

The Beholder

Anna Bright

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Selah is an eighteen-year-old girl and also the Seneshal-elect of *Potomac*, a small isolated country in North America in the 19th century. As the daughter of the current leaders of their small country, Selah has much pressure to get married. But soon, her dreams are crushed when her lifelong childhood crush rejects her marriage proposal in front of hundreds of party guests at the family's national Arbor Day festival. In response to Selah's rejection, Selah's step-mother arranges a new plan and a ship called *The Beholder*, to take her across the Atlantic Ocean the very next day, so Selah can meet 4 foreign suitors to marry instead. Suspicious of her step-mother's intentions to get rid of her, and with her father becoming increasingly more ill, Selah is very reluctant to leave Potomac, but she finds herself with no choice. Soon, her adventure on *The Beholder* begins and Selah sets out to distant lands to find love.

This is a young adult novel for readers at least thirteen years old. It is mainly a romance novel, but nothing is too suggestive. The romantic content only goes up to kissing.

The beginning of the novel, as well as its setting and situation is quite promising. The beginning plot and conflict that arises sets a great tone to start the novel, but as the story progresses, I felt that there wasn't as much development character-wise or plot-wise. As the story progresses, it sort of drags on about Selah's progress as she attempts to fall in love with each of her suitors, and there isn't much of a build-up or climax that the plot is actually going toward. I felt that Selah, herself, lacked a bit of sufficient character development. It was a bit hard to believe that Selah, a girl with zero love experience and who was too scared to tell her one lifelong childhood love her true feelings until she proposed, was the same girl who could meet a few foreign guys in 2 weeks and madly fall in love with each of them. However, this change may also be seen as a bit of Selah's small personal development. I could see how as she met each of her potential fiancés, she grew in confidence a bit. But still, the romance didn't seem too realistic to me. With the way the author composed Selah's love interests, they seemed to have nice personalities, but these personalities seemed a bit superficial and lacked much nuance too. In general, despite each of their personal values and circumstances, her suitors seemed pretty similar in charm and personality.

However, some things I did enjoy was the fluid writing style of the author. The sentence structure and wording wasn't too overly complicated to comprehend, and at the same time, it wasn't too simple or boring. Even though Selah's relationships with her suitors didn't seem as strong or deep to me, she seemed to have a more developed relationship with her Godmother Althea. Although, their interactions were short and few to come across, they still seemed more genuine and realistic. I also liked the fact that there were small quote excerpts from fairy-tale or myth classics in some of the chapters. This didn't have a huge impact on the plot or content of the story, but it did give the book a bit of a fantasy-like or fairy-tale charm. However, the story itself wasn't really related to the fairy-tale genre. It was more realistic and historical fiction. Personally, this book didn't speak to me as much, but that might be because of my lack of preference for romance novels. However, I feel that YA romance fans may feel very differently and I think it's good to give every book a chance.

Recommended titles

- The Selection by Kiera Cass
- The Boundless by Anna Bright
- A Court of Thorns and Roses by Sarah J. Maas
- Matched by Ally Condie
- Delirium by Lauren Oliver