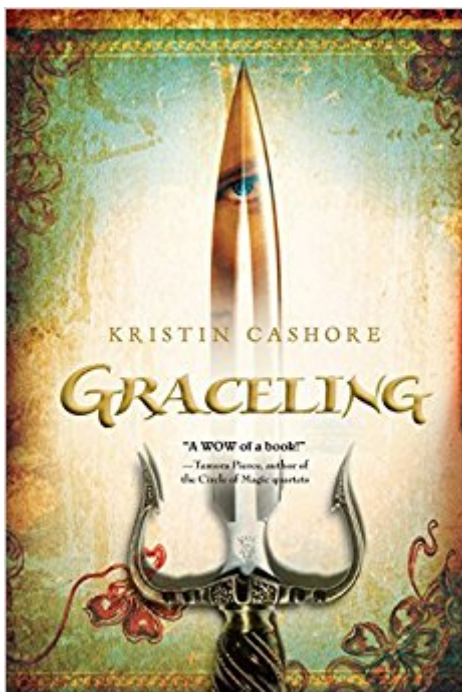


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# Graceling



## Synopsis

Discover the Graceling Realm in this unforgettable, award-winning novel from bestselling author Kristin Cashore. A New York Times bestseller, ALA Best Book for Young Adults, Mythopoeic Fantasy Award for Children's Literature Winner, Publishers Weekly, School Library Journal, Booklist, and BCCB Best Book of the Year. "Rageful, exhilarating, wistful in turns" (The New York Times Book Review) with "a knee-weakening romance" (LA Times). Graceling is a thrilling, action-packed fantasy adventure that will resonate deeply with anyone trying to find their way in the world. Graceling tells the story of the vulnerable-yet-strong Katsa, who is smart and beautiful and lives in the Seven Kingdoms where selected people are born with a Grace, a special talent that can be anything at all. Katsa's Grace is killing. As the king's niece, she is forced to use her extreme skills as his brutal enforcer. Until the day she meets Prince Po, who is Graced with combat skills, and Katsa's life begins to change. She never expects to become Po's friend. She never expects to learn a new truth about her own Grace or about a terrible secret that lies hidden far away . . . a secret that could destroy all seven kingdoms with words alone. Awards: Winner of the Mythopoeic Fantasy Award for Children's Literature, winner of the SIBA Book Award/YA, Indies Choice Book Award Honor Book, ALA Best Book for Young Adults, 2008 Publishers Weekly Best Book of the Year, 2008 School Library Journal Best Book of the Year, .com's Best Books of 2008, 2008 Booklist Editors' Choice, Booklist's 2008 Top Ten First Novels for Youth, 2009 Amelia Bloomer List, BCCB 2009 Blue Ribbon List. And don't miss the sequel *Fire* and companion *Bitterblue*, both award-winning, New York Times bestsellers, and full of Kristin Cashore's elegant, evocative prose and unforgettable characters.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

If you had the power to kill with your bare hands, what would you do with it? *Graceling* takes readers inside the world of Katsa, a warrior-girl in her late teens with one blue eye and one green eye. This gives her haunting beauty, but also marks her as a Graceling. Gracelings are beings with special talents—swimming, storytelling, dancing. Katsa's Grace is considered more useful: her ability to fight (and kill, if she wanted to) is unequalled in the seven kingdoms. Forced to act as a henchman for a manipulative king, Katsa channels her guilt by forming a secret council of like-minded citizens who carry out secret missions to promote justice over cruelty and abuses of power. Combining elements of fantasy and romance, Cashore skillfully portrays the confusion, discovery, and angst that smart, strong-willed girls experience as they creep toward adulthood. Katsa wrestles with questions of freedom, truth, and knowing when to rely on a friend for help. This is no small task for an angry girl who had eschewed friendships (with the exception of one cousin that she trusts) for her more ready skills of self-reliance, hunting, and fighting. Katsa also comes to know the real power of her Grace and the nature of Graces in general: they are not always what they appear to be. *Graceling* is the first book in a series, and Kristin Cashore's first work of fiction. It sets up a vivid world with engaging characters that readers will certainly look forward to following beyond the last chapter of this book. (Ages 14 and up) --Heidi Broadhead --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

**Starred Review. Grade 8 Up** • In this debut fantasy novel, Cashore treats readers to compelling and eminently likable characters and a story that draws them in from the first paragraph. In Katsa's world, the "Graced," those gifted in a particular way, are marked by eyes that are different colors. Katsa's Grace is that she is a gifted fighter, and, as such, she is virtually invincible. She is in the service of her tyrannical uncle, king of one of the seven kingdoms, and she is forced to torture people for infractions against him. She has secretly formed the Council, which acts in the service of justice and fairness for those who have been accused and abused. Readers meet her as she is rescuing the father of the Lienid king, who has been abducted. The reasons for his capture are part of a tightening plot that Katsa unravels and resolves, with the help of Prince Po, the captive's grandson. He has his own particular Grace, and he becomes Katsa's lover and partner in what

becomes a mortally dangerous mission. Cashore's style is exemplary: while each detail helps to paint a picture, the description is always in the service of the story, always helping readers to a greater understanding of what is happening and why. This is gorgeous storytelling: exciting, stirring, and accessible. Fantasy and romance readers will be thrilled. --Sue Giffard, Ethical Culture Fieldston School, New York City Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

(This review can also be found on my book review blog [sparereads.blogspot.com](http://sparereads.blogspot.com)) I'm happy to say that I have been making some real progress with my TBR pile lately. \*clap\*clap\* Graceling has been on my radar for quite a long time due to its widespread popularity, though it is only now that I finally stepped into Kristin Cashore's intriguing Medieval world - the realm of the Seven Kingdoms - and got to know these Gracelings who bear different colors in their eyes. With high expectations in mind, I started it off anticipating great things from Ms. Cashore and I'm glad that not one of them was left unfulfilled. Katsa is a Graceling - someone who is exceptionally gifted in a particular skill, may it be dancing or swimming. But Katsa's Grace is far more unique than just mundane talents; she is Graced with the mastery of killing. With this unparalleled skill comes the neverending fear people project upon her, constantly reminding her that she is nothing but the King's royal thug, bent to his every will to torture and threaten whomever he wishes. As conflicting as it may seem, Katsa is also a rebellious soul who would go against cruelty and injustice time after time in hopes of saving those who suffer from the tyranny. It is when these two sides of her collide and crash into each other that we witness her evolving into the free and independent spirit we come to love even more. No longer bound by her uncle's orders, Katsa sets destination for Monsea. There she intends to solve the mysterious kidnapping that prompted her and Po's first meeting. It is not easy to remain untouched by Po's charms. His kind and considerate nature, always able to find its way to soothe our nerves, traps us in his loving presence. Our affection towards Katsa and Po grows stronger as the distance between the two lessens, but not even the tenderest moments can take our minds off of the deathly encounter that would lie ahead - something much more frightening than the secrets they each hide beneath the surface. Among all the spectacular pieces that compose Graceling as a whole, romance is the one that stood out the most for me. There can be no one who is more appropriate than Po for Katsa, I'm sure of it. He understands and respects her in a way no one else can (okay, maybe also Raffin). He knows what freedom is like to her, so much so that he would never dare to hold her back from anything, not even in the name of love. He is not just Katsa's lover or admirer, he is her source of support and tranquility. There was a time that I felt Kristin Cashore was planning to seriously

injure or even kill Po based on where the story was going. As a result, I basically held off reading for a couple of days because I was simply not ready at all, both mentally and physically, to process something like that, not to mention accepting it. Though luckily for both you and me, Ms. Cashore picked another path instead, one that is equally heart wrenching but a hint less devastating. While the two main characters in Graceling are portrayed superbly, the rest of the crew are a lot less fortunate. Although I enjoyed their company at the time, they didn't leave me any memorable impressions with Raffin being an exception. Another minor complaint I have with Graceling is that the ending isn't as grand as I expected. Considering the buildup is so irresistibly compelling, it felt way too anti-climatic and convenient in comparison. I have often seen people labeling Graceling as "feminist propaganda" and I agree to that in some ways. However, even though there are indeed opinions and stances immersed in this book which I do not approve of, they did not stop me from enjoying this excellently-done high fantasy novel and you shouldn't let them stop you either. The story of Katsa and Po ends here, but Kristin Cashore has much more to offer in the realm of the Seven Kingdoms. I'm eager to see what other incredible heroines and stories she has sprung up for us readers, and I will make sure to keep you all in the loop :)

This is a really enjoyable read. There is a level of detail that makes this world come alive, but the descriptions aren't endless. The characters are all well-developed, and the plot moves along. Katsa is a strong protagonist who grows and changes over the course of the novel, but never becomes a "classic" princess desperate for Po to tell her how pretty she is, or who suddenly decides she does want to be a wife and a mother. The characters stay true to themselves, and though this is the first book in a series, it does have a real conclusion. I've read it a couple of times now, and still really enjoy it.

I read the third book in this series, Bitterblue, and it was so good that I was immediately compelled to read this one. I was not disappointed; Graceling is the incredible story of a strong-minded woman named Katsa, who is Graced with the ability to kill. I was interested in the way the author presented her, as a stubborn but good-hearted young woman who had an ability that estranged her from others, an ability that others took advantage of. I liked how she had to make a choice; whether she would let herself be controlled into hurting others, or if she would take control of herself. I was hooked by the time Prince Po came onto the scene. I enjoyed finding parts of the story that coincided with the third book, Bitterblue. You don't have to read these books in any order, but it was nice to go back and have some backstory. I haven't read Fire yet, but it's next on my list!

Rating : 5 Stars I was very intrigued from the first few paragraphs. By the end of the first chapter I was enraptured. The author writes beautifully. There were so many quotes in this book that I loved and spoke to me. Some of her writing was almost lyrical. Katsa is a Graceling. Gracelings are people that have an almost superhuman ability. It can be anything from fighting or killing to something useless like climbing a tree or dancing. Gracelings have two different colored eyes that indicate to people that they are Graced. They are discriminated and ridiculed against in Katsa's kingdom. Katsa's grace gives her an amazing ability to kill anyone that might be attacking her or even threatening her in any way. She is known throughout all of the seven kingdoms and she is greatly feared. "She practiced every day. She learned her own speed and her own explosive force. She learned the angle, position, and intensity of a killing blow versus a maiming blow. She learned how to disarm a man and how to break his leg, and how to twist his arm so severely that he would stop struggling and beg for release. She learned to fight with a sword and with knives and daggers. She was so fast and focused, so creative, she could find a way to beat a man senseless with both arms tied to her sides. Such was her Grace." I loved that she was the ultimate badass tomboy. She had no plans to ever marry or have children, and she was happy that way. She didn't even realize one of her dear friends was in love with her until someone pointed it out; she was so oblivious to these things. When he asked her to marry him so he could protect her, this was her thought... "A man who thought himself her protector-when she could outduel him if she used a toothpick to his sword." I loved her friendship with Po, their easy conversation and mutual respect, the way he truly saw her and totally accepted her. Their banter is hilarious! The more they came to know each other the more I loved their story. The further into the book I got, the more stressed out I became because of the character's dire situation. It seemed that they just couldn't catch a break. I would start to lose faith and then something would happen and they would escape by the skin of their teeth. I loved when she decided to teach Bitterblue how to defend herself. She thought something that was very truthful for women in many societies today and in the past... "How absurd it was that in all seven kingdoms, the weakest and most vulnerable of people-girls, women- went unarmed and were taught nothing of fighting, while the strong were trained to the highest reaches of their skill." I can't think of anything I didn't like about this book! I loved the author's writing style and the way the story unfolded.

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