

The Night Circus

Printable Reading Map

“The circus arrives without warning. No announcements precede it. It is simply there, when yesterday it was not.”

Author

- Erin Morgenstern
- Erin Morgenstern is a writer and artist. Most of her writings and paintings are fairy tales, in one way or another. She lives in Massachusetts.
- Author Website: <http://erinmorgenstern.com/>

Book Summary

“A fierce competition is underway, a contest between two young magicians, Celia and Marco, who have been trained since childhood to compete in "a game," in which each must use their powers of illusion to best the other. Unbeknownst to them, this game is a duel to the death, and the circus is but the stage for a remarkable battle of imagination and will.”

Source: Novelist database (<http://ppld.org/all-databases?keys=novelist>)

Book Trailer: <http://erinmorgenstern.com/the-night-circus/>

Reviews

BookList: “This big and—no, not bulky—compelling first novel ushers in a menacing tone with its first sentence: The circus arrives without warning. Why would a circus arrive so quietly in town, and why would anyone need warning about this particular one? The time span here is 30 years, from 1873 to 1903, and the settings range from America to Europe. To a famous magician is delivered a little girl who, as it turns out, is his child, and fortunately for his future, she is possessed of magical powers. As it also happens, this magician has an archrival, who, in the face of the first magician’s jackpot in the form of his little girl, seeks a young person for him to train to rival her. What the two magicians did not anticipate, as the years pass and the two young people, the girl and the boy whom the second magician found, are honed in their specialty for performance’s sake and to outplay the other one, is that the young persons, when of an age, would meet and, surprising or not to the reader, fall in love. How will their destiny play out now? With appeal for readers not particularly geared to fantasy but who plainly enjoy an unusual and well-drawn story, this

one will make a good crossover suggestion. -- Hooper, Brad (Reviewed 05-15-2011) (Booklist, vol 107, number 18, p35) .”

Library Journal: “When Prospero the Enchanter discovers that he has a young daughter with extraordinary magical talents, he wastes no time in setting up a competition between her and the protégé of his longtime adversary. Celia and Marco train until young adulthood and eventually meet under the eerie black-and-white-striped tents of the Cirque des Rêves—the Circus of Dreams. What happens next has obviously intrigued a lot of people—rights for this debut have been sold to 22 countries, Summit Entertainment has made a film deal, and there's a 175,000-copy first printing. Not over-the-top kaleidoscopic but keenly, lushly cool and inventive with a hint of danger and reckless love; remember, this circus "Opens at Nightfall/ Closes at Dawn." Puts me in mind of Ray Bradbury's *Something Wicked This Way Comes* lightened up by Harry Potter. This will be big. --Barbara Hoffert (Reviewed April 1, 2011) (Library Journal, vol 136, issue 6, p68) .”

Publishers Weekly: Debut author Morgenstern doesn't miss a beat in this smashing tale of greed, fate, and love set in a turn of the 20th-century circus. Celia is a five-year-old with untrained psychokinetic powers when she is unceremoniously dumped on her unsuspecting father, Hector Bowen, better known as Le Cirque des Reves' Prospero the Entertainer. Hector immediately hatches a sinister scheme for Celia: pit her against a rival's young magician in an epic battle of magic that will, by design, result in the death of one of the players, though neither Celia nor her adversary, Marco, is informed of the inevitable outcome. What neither Hector nor his rival count on is that Celia and Marco will eventually fall in love. Their mentors—Marco's mentor, Alexander, plucked him from the London streets due to his psychic abilities—attempt to intervene with little success as Celia and Marco barrel toward an unexpected and oddly fitting conclusion. Supporting characters—such as Bailey, a farm boy who befriends a set of twins born into the circus who will drastically influence his future; Isobel, a circus employee and onetime girlfriend of Marco's; and theatrical producer Chandresh Christophe Lefèvre—are perfectly realized and live easily in a giant, magical story destined for bestsellerdom. This is an electric debut on par with *Special Topics in Calamity Physics*. (Sept.) --Staff (Reviewed May 16, 2011) (Publishers Weekly, vol 258, issue 20, p) .

“Night Circus Comes to Town with Magic, Mystery

Interview with Erin Morgenstern from NPR (YouTube video)

Audio version: <http://www.npr.org/2011/09/13/140430020/night-circus-comes-to-town-with-magic-mystery>

Text version: <http://tinyurl.com/Night-Circus-Review>

The Night Circus Reader's Guide: <http://www.randomhouse.com/book/211964/the-night-circus-by-erin-morgenstern/?view=reader%27sguide#reader%27sguide>

Interview with Erin Morgenstern from Doubleday Book Club (YouTube video):
<http://www.youtube.com/user/DoubledayBookClub>

Explore the Night Circus through an interactive story from Failbetter Games:
<http://www.nightcircus.co.uk/Home/Auth>

Audiobook as read by Jim Dale (YouTube video):
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DdGch8qVKpQ&list=LPqB1Uo-Pt-Hc&index=5&feature=plcp>

Music of the Night Circus

Erin Morgenstern's Night Circus Mix:
http://8tracks.com/erinmorgenstern/erinmorgenstern-s-night-circus-mix?utm_source=sendgrid&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=sendgrid

Book Notes: Erin Morgenstern "The Night Circus" – discussion of the music that relates to the book and why.
http://www.largeheartedboy.com/blog/archive/2011/09/book_notes_erin_1.html

Themes of the Book

Magicians / Magic

"Have you seen the contraptions these magicians build to accomplish the most mundane feats? They are a bunch of fish covered in feathers trying to convince the public they can fly, I am simply a bird in their midst." (Erin Morgenstern, *The Night Circus*)

Famous magicians during the time period of *The Night Circus*: Adelaide Herrmann, Harry Houdini, Harry Blackstone

Fiction books featuring magicians:

- [Vaclav & Lena](#) by Haley Tanner
- [The Prestige](#) by Christopher Priest
- [Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell](#) by Susanna Clarke

- [*The Magicians*](#) by Lev Grossman

Nonfiction books featuring magic/magicians:

- [*Hiding the Elephant: How Magicians Invented the Impossible and Learned to Disappear*](#) by Jim Steinmeyer
- [*Houdini*](#) by Clinton Cox
- [*The Encyclopedia of Magic and Alchemy*](#) by Rosemary Guiley
- [*The Magician and the Cardsharp: The Search for America's Greatest Sleight-of-Hand Artist*](#) by Karl Johnson

Circuses in the 1800s

"I couldn't tell the difference between what was real and what I wanted to be real." (Erin Morgenstern, *The Night Circus*)

Barnum & Bailey Circus: <http://kids.britannica.com/elementary/art-88616/Trapeze-artists-were-popular-circus-performers-during-the-1800s>

Edwin Lawrence's Marionettes circa 1890:

<http://hri.shef.ac.uk/fairground/db/fairground/gjpg.jsp?id=00360956>

The Circus in America TimeLine (1872-1905):

<http://www.circusinamerica.org/public/timelines?date1=1872&date2=1905>

Fiction Books Set in a Circus

- [*The Autobiography of Mrs. Tom Thumb*](#) by Melanie Benjamin
- [*Embrace Me*](#) by Lisa Samson
- [*The Blue Moon Circus*](#) by Michael Raleigh
- [*Water for Elephants*](#) by Sara Gruen
- [*Something Wicked This Way Comes*](#) by Ray Bradbury

Nonfiction Books Set in a Circus

- [*Two Hundred Years of the American Circus: From Aba-Daba to the Zoppe-Zavatta Troupe*](#) by Tom Ogden
- [*P.T. Barnum: America's Greatest Showman*](#) by Philip Kunhardt
- [*The Greatest Circus Stories Ever Told: Amazing Stories of Life Under the Big Top*](#) by Stephen Brennan

- [Wild, Weird, and Wonderful: The American Circus 1901-1927 as seen by F.W. Glasier](#) Photographer by Mark Sloan

Star-Crossed Love

“Lovers whose relationship is doomed to fail are said to be “star-crossed” (frustrated by the stars), because those who believe in astrology claim that the stars control human destiny. William Shakespeare used the phrase to describe the lovers in *Romeo and Juliet*.”
(Dictionary.com)

“Everything I have done, every change I have made to that circus, every impossible feat and astounding sight, I have done for her.” (Erin Morgenstern, *The Night Circus*)

Fiction Books

- [Romeo and Juliet](#) by William Shakespeare
- [The Time Traveler's Wife](#) by Audrey Niffenegger
- [The Fault in Our Stars](#) by John Green
- [One Day](#) by David Nicholls

Films

- [West Side Story](#)
- [Titanic](#)
- [Legends of the Fall](#)
- [Roman Holiday](#)

Genres

What is Historical Fiction?

These are novels set in the past, before the author's lifetime or experience. Through its serious respect for historical accuracy and details of time, place, and character, Historical Fiction enhances a reader's knowledge of past events, lives, and customs. (Novelist, *Getting Up to Speed in Historical Fiction* by Joyce Saricks)

What is Fantasy Fiction?

With its intuitive, rather than rational, approach, Fantasy describes a world that never could exist, one where magic rules. Fantasy deals more with emotions and relationships than ideas, and Fantasy cherishes and preserves familiar stories, legends, and myths,

retelling them, sometimes with a twist. These are often elegantly written stories with a haunting quality, with something just behind the story, something bigger than the story itself that hints at a larger meaning. (Novelist, *Getting Up to Speed in Fantasy* by Joyce Saricks)

For more resources, visit the Pikes Peak Library District at ppld.org.

“You think, as you walk away from Le Cirque des Rêves and into the creeping dawn, that you felt more awake within the confines of the circus. You are no longer quite certain which side of the fence is the dream.” (Erin Morgenstern, *The Night Circus*)

Created by Krista Meier, Pikes Peak Library District, ppld.org.