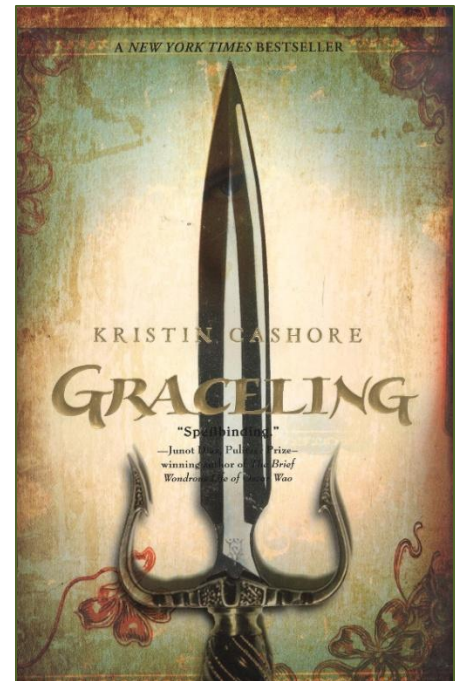


# Graceling

## Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean to be graced? Is it a blessing or a curse to be graced?
2. Why are the graced feared, when it seems that many graces are actually very useful?
3. Why do the graced tolerate being treated as second class citizens?
4. How would you describe King Randa? Are all of the Kings of the Seven Kingdoms corrupt?
5. What is the council? Who is the council working for?
6. What is the nature of Po's grace? Why isn't he honest with Katsa from the beginning about his grace?
7. What is the true nature of Katsa's grace? How is it similar to Po's?
8. What is the nature of King Leck's grace? How is it that some people are able to see through his deception?
9. Katsa seems to believe the worst about herself, and thinks that her grace defines who she is. Is she right? Does a person's grace always determine how they will act? Why or why not?
10. When Katsa finally confronts King Randa, she thinks that mercy is more frightening than murder. What does she mean by that? Why does Randa allow her to walk away? Does he really have any choice?
11. Describe Katsa's relationship with Bitterblue. What draws Katsa to the child?
12. Did the ending surprise you? If it did, what did you expect to be different?
13. A person's grace seems to be used to explain their actions, whether those actions are good or bad. In our culture, without graces, how do we explain people's actions? Are such explanations valid, or simply ways of excusing bad behavior?
14. Would you want to be graced? Why or why not? What grace would you choose for yourself?



# In Her Own Words

Kristin Cashore



So, here's the short tale of me: I grew up in the countryside of northeastern Pennsylvania in a village with cows and barns and beautiful views from the top of the hill and all that good stuff. I lived in a rickety old house with my parents, three sisters, and a scattering of cats, and I READ READ READ READ READ. I read while brushing my teeth, I read while chopping parsley, the first thing I reached for when I woke up in the morning was my book; the only two places I didn't read were in the car and in bed. What did I do then? The one thing I liked even more than reading: I daydreamed.

And so, without knowing it, I was planting the seeds. Reading and daydreaming = perfect preparation for writing.

At 18 I went off to college-- thank you, Williams College, for the financial aid that made this possible-- and it almost killed me. College is *hard*, man, and the Berkshires are cloudy. A (phenomenal) year studying abroad in sunny Sydney revived me. After college I developed a compulsive moving problem: New York City, Boston, Cambridge, Austin, Pennsylvania, Italy, and even a short stint in London, where my showerhead hung from the cutest

little stand that was exactly like the cradle of an old-fashioned telephone. The best phone calls are the pretend phone calls made from your telephone tub.

During my stint in Boston, I got an M.A. at the Center for the Study of Children's Literature at Simmons College. (Thank you, Simmons, for the scholarship that made this possible!) Grad school almost killed me, but I felt a lot more alive than when I was almost being killed in college. The Simmons program is stupendous. It got me thinking and breathing YA books. It got me writing.

Am I getting boring?

Since Simmons, I haven't stopped writing, not once. I've developed a compulsive writing problem that makes my moving problem look like a charming personality quirk. I can't stop! But it's okay, because I don't want to stop. I've been writing full-time-- well, more than full-time, really-- for a bunch of years now, first doing educational writing for the K-6 market and now working on my novels. It's a dream job, which is another way of saying that when I shop for work clothes, I go straight to the pajamas section.

Should I say a little bit about what I'm like? I'm fiercely independent. I am sometimes a hermit, but never for very long. I am in search of the perfect cat. I'm a recovering Catholic. I meditate, and when I do, Prince Harry appears in my subconscious and meditates with me. It's a little strange but I don't think there's anything I can do about it. Sometimes he's not the only one; the other day it was me, Prince Harry, the Dalai Lama, Mr. Rogers, Coco the gorilla, and George Clooney. We were all floating above the earth looking down at the continents as they passed. George Clooney suggested I visit Providence, Rhode Island. The Dalai Lama sighed deeply and said he'd like to visit Tibet. Poor Dalai Lama.

I recently moved from Jacksonville, Florida, to Cambridge, Massachusetts, trading the St. Johns River for the Charles River and pelicans for geese. As a native northerner, it's nice to be back in the land of four seasons. I feel as if I've come home.

And that's my story.