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Young Adult Fiction

Journey to Rainbow Island
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Lush descriptions and a young heroine's unwavering moral compass set the tone for this dragon-driven fantasy.

On a quest to stop a dangerous evil before it is too late, a young girl finds that her best weapons are faith, light, and love. Although *Journey to Rainbow Island* sometimes struggles to find balance between plot and theme, the combination of affirmative messages and a perpetually optimistic main character makes for a surprisingly positive fantasy story for younger readers.

A place of peace, love, and harmony, Rainbow Island is the beloved home of Yu-ning, an eleven-year-old girl. When an evil, power-hungry wizard revives an obsidigon (a type of extinct dragon) from the dead, he vows to spread darkness and starts by attacking the idyllic island. Yu-ning, an orphan descended from an elite race of mysterious warriors, is the only one who can destroy the obsidigon. She sets off on an adventure to recover the magical weapons she'll need, facing numerous obstacles along the way.

At each stop, Yu-ning finds people oppressed by despair, often a result of their own desire for money and conformity. Yu-ning uses her crystal heart, which emits a pink light powered by her own love, belief, and spirit, to lead the weary to a path of goodness and light.

These plot points show how strong Yu-ning's positive force is, which gives her more credibility—if she can save an entire city from misery, she must be powerful. However, the pattern is repeated over and over, often without furthering the story. Seemingly, the efforts to relay the theme drive the story more than anything else does. When the plot fits more cleanly into the overarching story line, there is clear purpose with much more impact. The backstory and history of Rainbow Island and the surrounding world give the narrative more depth and believability.

As Yu-ning travels from place to place, both beautiful and bleak settings are depicted

with verbose, vivid sensory details. Near the wicked wizard's cave, the "ocean was all froth and rage" with "dark grey granite rocks jutting from the turbulent sea." On Rainbow Island, "large morrpho, hairstreak, and swallowtail butterflies skipped through the afternoon air as honeybees drank sweet nectar from voluptuous tropical blooms." Generally, the strong scenic details create clear visions and set the tone of each individual setting.

If this talent for description could be used more on the characters themselves, readers might be able to connect at a deeper level with this fine fantasy's positive message.

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