

The Iron Trial

Holly Black

Reviewed by: Ritika Chhabra, 13

Star Teen Book Reviewer of Be the Star You Are! Charity

www.bethestaryouare.org

Callum's goal is simple. Fail at the Magisterium entrance exam and stay clear of dangerous, sinister magic. But Cal's plan goes awry and he is selected to train under Master Rufus, the most respected mage at the school. Plunged into a strange, subterranean world, where nothing is as it seems, Cal can only hope to survive the next year.

Callum is an interesting, flawed and unique character. As a baby, his leg was damaged irreparably, affecting basic daily functions, including walking and moving around. Although his insecurity makes him *feel* less than capable, his teacher and friends help empower and push him, helping him harness his strengths to reach new levels. This story is encouraging, as it focuses on discovering what holds you back, and learning to adapt and evolve beyond it. In addition, there was excellent world building, setting the stage for the next few books in the series. Although the setting is more dark than the average middle grade book, the descriptions were both logical and entrancing.

Other readers may have compared this story to another Harry Potter copy, but don't be fooled by the magical school theme, or the three main characters. This book brings something entirely new, and varied to this genre, adding to the conversation of magic and spells instead of falling into the same grooves as other stories. The familiarity towards witch and wizard books allowed the authors to explore other, more abstract characteristics of the society, expanding the depth and reach of the novel. However, the book did contain a slower paced plot, losing key action scenes in piles of information and detail. Even with the extra knowledge, the story didn't describe the apprentice training very well, nor some of the more general points of the living accommodations. This book would be best suited for ages 10+, as there are some darker scenes and descriptions.

Recommended Titles:

The Colossus Rises (Seven Wonders #1) by Peter Lerangis

The School for Good and Evil by Soman Chainani

Loki's Wolves (The Blackwell Pages, #1) by K.L. Armstrong

The Sword of Summer (Magnus Chase and the Gods of Asgard #1) by Rick Riordan

Tales from the Shadowhunter Academy by Cassandra Clare