

Hero at the Fall

Alwyn Hamilton

Reviewed by: Sireen Mohammed, 14

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Hero at the Fall, the ending to the *Rebel of the Sands* trilogy, is also the ending of the Rebellion's journey to take the country of Miraji back from the Sultan and free all its citizens. The farther I read into this series, the less I love it. As a Muslim myself, I'm not sure how I did not realize the stereotypes and culture appropriation earlier in the series. I was a fan of the plot but the stereotypes against Islamic and Middle eastern culture were practically trying to jump off the page and throw themselves at me in a way I could not look past.

The series' end continues from the second book with Amani and the rest of the Rebellion in panic because six of their most important leaders have all been taken prisoner and quite possibly sent to their deaths. Amani and her boyfriend Jin are under pressure to make it out the capital of Miraji to save them while trying not to get killed by the Sultan's traps put in place by his daughter (the Rebellion's traitor) - Princess Leyla. Amani feels the pressure start getting to her and finds herself confused on what to do most of the time, but she tries her best to fight it and focus on winning the war and finding her friends. Amani crosses the entire country, forges alliances, visits new places and people, and enlists the help of old friends all in the name of saving the people she cares about and the desert she calls home.

The author portrays Miraji as an extremely patriarch society where Amani must fight for any recognition at all; this is simply NOT the case in real life and only adds fuel to the fire of stereotyping Middle eastern countries and Muslims. On top of that, much of Amani's character that Hamilton worked to develop in the first two books fell away in this one. Amani takes on the help of powerful supernatural beings, similar to ones believed in by Muslims, to help take down the Sultan and his oppressive rule. All in all, the book was a plausible end to the series and the plot itself wasn't so bad. Despite the bias sprinkled throughout the book, I must admit I did like it. On the other hand, I do believe the author could have done a lot more research on the actual culture of the Middle East to portray it more accurately. I recommend this book for children ages 12 and up.

Recommended Titles:

Rebel of the Sands, Alwyn Hamilton

All the Light We Cannot See, Anthony Doerr

Animal Farm, George Orwell