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### Avielle of Rhia

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Calhoun, Dia. *Avielle of Rhia*. Marshall Cavendish, 2006. ISBN 0761453202. \$16.99. 398 p.

Reviewer: Kate Reynolds

Reading Level: Young Adult

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Fantasy fiction;

Subject: Prejudices--Juvenile fiction; Princesses--Juvenile fiction; Magic--Juvenile fiction;

Books--Reviews;

Avielle is a princess, but because she resembles her Dredonian great-great grandmother who placed a curse on the kingdom of Rhia, she is shunned and hated, even by members of her own family. Her only consolation to herself is that she has no magic; therefore, she cannot become evil like her ancestor. However, she is terrified when she discovers that in fact she does have magic--magic that evidences itself in her weaving abilities. When the leading cult in Dredonia attacks and slaughters the royal family, only Avielle survives. She goes into hiding as an apprentice weaver and learns that not everyone hates her. As she comes to care about those around her and finds the relationships reciprocated, she becomes stronger. But her newfound strength and determination are put to the test when she is faced with the decision to come forward to claim the crown and defend her kingdom from the Black Cloaks.

Avielle is a wonderfully complex and believable character. Unfortunately, very few other characters are as well developed: they seem to be stereotypes and caricatures rather than real people. The princess' transformation from a scared, reclusive girl to a courageous, determined young woman is well thought out and well paced. The story is an engrossing read; readers will find themselves urging Avielle along her path of self-discovery and self-acceptance. However, it is evident that Calhoun is also using this book to convey political messages about racism, terrorism and religious fanaticism. The messages may be timely and pertinent, but they are paraded too obviously in front of the reader's face.