this book did that for me. As I said above, Erin Morgenstern writes with a level of complexity that is difficult to find with other novels. She weaves multiple stories together beautifully and includes an aspect of fantasy that is rarely matched.

This is one of those books that makes you want to live in the world that the author created. Everything that makes this book realistic is on point, and the aesthetic is one I love (academia!).

Needless to say, any book of hers is an instant buy for me!

Like · flag

