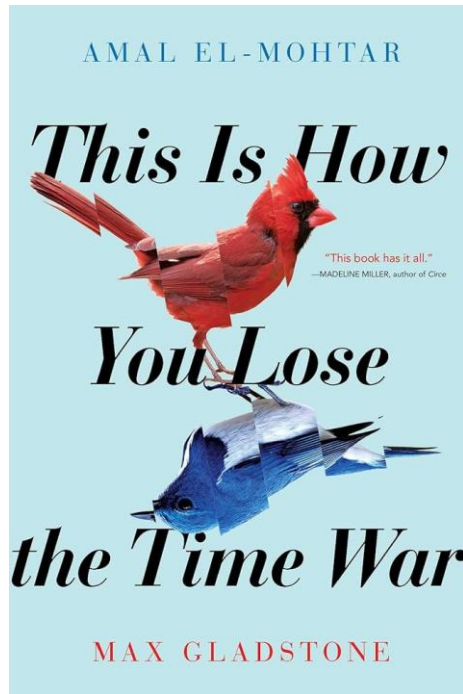


A Reader's Guide

This is How You Lose the Time War

Author: Amal El-Mohtar and Max Gladstone

Subject: Science Fiction and Romance



Summary

Among the ashes of a dying world, an agent of the Commandant finds a letter. It reads: *Burn before reading*. Thus begins an unlikely correspondence between two rival agents hellbent on securing the best possible future for their warring factions. Now, what began as a taunt, a battlefield boast, grows into something more. Something epic. Something romantic. Something that could change the past and the future.

Except the discovery of their bond would mean death for each of them. There's still a war going on, after all. And someone has to win that war.

Conversation Starters

1. As Red and Blue are executing their respective orders, they have their first exchange. Describe the warriors introduced in these first few opening challenges. Is one more dedicated to their cause than the other?
2. Blue writes a lot about Atlantis in one of her early letters. Discuss why this is a myth the authors choose to highlight, and why Atlantis, of all places, recurs with the same result in every strand.
3. There are many subtle pop-culture references made as Red and Blue move through time. Which references did you pick up on? Which were your favorites?
4. The seeker appears at the end of every chapter, chasing letters and collecting evidence. Who is the seeker? What is their purpose? What is their role in this time war?
5. Discuss how Red and Blue each come to realize they are in love. What made it apparent to you? Does it happen more easily for one than the other?
6. Red and Blue each interact with their leaders once throughout the book. What are the notable differences between the Commandant and the Garden? Who would you rather work for? Red's final letter to Blue is extremely complex. Discuss its many layers and her decision to write a letter within the poison. What would you write if you were in her position? Red makes a very risky move that will have dire consequences if things don't align perfectly. How many ways could her plan go wrong? Discuss Red's mindset before, during and after the end of this impossible mission.

About the Authors

Amal El-Mohtar is an award-winning writer of fiction, poetry, and criticism. Her stories and poems have appeared in magazines including *Tor.com*, *Fireside Fiction*, *Lightspeed*, *Uncanny*, *Strange Horizons*, *Apex*, *Stone Telling*, and *Mythic Delirium*; anthologies including *The Djinn Falls in Love and Other Stories* (2017), *The Starlit Wood: New Fairy Tales* (2016), *Kaleidoscope: Diverse YA Science Fiction and Fantasy Stories* (2014), and *The Thackery T. Lambshead Cabinet of Curiosities* (2011); and in her own collection, *The Honey Month* (2010). She is co-author, with Max Gladstone, of the multiple award-winning *This is How You Lose the Time War*. Her articles and reviews have appeared in the *New York Times*, *NPR Books* and on *Tor.com*. She has been the *New York Times's* science fiction and fantasy columnist since February 2018, and she is represented by DongWon Song of HMLA.

Hugo-, Nebula-, and Locus Award winning author Max Gladstone's works include *Empress of Forever*, the *Craft Sequence* of fantasy novels and games, and, with Amal El-Mohtar, the internationally bestselling *This is How You Lose the Time War*. His interactive projects include the XYYZY-nominated *Choice of the Deathless* and *Deathless: The City's Thirst*, which take place in the world of the *Craft Sequence*. Gladstone created the *Serial Box* series *Bookburners*, and the interactive television series *Wizard School Dropout*.

Gladstone studied Chinese literature at Yale, and lived and taught for two years in rural Anhui province. He is a martial artist, fencer, and fiddler. Before writing full-time, he also worked as a

researcher for the Berkman Center for Internet and Policy Law, a Swiss Embassy tour guide, a go-between for a Chinese auto magazine, a translator, a philosophy TA, a tech industry analyst, and an editor. He has wrecked a bicycle in Angkor Wat, sung at Carnegie Hall, and been thrown from a horse in Mongolia.