



2016

# Sword and Verse

Abigail Packard

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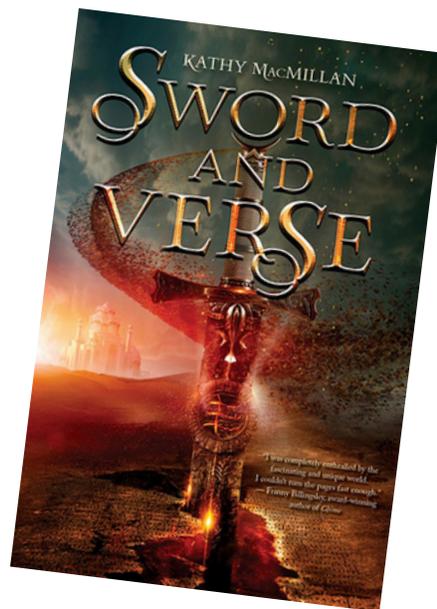
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# Book Review

**Title:** Sword and Verse  
**Author:** Kathy MacMillan  
**Reviewer:** Abigail Packard  
**Publisher:** HarperTeen  
**Publication Year:** 2016  
**ISBN:** 9780062324610  
**Number of Pages:** 384  
**Interest Level:** Young Adult  
**Rating:** Dependable



## Review

Raisa is Arnathian, and in a the country of Qilara that means she's a slave. After watching her parents' and brother's brutal murder during a raid, Raisa escapes the same death by pretending that she is not the daughter of a Learned One (an Arthanian who can read and write; a blasphemy in a world where only Scholars of Qilara are allowed this ability). Instead, she is enslaved by the people of Qilara. After the treason and execution of the current tutor in training, Raisa is selected to be the next future tutor, an honor only allotted to two Arnathians at a time. She learns alongside Prince Mati, a young man with whom she forms a secret romance. Despite her feelings for Mati, she is approached by the Resistance—an underground group of Arnathian rebels—and she accepts the jobs they ask her to do. After a series of lies, betrayals, and close calls, Raisa, Mati, and the Resistance overthrow the monarchy and the corrupt priests by loosing the enslaved goddess, Sotia, who wreaks havoc upon the city in revenge. Raisa and Mati begin building a Qilara of equality and learning for all.

MacMillan discusses themes of the importance of writing and reading in an engaging way, guiding the reader through a story along the same vein as *Frederick Douglass* and *Prometheus*. She also explores some interesting moral dilemmas. But despite these interesting themes, the presentation lacked depth as the story revolved too much around the romance between Mati and Raisa (a romance that although sweet and triumphant in the end had undertones of emotional abuse) instead of around the Resistance and Raisa's attempts to help liberate her people for her own sake and her own reasons. The lack of depth in this area made Raisa's story and character flat and one-dimensional. Despite these shortcomings, this was a solid read and presented the ideas of slavery and the search for knowledge, a good companion to another deeper approach to these topics such as the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*.

\*Contains some graphic descriptions of violence and multiple fade-to-black sex scenes.