

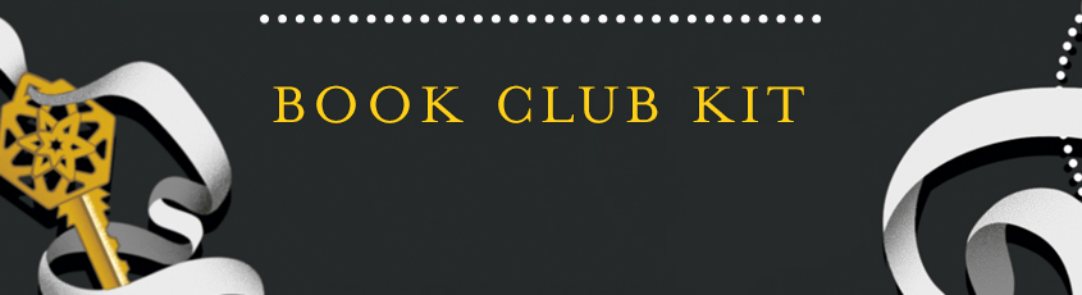


The
STARLESS SEA

ERIN
MORGENSTERN



BOOK CLUB KIT



Dearest Friends,

*Eight years ago THE NIGHT CIRCUS
arrived without warning.*

*Now you are invited to sail
THE STARLESS SEA.*

*I'm thrilled that we get to go on
this voyage together.*

Yours,

Erin Morgenstern



discussion questions

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1. A single book takes Zachary on an adventure. What book that you've read would you want to take you on an adventure?
2. Why does Allegra want to destroy the doors?
3. What are the pirate and the girl metaphors for?
4. *The Starless Sea* is made up of six books. Is there a main character or narrator for each? Or do they each have the same one?
5. How do the stories intersect in *The Starless Sea*?
6. 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 particular book six from the first five?
7. Why didn't Zachary open the door when he was younger? Why do you think he found "Sweet Sorrows" in the library years later?
8. What do you think Katrina finds at the end of the book when she opens the door with a crown, a feather, and a heart?



Quiz: Are you an Acolyte, a Guardian, or a Keeper?

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1. At a party, you can be found...

- A. ...at the center of the room, entertaining everyone. It's probably your party.
- B. ...listening and observing. You're more of a wallflower. You can be found curled up in the corner, listening to someone spilling their heart out.
- C. ...off on your own adventure. You left the party twenty minutes ago ... or you're looking after a friend who has gone haywire, making sure they don't get hurt.

2. How do you react to an emergency?

- A. You've already planned for it. You're prepared and have everything you need. Wet wipes? Check. Snacks? Check. A tool kit with twenty-seven different uses? Absolutely, check.
- B. You're frozen: You tend to watch with horror as the events unfold, unable to speak... but at least you are there.
- C. Creatively! You'll knot together bedsheets if you have to.

3. What is your favorite kind of story?

- A. Anything, as long as I'm telling it.
- B. Anything, as long as it's memorable.
- C. Anything, as long as it's action packed.

4. As a child, you were...

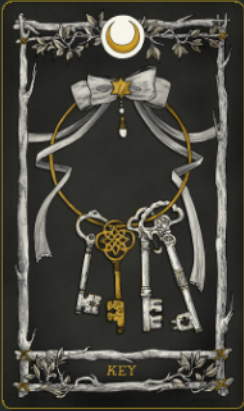
- A. ...a bit of a performer. You were in all the shows, had lots of friends, and told the best jokes.
- B. ...shy and quiet but pretty dedicated. Maybe you practiced the piano every day or always did your homework on time. Whatever it was, if you loved it, you were bound to do it well.
- C. ...rough and tumble. You were always running into danger but for good reason! Your friends knew you'd be by their side no matter what.

5. You could never give up...

- A. ...your voice.
- B. ...your dedication.
- C. ...your beliefs.



How did you respond?



Mostly As – You're a Keeper!

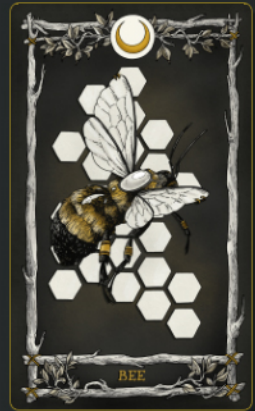
"Keepers must have spirit and keep it aloft"

Keepers are represented by the key and are born performers. If you didn't want to be an actor as a child, you probably wanted to be a singer or a comedian, happy to learn your lines by heart and imbue them with life. When you speak, people listen, which comes in handy, because the Keeper's role is looking after the stories, understanding them and making sure people hear them. They're also great at being prepared for anything! If you're ever hungry, ask a Keeper: They are certain to have a snack handy or at least know where to get one. The downside of this is that you're a bit of a hoarder. But, then, there is a reason the Underground Library is hundreds of miles deep...

Mostly Bs – You're an Acolyte!

"Devotion is for acolytes"

You're quiet and more of a listener than a talker, which is a good thing if you're an Acolyte, as they commonly have their tongues cut out to show their dedication... They must also spend a full cycle of the moon in isolated contemplation before they commit to their path. Defined by a love of stories, you're selfless, kind, and humble, withholding your stories in reverence to others. Your friends would call you sweet as honey, which is appropriate because the acolytes are represented by the bee.



Mostly Cs – You're a Guardian!

"To be a guardian is to wear death on your chest"

Represented by the sword, Guardians protect important books. They are known for their worthiness. They are honest, genuine, and loyal. They can, and do, look like anyone; they must go unnoticed to avoid being spotted by people who would put the books in harm's way. They are creative too, inventing solutions on the spot to the problems they encounter. A Guardian would go to the ends of the Earth (sometimes literally) to protect what they believe in — even if that puts them in great danger...



A CONVERSATION
WITH
**ERIN
MORGENSTERN**

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©Allan Amato

What did you do before you were a writer?

I was a theater major in college. I did a lot of theater and I also painted. I started writing because I could do all of those things with words, and it was a lot less messy and required fewer people.

Who is the first person to read your writing?

My husband. He tells me I can do whatever I want so he's a very good person to read it first. He's never, like, "no don't do that it's too weird." He usually tells me to be weirder.

"The circus that appeared in my head at that moment was way more interesting than anything I had written so far, and it came fully formed."

What was the inspiration behind *The Night Circus*?

The Night Circus started as part of National Novel Writing Month, which is an online-based competition to write 50,000 words in thirty days. I'd done it for several years for myself, and I was writing one November and I had these Edward Goreyesque guys in big fur coats wandering around and being mysterious, and I needed something exciting to happen. The NaNoWriMo rule of thumb is usually when in doubt just add ninjas. I didn't want to add ninjas with my guys in fur coats, so instead I sent all of these characters to the circus. The circus that appeared in my head at that moment was way more interesting than anything I had written so far, and it came fully formed in my head. It had all these black-and-white striped tents and a bonfire in the middle. I eventually abandoned that outside project and spent a lot of time writing just about the circus. That book eventually became *The Night Circus*.

How was writing *The Starless Sea* different from writing *The Night Circus*?

It was a little different because I kind of knew what I was doing, but not really. I wasn't doing that sort of binge writing that I did for *The Night Circus*. I write very sprawling messy drafts, and it takes me a while to find the story within the space because I always start with the space and try to write my way through it.

How long did it take you to write *The Night Circus* and *The Starless Sea*?

Too long! *The Night Circus* and *The Starless Sea* each actually took about five years to write from start to finish. I tend to be a rewriter; that's where I find my story, in the rewriting and really familiarizing myself with the story as I go along.

Why did you decide not to make your second book a sequel to *The Night Circus*?

When I went to write a second book, I didn't really want to write a sequel to *The Night Circus*. I felt like *The Night Circus* ends kind of nicely. I could explore the world further, maybe someday, but it wasn't what I wanted to do next. I wanted to do something that still felt fantastical and still felt like that kind of book that I love that plays with the edges of genre. I settled on wanting to write a book about books. As I started writing, though, I realized I was really creating a book about stories. It turned into a book that was not only about books themselves and an underground labyrinth full of books, but it was also a book about fate and time and video games, and that's *The Starless Sea*.

What was the hardest part about writing *The Starless Sea*?

The ending. The first 100 or so pages changed very little, but I rewrote the last half of the book many, many times until I found where it was meant to be going.



"I write very sprawling messy drafts, and it takes me a while to find the story within the space because I always start with the space and try to write my way through it."





Cocktail recipe (Bee's Knees)



serves 4



8 ounces gin

4 ounces lemon juice

4 ounces honey simple syrup (recipe below)

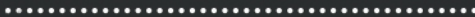
Lemon peel for garnish

Directions:

Vigorously shake the gin, simple syrup, and lemon juice over ice and strain into a chilled cocktail glass. Garnish with the lemon peel.

Directions for Honey Simple Syrup:

In a small saucepan heat the honey and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water over medium heat until the honey is dissolved. Cool to room temperature before using.



Recipe from the [Food Network](#)