

**This Is How You Lose the Time War**  
**Amal El-Mohtar and Max Gladstone**  
**Reviewed by: Drishti Upadhyaya, 16**  
**Star Teen Book Reviewer of Be the Star You Are! Charity**  
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Amal El-Mohtar and Max Gladstone weave together an epic romance between two warring factions solely through a series of letters. *This Is How You Lose the Time War* tells the tale of two secret agents, Red and Blue, who leave each other letters all across time. The two use time travel to undo each other's defeats, but as time is rebuilt and erased again and again, the only constants they have are the letters they leave the other. The forbidden romance that puts Romeo and Juliet to shame is soon discovered by Red's commander, who orders her to kill Blue, but unlike the original star crossed lovers, the two find a way to escape with their lives and their love.

The novel is a short but gorgeous read. The romance built is one too gentle for the war-torn setting, but it never feels out of place through the writing style. The poetry in the letters complements the quick and sharp actions, though in some places the sudden shift from adventure to romance can be a little awkward. Despite the book being built on time travel, the science fiction elements take a step back for the building romance. This may leave some readers unsatisfied, but for those interested in romance, the novel hits the mark completely. Every emotion felt is strong and earned, and there are no cheap attempts at making you feel something. The novel is genuine in a way most romance stories are not. The build up is slow but one of the most intense love stories I've ever read, due to the tragedy elements. The climax was foreshadowed throughout the entire novel but still felt gut wrenching. The conclusion, however, was completely unexpected, which made it all the more satisfying.

Stories rarely deliver on every story beat as well as this one did. It was very easy to get invested into the plot and attached to the characters. It's definitely a book you'd read in one sitting. For traditional romance fans who find themselves put off by the science fiction premise, don't worry! Each element is explained and developed very clearly, and mostly serves to prop up the romance. For science fiction fans, if you like romance, you'll definitely love this. It incorporates the best parts of both to make a truly exciting read. And for fans of poetry, you'll love the novel. Each letter sent has some of the most beautiful lines I've read. The book's definitely one you'd buy for the prose alone. I'd recommend it for older teenagers in high school and young adults, as some of the writing can be complex, but anyone interested in modern poetry would easily get immersed in its lines.

**Recommended Titles:**

The Song of Achilles by Madeline Miller

Circe by Madeline Miller

Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe by Benjamin Alire Sáenz