

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



Erin Morgenstern is the author of *The Night Circus* (2011) and *The Starless Sea* (2019) and hopes to someday write other books so she has more things to list in biographies.

She grew up in Massachusetts and studied theatre and studio art at Smith College. She currently lives with her husband Adam and the world's cutest kitten in the middle of the woods in the Berkshires where she writes, plays video games, and tries to improve her cocktail mixing skills.

She is a Cancer with a Leo moon and Taurus rising and she knows what all of that means. She collects bloodmilk jewelry. She knits things as long as they don't involve too much math. She paints. She gets obsessed with artisan perfume oils and drinks a lot of tea.

- Author's website

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Prior to reading this book, what were your expectations? Did it meet them, or did this book surprise you?
2. A single book takes Zachary on an adventure. What book that you've read would you want to take you on an adventure?
3. Why does Allegra want to destroy the doors?
4. What are the pirate and the girl a metaphor for?
5. *The Starless Sea* is made up of six books. Is there a main character or narrator for each? Do they each have the same one?
6. How do the stories intersect in *The Starless Sea*?
7. The books in *The Starless Sea* are "Sweet Sorrows," "Fortunes and Fables," "The Ballad of Simon and Eleanor," "Written in the Stars," "The Owl King," and "The Secret Diary of Katrina Hawkins." How do they

differ from one another, in particularly book six from the first five?

8. Why didn't Zachary open the door when he was younger? Why do you think he found Sweet Sorrows in the library years later?
9. What do you think Katrina finds when she opens the door at the end of the book with a crown, a feather, and a heart?
10. What character did you identify with the most and why? Was there a character you particularly didn't like or think you wouldn't get along with?
11. Who would you recommend this book to and why?
12. Which passage of this book resonated with you most?

- <https://www.litlovers.com/reading-guides/fiction/11664-starless-sea-morgenstern?start=3>

BOOK REVIEWS

Publisher's Weekly

/ Starred Review */* Built from fables, myths, and fairy tales, Morgenstern's long-awaited second fantastical novel (following *The Night Circus*) delves into a vast subterranean library, the Harbor on the Starless Sea, a giant, maze-like, subterranean library where all languages are comprehensible to everyone, and time moves differently. Its wonders include moving statues, edible stories, and a sea made of honey. Narrative-obsessed grad student Zachary Rawlins happens upon an old, authorless collection in the campus library. Among the tales of an improbable land of books and their devotees is an anecdote from Zachary's own childhood, a time when he found a magical door but chose to walk away, disbelieving. Desperate to understand and longing for a second chance at adventure, Zachary investigates and finds a literary party thrown by a secret society. He goes through a painted door in Central Park and into the Harbor itself, now long past its heyday and mostly deserted. Aboveground, the secret society is trying to close as many doors as possible, hoping to keep the Starless Sea hidden. Aided by otherworldly Mirabel, whose motives and history are obscure, and alluring Dorian, a former society member who opposes the closing of the doors, Zachary works to understand how the Harbor fell into disrepair and what he can do to protect it. He also learns what it means to be not just a reader but a part of the story, and what happens after that story ends. This love letter to bibliophiles is dreamlike and uncanny, grounded in deeply felt emotion, and absolutely thrilling. Agent: Richard Pine, InkWell Management. (Nov.) --Staff (Reviewed 07/15/2019) (Publishers Weekly, vol 266, issue 28, p).

Library Journal

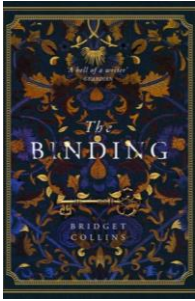
/ Starred Review */* In this follow-up to Morgenstern's magical debut, *The Night Circus*, grad student Zachary Ezra Rawlins discovers a mysterious book in his university library stacks containing loyal acolytes, key seekers, and lovers trapped in time, not to mention the story of a childhood incident wherein he finds

a door painted on a wall but doesn't risk going through. Smartly following enigmatic clues, he is led to a masquerade party, a woman dressed as Max from *Where the Wild Things Are*, and a storytelling man who rescues him from murderous pursuers and with whom he falls in love. And that leads him to a doorway opening on an ancient underground sanctuary, bordering on a starless sea, where he follows numerous threads to find out what his story really is as he fights to protect the stories already there, the stories interwoven with his own. What results is a magnificent quest, a sense of unfolding adventure and danger, gold-wrought fantasy, and endless provocation on what storytelling really means. VERDICT In the end, Morgenstern proves wrong one of her villains, who proclaims that a story is like an egg; break it, and it's lost. Her stories flow together as they flow forward and will enthrall a wide range of readers. Highly recommended. [Prepub Alert, 4/22/19.] --Barbara Hoffert (Reviewed 09/01/2019) (Library Journal, vol 144, issue 8, p67).

Kirkus Reviews

/ Starred Review */* A withdrawn graduate student embarks on an epic quest to restore balance to the world in this long-anticipated follow-up to *The Night Circus* (2011). Zachary Ezra Rawlins is a typical millennial introvert; he likes video games, escapist reading, and drinking sidecars. But when he recognizes himself in the pages of a mysterious book from the university library, he's unnerved—and determined to uncover the truth. What begins as a journey for answers turns into something much bigger, and Zachary must decide whether to trust the handsome stranger he meets at a highflying literary fundraiser in New York or to retreat back to his thesis and forget the whole affair. In a high-wire feat of metatextual derring-do, Morgenstern weaves Zachary's adventure into a stunning array of linked fables, myths, and origin stories. There are pirates and weary travelers, painters who can see the future, lovers torn asunder, a menacing Owl King, and safe harbors for all the stories of the world, far below the Earth on the golden shores of a Starless Sea. Clocking in at more than 500 pages, the novel requires patience as Morgenstern puts all the pieces in place, but it is exquisitely pleasurable to watch the gears of this epic fantasy turn once they're set in motion. As in *The Night Circus*, Morgenstern is at her best when she imagines worlds and rooms and parties in vivid detail, right down to the ballroom stairs "festooned with lanterns and garlands of paper dipped in gold" or a cloak carved from ice with "ships and sailors and sea monsters...lost in the drifting snow." This novel is a love letter to readers as much as an invitation: Come and see how much magic is left in the world. Fans of Neil Gaiman and V.E. Schwab, Kelly Link and Susanna Clarke will want to heed the call. An ambitious and bewitching gem of a book with mystery and passion inscribed on every page. (Kirkus Reviews, August 15, 2019).

READALIKES



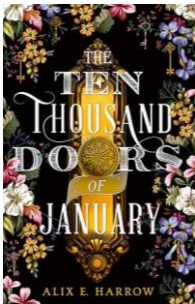
***The Binding* by Bridget Collins**

Imagine you could erase your grief. Imagine you could forget your pain. Imagine you could hide a secret. Forever. THE BINDING is an unforgettable, magical novel: a boundary-defying love story and a unique literary event.



***The Age of Witches* by Louisa Morgan**

In Gilded Age New York, a centuries-long clash between two magical families ignites when a young witch must choose between love and loyalty, power and ambition, in this magical novel by Louisa Morgan.



***The Ten Thousand Doors of January* by Alix Harrow**

A woman navigating the out-of-place artifacts in her caretaker's sprawling early 20th-century mansion discovers a mysterious book that reveals impossible truths about the world and her own past.