

Mirror of Stone

Corie J. Weaver

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A believably crafted alternate world populated by dramatic and refreshing characters brings intensity to this sci-fi journey.

An epic power struggle between humanity and an alien species sits at the heart of Corie J. Weaver's *Mirror of Stone*. Set in a vividly imagined and credible alternate world and populated by a refreshingly diverse set of characters, this fun, escapist read will appeal to readers beyond the target YA audience.

Sixteen-year-old Eleanor reads a prospector's journal while she is cleaning up his belongings. The journal foreshadows an alien conflict; she dismisses it as the ravings of a madman. But before long, family tragedy and a mysterious video launch Eleanor on a journey that puts her at the heart of the struggle between her people and an alien race that holds its own claim to the frontier moon of Travbon. A second main character, Adam, is a government "Guardsmen" who is charged with her capture. Weaver skillfully uses the thoughts, actions, and feelings of both characters to narrate events.

Chapter breaks and references to character names mark the switches back and forth between the two story lines. Diversity in the gender and age of both human and alien characters reflects an understanding of the current growing audience for science fiction and increases the appeal and accessibility of this book.

Science fiction purists may take issue with the lack of specific scientific detail about the colonization of Travbon and its ability to sustain human life. While nothing in the novel strains credulity, details that distinguish things like "vids" and "flitters" from the videos and planes of "our" world would enhance the otherworldliness of the setting. These flaws are more than balanced by the obvious care that went into crafting a believable world and creating the alien race at the heart of this novel. Tamkeri differ dramatically from humans in appearance, custom, and speech. Eleanor's caretaker sums up the contrast by saying, "You are hard on the inside. We are hard on the outside," challenging her to see beyond the differences. Their ethereal home city is a vivid contrast to Travbon's rustic frontier-style towns, farms, and mining camps.

Respect for the lives and cultures of others are themes that resonate throughout *Mirror of Stone*. The stories of Eleanor, Adam, and the cast of diverse and well-developed minor characters all converge in a clash between the power of a corrupt government and the basic rights of all living creatures. The government-deception angle will please readers of dystopian literature. Despite casualties, the ending satisfies, and a surprise twist seems to leave the door open for a sequel.

CAROLYN BAILEY (Fall 2014)

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