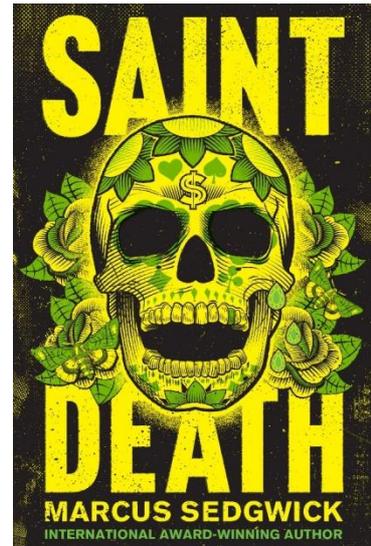


## 2018 Carnegie Medal shortlist Talking Points

Title: **SAINT DEATH**  
Author: **Marcus Sedgwick**  
Publisher: **Orion**



### IN MEXICO

The brief opening scene is shocking, in part because of how normal it's made to seem – what is Sedgwick telling us about the society in which these people are living?

Most of this book's readers will never see its setting in real life – how vividly (and how *visually*) does Sedgwick manage to conjure it up for us?

What makes this particular setting interesting to a reader who hasn't been there?

### THE CHARACTERS

How important is knowing Arturo and Faustino's tragic backstories to understand their characters today?

Arturo and Faustino are still only teenagers – do they still have any childhood innocence, or have their circumstances and experiences made them totally corrupted, cynical?

What do we know about Faustino's namesake?

What do we learn about Faustino from the sacrifices he makes and the risks he takes for others? (For Eva and her child, for example.)

What's Carlos's role in this book?

How does Arturo change – his faith in Santa Muerte, for example – over the course of the story?

### CROSSINGS

So many people try to cross the border – why has Arturo never tried before?

Does Sedgwick help you understand why so many people risk the lives of their families and themselves to cross borders in search of a better life?



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“When you cross a bridge, there is always a price to pay” – do you think this book is about symbolic transitions (e.g. between childhood and adulthood) as well as literal crossings?

## SAINT DEATH

Sedgwick often weaves folklore into his novels, as he does here with Santa Muerte – does this make it easier for the reader to bring a place to life, or harder because it’s so unfamiliar? (Or some other effect entirely?)

Had you heard of Santa Muerte before? Traditionally Mexico has had a very different relationship to Death than we’re used to in the English-speaking world. (If you’ve seen *Coco* you may know about it from there, too.) Are there signs of it in this book?

Why do you think he chose her not just as a feature of the book but to use as its *title*?

Does Santa Muerte bring any morality to the story? Any justice?

## COMPLICITY AND POLITICS

What does the book have to say about how those of us in wealthy consumer societies (like the neighbouring US) are complicit in what’s happening in poorer countries? Is it, as some have said, an “anti-capitalist” novel?

We’re also made to feel complicit with the Mexican experience – it’s “our” town, there’s an “us” in the narrative, we’re part of it – but does it ever *glamorise* the gangs, the violence?

Does this make you think differently about your own life, your own society, and the kind of world *you* want to live in?

## HOW IT’S WRITTEN

Sedgwick uses language very dynamically – mixing slang, Spanish words, etc. What’s the effect on the reader?

The story is intercut with brief one-page pieces in different fonts – what do they add to the experience of reading the story?

The narrative is present-tense – what’s the effect of this as you read?

This isn’t a story with a tidy happy ending in which everyone’s going to be OK – it’s more realistic than that. But is there a positive message to be found in it, too?

## AND FINALLY...

Does this Carnegie-shortlisted book deserve to win? Why, or why not?



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