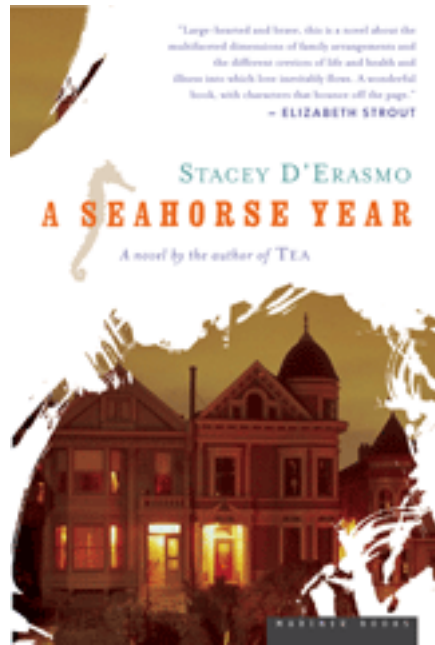


## A Reader's Guide

# A Seahorse Year

by Stacey D'Erasmus

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"One of the most profound, heart-wrenching, and resonant stories I've read in years." — Francisco Goldman

A *San Francisco Chronicle* Bestseller

Winner of the Lambda Award and the Ferro-Grumley Award

## About the Book

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Stacey D'Erasmus's acclaimed second novel, *A Seahorse Year*, her follow-up to the reading group favorite *Tea*, introduces an unforgettable constellation of characters gripped in the undertow of crisis. When a teenager, Christopher, disappears from his San Francisco home after behaving strangely, his family comes together in a frantic search for him. It is soon revealed that Christopher is ill, and their attempts to support him and to save him will challenge their assumptions about themselves and about one another.

Exquisitely crafted, *A Seahorse Year* is a rich, absorbing read that explores the ways in which love moves us to actions that have both redemptive and disastrous consequences, sometimes in the same heartbeat.

"A natural ventriloquist, D'Erasmus deftly filters this increasingly suspenseful story through [her] characters, offering an unflinching view into the pockmarked lives of this unconventional clan." — *Elle*

"*A Seahorse Year* succeeds in being both deeply satisfying and quietly subversive." — *New York Times Book Review*

## About the Author

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**Stacey D'Erasmus** is the author of the novel *Tea*, which was selected as a New York Times Notable Book and a Book Sense pick. Her essays and criticism have appeared in the *New York Times Book Review*, the *New York Times Magazine*, and *Ploughshares*. She was a Stegner Fellow in fiction at Stanford University. She lives in New York City.

## Questions for Discussion

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We hope the following questions will stimulate discussion for reading groups and provide a deeper understanding of *A Seahorse Year* for every reader.

1. D'Erasmus has been widely praised for crafting very real characters — novelist Elizabeth Strout called them "characters that bounce off the page." How does the author bring her characters to life? Were you drawn to one particular character? Why do you suppose you had an affinity for this person?
2. In her review of *A Seahorse Year* for the *Boston Globe*, Karen Campbell observed that "while the family dynamic is unconventional, their pain and confusion through unfolding crises reflect the kind of struggles and choices everyone faces." How is Christopher's family like your own? How is it different? What do you think your reaction would have been if your family faced a similar series of crises?
3. What does *A Seahorse Year* say about the ways love connects us? How does the novel present acts inspired by love as both redemptive and destructive?
4. Hal keeps a photograph of his old band, The Venus Flytrap, on display at his office. Why does he choose to keep a reminder of his glam rock alter ego on hand at his accounting job? What does his past say about him? How are each of the characters in the novel shaped by their pasts?
5. When Christopher enters the hospital, Nan and Hal disagree over how they believe his illness should be treated. How do their views reflect the essential differences in their personalities? If you were making the same decisions for a child or a loved one, would you agree with Nan or Hal? Why?
6. Art is the basis of a unique bond between Marina and Christopher. Why? How does D'Erasmus use art throughout the book?
7. What does the Armani dress symbolize to Marina? Why is she so attracted to it? Why does she hide it from Nan? Once she owns it, she treats it with seeming irreverence; do you find this behavior rational given the circumstances?
8. What impulse drives Marina to have an affair with an art student? Are the consequences of her actions inevitable?

9. Tamara steadfastly supports Christopher throughout his rehabilitation, even to her own detriment. Would you have reacted similarly if you were Tamara? If you were one of her parents? Do you agree with Tamara's parents' shifting views about their daughter's relationship with Christopher?

10. What is the significance of the title *A Seahorse Year*?

## For Further Reading

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The following titles may be of interest to readers of *A Seahorse Year*.

[Lucky in the Corner](#) by [Carol Anshaw](#)

[Long for This World](#) by [Michael Byers](#)

[The Book of Salt](#) by [Monique Truong](#)