

Further Reading

The Night Circus
Erin Morgenstern (2011)
MORGENSTERN

Waging a fierce competition for which they have trained since childhood, circus magicians Celia and Marco unexpectedly fall in love with each other and share a fantastical romance that manifests in fateful ways.

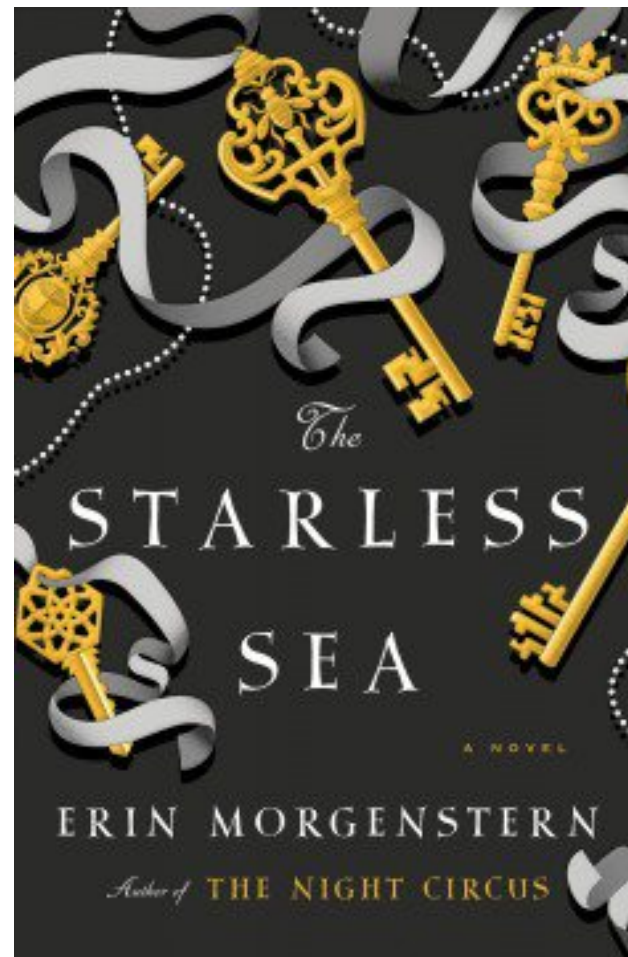
Middlegame
Seanan McGuire (2019)
MCGUIRE

In an alternate-reality world under the shadow of a magical government bent on transmuting the fabric of reality, two alchemical twins, one skilled with language and the other with math, become catalysts in their creator's grab for power.

Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell
Susanna Clarke (2004)
SF CLARKE

In nineteenth-century England, all is going well for rich, reclusive Mr. Norrell, who has regained some of the power of England's magicians from the past, until a rival magician, Jonathan Strange, appears and becomes Mr. Norrell's pupil.

Book Discussion Guide



About the Book

Zachary Ezra Rawlins is a graduate student in Vermont when he discovers a rare book hidden in the stacks. As he turns the pages, entranced by tales of lovelorn prisoners, key collectors, and nameless acolytes, he reads something strange: a story from his own childhood. Bewildered by this inexplicable book and desperate to make sense of how his own life came to be recorded, Zachary uncovers a series of clues--a bee, a key, and a sword--that lead him to a masquerade party in New York, to a secret club, and through a doorway to a subterranean library, hidden far below the surface of the earth. What Zachary finds in this curious place is more than just a buried home for books and their guardians--it is a place of lost cities and seas of honey, lovers who pass notes under doors and across time, and of stories whispered by the dead. Zachary learns of those who have sacrificed much to protect this realm, relinquishing their sight and their tongues to preserve this archive, and also those who are intent on its destruction. Together with Mirabel, a fierce, pink-haired protector of the place, and Dorian, a beautiful barefoot man with shifting alliances, Zachary travels the twisting tunnels, darkened stairwells, crowded ballrooms, and sweetly-soaked shores of this magical world, discovering his purpose--in both the rare book and in his own life.

Discussion Questions

1. A single book takes Zachary on an adventure. What book has taken you on an adventure?
2. Why does Allegra want to destroy the doors?
3. What do the pirate and the girl metaphors mean to you?
4. The Starless Sea is made up of six books. Compare the narrator in each book.
5. How do the stories intersect in the novel? Do you like this technique?
6. Contrast the six books. How are they different from one another, in particular book five and six?
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?

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