

*Sword and Verse*

HarperTeen, 2016

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Ages 14 and up

In a sweeping fantasy that award-winning author Franny Billingsley calls “fascinating and unique,” debut author Kathy MacMillan weaves palace intrigue and epic world-building to craft a tale for fans of Rae Carson and Megan Whalen Turner.

Raisa was just a child when she was sold into slavery in the kingdom of Qilara. Despite her young age, her father had been adamant that she learn to read and write. But where she now lives, literacy is a capital offense for all but the nobility. The written language is closely protected, and only the King, Prince, Tutor, and Tutor-in-training are allowed to learn its very highest form. So when she is plucked from her menial labor and selected to replace the last Tutor-in-training who was executed, Raisa knows that betraying any hint of her past could mean death.

Keeping her secret guarded is hard enough, but the romance that’s been blossoming between her and Prince Mati isn’t helping matters. Then Raisa is approached by the Resistance—an underground rebel army—to help liberate the city’s slaves. She wants to free her people, but that would mean aiding a war against Mati. As Raisa struggles with what to do, she discovers a secret that the Qilarites have been hiding for centuries—one that, if uncovered, could bring the kingdom to its knees.

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“I was completely enthralled by the fascinating and unique world that Kathy MacMillan has created. The depth and skill she demonstrates with her ability to build an original mythology based on words and the power of language are highly unusual for a first-time novelist and I couldn’t turn the pages fast enough.” – National Book Award finalist Franny Billingsley

“A tense, romantic fantasy epic about prejudice, political struggle, and the power of words, *SWORD AND VERSE* kept me guessing at every turn. Kathy MacMillan is a writer to watch.”  
— R.J. Anderson, Andre Norton Award-nominated author of *Ultraviolet*

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**General Bio (128 words)**

Kathy MacMillan is a writer, American Sign Language interpreter, librarian, signing storyteller, and avowed Hufflepuff. Her debut young adult novel, *Sword and Verse* (2016) was a finalist for the Compton Crook Award, and its companion novel, *Dagger and Coin* (2018) has been called a “complex feminist fantasy” by author Heidi Heilig. Kathy serves as the co-Regional Advisor for the Maryland/Delaware/West Virginia Region of the Society for Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators. She is also the author of the *Little Hands Signing* board book series from Familius Press, as well as eight resource books for educators, librarians, and parents, including *Little Hands and Big Hands: Children and Adults Signing Together* (Huron Street Press, 2013). She lives near Baltimore, MD. Find her online at [www.kathymacmillan.com](http://www.kathymacmillan.com) or on Twitter at @kathys\_quill.

**Short bio (76 words)**

Kathy MacMillan is a writer, American Sign Language interpreter, librarian, signing storyteller, and avowed Hufflepuff. Her debut young adult novel, *Sword and Verse* (2016) was a finalist for the Compton Crook Award, and its companion novel, *Dagger and Coin* (2018) has been called a “complex feminist fantasy.” She is also the author of the *Little Hands Signing* board book series, as well as eight resource books for educators, librarians, and parents. Find her online at [www.kathymacmillan.com](http://www.kathymacmillan.com).

**Very short bio (52 words)**

Kathy MacMillan is a writer, American Sign Language interpreter, librarian, signing storyteller, and avowed Hufflepuff. Her debut young adult novel, *Sword and Verse* (2016) was a finalist for the Compton Crook Award, and its companion novel, *Dagger and Coin* (2018) has been called a “complex feminist fantasy.” Find her online at [www.kathymacmillan.com](http://www.kathymacmillan.com).

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Praise for *Sword and Verse*:

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“[A] highly satisfying novel with an exciting conclusion. Filled with romance, political intrigue, and rebellion, this stand-alone page-turner will be in high demand by fantasy lovers.” — *Voice of Youth Advocates*

“*Sword and Verse* is a slow burn, a thoroughly crafted novel in every sense of the word.”– *RT Book Reviews*

“Fans of Megan Whalen Turner will enjoy MacMillan’s debut novel...MacMillan explains the complicated political twists and turns clearly, and her characterizations are layered and believable.” — *Publishers Weekly*

“Literacy becomes the key to liberation in a thoughtful debut fantasy.” — *Kirkus Reviews*

“MacMillan’s love of learning, knowledge, and literacy shapes both plot and character development, while raising ethical questions with no easy answers. Beneath what appears to be a romantic fantasy, discerning readers will find complex, broader issues among the predictable comforts of the genre.” — *Booklist*

“MacMillan has created a believable world, complete with its own mythology.” — *School Library Journal*

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