

The Tenth Power by Kate Constable

Although I have not read the first two books in this trilogy, I found “The Tenth Power” to be a complete enough text to stand alone. There were references to previous adventures and relationships which did not impede enjoyment or understanding of this text, but hinted at further enjoyment if the trilogy were to be read as a whole.

If you are a fan of the fantasy series, you would definitely enjoy this book. It fits the genre well, and is at a reading level accessible to Harry Potter's original audience, that is the 10–11 year olds, although it is probably the mid teens who would like it most. It has plenty for adults too, with the rather dark first chapter as the most challenging aspect of the book.

Kate Constable has created a world which long ago was visited by aliens, the 'voiced ones'. Over time the original inhabitants, the tree people, who speak with their minds only, have lost power over their world, and this book brings to a climax the long standing enmity between the voiced and non-voiced.

The central character, Calwyn, is destined to become the Singer of all Songs, and there is enough complication of plot, relationships and motivation to prevent the reader from seeing all of the twists before they happen. Her enemy, Samis, is much more than a simple opponent, and there is an element of discreetly repressed sexual tension that adds interest to the resolution.

I really liked the discovery of Calwyn's mixed parentage, and that of her brother, Halasaa.

The concept of the ten powers is a good one, and the settings are all well realised. I particularly liked the idea of the healing waters far underground, and certainly got a sense of a well realised frozen world waiting for the Singer to heal it.

The conceit of the mind speaking is particularly enjoyable when you consider the act of reading—words on a page move directly from the writer to the reader's mind, and the mind conversations between Calwyn and Halasaa are sure better than what could be achieved with the mobile phone! Which is of course the closest we come to mind speaking, after reading. The Tenth Power is of itself the possible way that the text could be used in class—the power of writing.

Helen Wilde, Education Department, SA

Moving slowly towards the ice wall, the procession of women immediately grabs the reader as the wonder of the image created takes hold. One slower woman is given a draft, putting her in a death-like sleep, and she is placed inside the wall and sealed up. This breathtaking opening was enough to make me read on, despite not having read the first two books in the series, and I'm so taken with the story of good over evil in this land of ice and snow, where the snow sickness is taking hold, that I will read the first two books in the series as well.

Calwyn fights against her destiny. She has learn chantment, but has lost the power, and returning to the land where she spent her childhood, is taken to the dying leader. Here she is given the songs known only by one person, and she balks at the duty which rises before her. She had hoped to hide away in the land where she once had contentment, but instead must fight for its very survival.

She moves off with a small group of loyal followers, including her beloved Darrow, fighting against the spread of the snow sickness in his body. She learns along the way of friendship and trust and puts herself in the hands of the evil Samis, but is able to shake herself free of his influence. True to any good fantasy story, there is a great battle between the two forces at the end of the book, in which loyal companions die, and this is no different. And like others, there are lessons to be learnt not only by the communities of the book, but parallels to be made in the world of the readers. A great story with strong characters and visual images well written by this author, this book is sure to please the fantasy readers in your school.

Fran Knight, William Light R-12 School, SA

What began as a fairly ordinary concept in "The Singer of all Songs", certainly developed into something fascinating. Readers of the "Chanters of Tremaris" series have been eagerly awaiting this conclusion to the trilogy and are not being disappointed. However, they're asking: "Is Calwyn's story really over, or will there be another book?" I have to confess to wondering about it as well.

The first page of "The Tenth Power" immediately draws readers back into Calwyn's world at the Wall and they realize that something has gone terribly wrong there. They know that Calwyn and her friends will not find the solace or answers they were hoping to get from her homeland.

Constable poignantly portrays Calwyn's yearning for her lost powers and her determination to make her life without them. Then she thrusts a new understanding upon her hero. In spite of all appearances, Calwyn must learn the Tenth Power to become the Singer of all Songs and fulfill her destiny. "The Tenth Power" tells the story of her voyage with a small group of trusted friends to right what has gone wrong and so allow spring to come again. She learns many lessons about prejudice, friendship, trust, responsibility and love along the way.

There are many parallels to be drawn between the conflicts of the modern era and that of the Voiced Ones and the Tree People. The safe world of fantasy provides an excellent forum for discussion of these sensitive issues with your students. Either as a stand alone or as part of the trilogy, "The Tenth Power" could provide this forum.

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