

Blood Over Bright Haven

M.L. Wang

Reviewed by: Cheri Li, 16

Star Book Reviewer of Be the Star You Are! Charity

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In the city of Tiran, prestigious mages work to run a complex, efficient utopia, while outside the city, a Blight devastates all life forms and makes territory outside of city boundaries uninhabitable. Sciona, a female magician, dedicates her life to climbing the ranks to highmage. When she passes the exam, she faces prejudice from her-all male colleagues, who assign her the janitor, Thomil, instead of an actual lab assistant. Before his time working for the mages, Thomil was part of a nomadic tribe outside the border of Tiran, before his tribe was decimated and he was forced to flee his homeland. However, while working together, they discover the dangerous secrets of the magic that sustains Tiran, challenging their versions of reality and entangling them into the conflict between morality and power.



There were so many aspects of the book I loved, from the fantasy universe to the characters. The unique world M.L. Wang writes is one where magic is powered by typewriter-like machines, where mages type out code which extracts energy in order to perform everything from levitating heavy objects to powering trains. Despite the fantastical novel, the deeper, relatable themes are a prominent part of the conflict. Sciona, the protagonist, faces sexism which incites her manic drive to be the best and gives her an admirable amount of resilience. Furthermore, Thomil is part of the Kwan, the nomadic race with origins outside the borders of utopic Tiran, and the discrimination he faces complicates his view of Sciona and her dedication to the society that harms his people. The internal and external conflict these main characters face were written incredibly well, and the depth of emotion of the novel truly stuck out.

From the plot to the fantasy world to the characters, this book was truly one of the best fantasies for older teens. I would recommend this book for those 15 and up, due to the mature themes of prejudice, classism, violence, and gender injustice. This book was incredible and would be great for anyone looking for a deeper, mature fantasy with lovable characters and an addicting plot. While this book had an amazing storyline, the social and political reflection of historical and present societies sticks with you. Overall, this book is a must-read and deepens perspective on class struggle, prejudice, and social and moral obligation.

Recommended Titles:

Circe by Madeline Miller

The Tainted Cup by Robert Jackson Bennett

A Darker Shade of Magic by V.E. Schwab

The Poppy War by R.F. Kuang

The Sword of Kaigen by M.L. Wang