



2005

The Amethyst Road

Sandra L. Tidwell

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Spiegler, Louise. *The Amethyst Road*. Clarion Books, 2005. ISBN 0618485724. \$16.00. 328 p.

Reviewer: Sandra L. Tidwell

Reading Level: Young Adult

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Adventure Stories; Fantasy Fiction;

Subject: Self Realization--Juvenile fiction; Prejudices--Juvenile fiction;

Sixteen-year old Serena lives in the Paria enclave, but she is "ma-hane" (shunned by everyone) because of her sister Willow's out of wedlock pregnancy. Serena is half Yulang and half Gorgio and accepted by neither; her father died accidentally in the army; her mother mysteriously left 3 years ago; her sister Willow lives a carefree dating life despite the fact that she should care for Zara, her 3 year-old daughter, birthed out-of-wedlock. Although she feels angry and caged-in by these many inhibiting factors, Serena loves Zara. When the Gorgio social services forcefully take Zara from Willow, Serena begins a quest to find her mother who could be a legal guardian and qualify to get Zara back. Serena desires to establish a stable growing up environment for her niece, finish school, and make a future for herself. Amethyst gemstones, which Serena finds in a deep cave in the mountains, turn out to be the means by which she and her friend Shem help themselves and begin to help dispel discrimination against the Yulang people. Together Serena and Shem meet delays, intolerance, and hatred. Through their adventures, Serena comes to understand herself better and eventually discovers the reason for her mother's mysterious departure.

Although most people still drive cars or trailers, the culture portrayed in this book is difficult to grasp, and the reader must piece facts about the culture bit by bit as they read. The author's note explains that Spiegler is interested in the fantasy Rom or Gypsy culture, a strict caste society. A note at the beginning of the book about this culture would have been helpful. Serena is an example of stick-to-it-iveness, but she is constantly jumping to conclusion and she struggles with a very short temper. Other themes include racism, resistance to bad treatment, speaking out and standup up for oneself, and self-realization. Readers who like romance along with adventure will be rooting for Serena and Shem to sort out their differences.