



2005

Princess Academy

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Hale, Shannon. *Princess Academy*. Bloomsbury Children's Books, 2005. ISBN 1582349932. \$16.95. 314 pp.

Reviewer: Jessica Farmer

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Fairy tales;

Subject: Princesses--Juvenile fiction; Self-confidence--Juvenile fiction;

Little Miri's life on the mountain is simple but pleasant. She and the rest of her village live in a secluded village in a far-off territory of the kingdom of Danland. Her only sadness is that her father, for some reason she can only guess, will not allow her to work in the linder quarry with the rest of the villagers. She struggles to feel like she belongs. Then, one day, the quarrying is disrupted by a royal delegate's announcement that the bride of Prince Steffan is to be found in their little village! All of the eligible girls are summoned to the Princess Academy to undergo training in preparation for the day when they will meet the Prince and he will choose his bride.

Miri and her friends go to the Academy and learn how to read and understand all the aspects of 'lowlander' life such as Commerce and Poise. Miri quickly takes her place at the top of the class and leads to rest of the girls against their tyrannical tutor and some evil bandits that hold them hostage. Through these adventures and the things she has learned, Miri finds power within herself that she never knew she had and finally sees herself as a member of her community.

This is a fun fairy tale very similar in style to Hale's *Goose Girl* and *Enna Burning*. All of these books speak essentially about young girls finding themselves as they are called upon to perform extraordinary tasks. This story speaks particularly of the power of education, friendship, love and self-confidence. Miri is a smart, strong character who sees something better for herself, while still harboring self-doubt and insecurities. Hale creates a character readers can identify with but also wish to emulate. Her writing is imaginative and sweet as she describes Miri's rise to power, so to speak. This would be a wonderful book for those who like Hale's other books and other fairy tale variations, such as McKinley's *Beauty*. Definitely a great read with a heart-warming ending.