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When he rebels against the tyranny of the ruling Scholars, Noren, a village boy, is labeled a heretic and sent to them for punishment.

Children of the Star Details

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From Reader Review Children of the Star for online ebook

Rachel says

This is a book that actually takes some thinking when you read it; I very much enjoy it for that reason, as well as the fact that it has a wonderful story with its ups and downs that kept me reading as I went.

Sam says

This is yet another amazing book by this author. Or amazing trilogy I should say.

Eric says

Sylvia Engdahl was my favorite author when I was about 10-12. On rereading this, I was pleasantly surprised that it hadn't lost any of its charm. The books (this is a compilation of 3) tend to wander a bit - but it never gets boring. She manages to explore themes about faith and freedom, while maintaining a great story, and fascinating characters.

MerryMeerkat says

Star Rating: 5 Stars, BUY IT!!

Self purchase for Kindle. Kindle Single.

Very funny and amusing. This is the first kindle single I've actually gotten around to reading. And oh my god it was soo good. It's the story of how Zuzanna finally gets together with her love interest. Highly recommended. Beautifully written, hysterical in parts, a bit emotional and all around just freaking awesome. I think I may have to read the 3rd book next as this was such a tease!!!"

elissa says

I obsessively read this entire trilogy. It's not that easy to find, but well worth it! I love her whole idea about psychic abilities being the natural next evolutionary step for people.

Rhuddem Gwelin says

Among the best books I've ever read.

Julia says

This was preachier than I remembered, but still a very good story. This is an omnibus of three books. The first one tells of Noren's story as a heretic who is intent on confronting the Scholars' control of society. The second is set among the Scholars. The third is Noren as an adult and also connects with some of Sylvia Engdahl's other books, although it is definitely not necessary to have read any of the others.

Julie Decker says

Noren resents being an everyday worker whose silly rituals and devotion to seemingly arbitrary principles are frustrating to him. But questioning the Technicians or the Scholars is heresy, and he risks his life if he disobeys. When Noren finally decides he can take it no longer, he embarks upon a search for truth that reveals more than he could ever have hoped to discover about the truth of the rituals, the importance of secrecy, and the horrifying plight his world is in. The future on their planet, along with all the knowledge of their people's history, rests on the shoulders of those who know the truth, and now, that includes him. . . .

I loved this book, but sometimes the storytelling was REALLY indulgent, especially at the start. The beginning of the book was the most awkwardly told part of this whole thing. I think the author was kind of trying to throw us into the mix and explain the culture to us by having the sheep repeat the Prophecy lines to us in their blind devotion, but it felt staged and forced. I was also kind of disappointed in that I got no understanding really of what Noren did in school, what his relationship with his family was like (besides that he was the black sheep who hated farm work and thought too much), or how he came to love Talyra. Some of those beginnings of his story felt very stitched on, and this is one of the hardest things about writing a book: making your audience feel like your character has in fact been alive all the years that he has. Sure his "real" story starts on page one, but it shouldn't feel like he started living on page one, and it largely felt that way to me since so many of the first interactions between him and other people seemed to be thrown around strategically placed to help the reader digest the world he lived in in the right order. There was enough (more than enough) description and discussion of the Prophecy and the High Law later in the book that I feel I could have absorbed it from context if she'd presented it more naturally. I was pretty frustrated with it at the beginning, so that would have really concerned me if the book hadn't been recommended to me by a friend whose taste I trust.

As mentioned, the amount of detail Ms. Engdahl goes into regarding Noren's thoughts is very indulgent. However, if I were writing letters to him to find out what he thought, I'd like it to be something like what was presented. I felt that for a book it made the story very very mental/cerebral and slow, and sometimes the thoughts weren't connected to the emotions (though they frequently WERE too, so I know she can do it). I decided to just accept early on that it was not a conventionally written book, and I know I have more patience for cerebral characters than most, so I figured I'd just let him talk to me without expecting him to entertain me. I find thoughts very entertaining, after all.

I thought she did an excellent job really making it seem like Noren proved the High Law and some aspects of

the Prophecy false through some of his heretical acts. I was totally cheering for him when he drank impure water, and when he challenged the mob and the officiator during his trial. I of course was expecting Technicians and Scholars to turn out to be ordinary humans (though I didn't presume to know what they knew or what they represented before Noren did), so I could see he was right about that, but it was interesting how much like myth-based folklore the local customs could be made to sound even though they turned out to just be symbolic dress-up clothes for actual events and principles (Founding Day actually being a date they did descend from the skies; metal actually being so precious it might as well be holy; impure water, quickening needed for fields, controlled weather).

I liked that even though Noren did many, many very courageous/brave things, he suffered personally because of them and had so, so much doubt and fear and just plain physical discomfort. People forget about that part being attached to denouncing your culture's most precious beliefs--which he did several times in his life. People usually write stories about heroes going to jail or being tortured over their beliefs, but they rarely discuss the fear and loss they contemplate during the lonely times, or the dread they must feel when meeting their fate. Ms. Engdahl did what a writer is supposed to do there: she went WITH her character into the bowels of despair, and she didn't gloss over it to make Noren seem like a fearless hero. It helped with the process of identifying with him.

Another thing I liked is how the complexity and trials just kept growing. There was always a new level. More and more to find out and experience, and there was always foreshadowing during scenes like whenever Stefred (in various states of his relationship with Noren) would tell him that he was going to encounter setbacks or have difficulty or (most prophetic of all) be like the First Scholar because of the similarity of their minds. Whenever Noren blew off or disregarded or downplayed something Stefred said, it always seemed to revisit him later.

I LOVED the purity of Noren's longing for truth and knowledge. He had so much desperate curiosity . . . to understand everything, have nothing kept from him, be allowed to treasure and nurture knowledge . . . but unlike most people, that quest for possession of knowledge was never as a means toward power, because he treasured it so much for its own sake. I could really see and share the ache there, especially when he was confronted with the idea of the Six Worlds' collective knowledge all perishing if they didn't find a way to assure long-term storage of the computer data.

I understood all of the explanations of how faith works in the book, but agreed with the underlying message of maybe half of it. I think my least favorite part of the books was when Noren assumed priesthood after acknowledging that he "must have known" there would be more tomorrows if he still abstained from drinking impure water despite logically thinking he was going to die. I thought it was a bit of a cop-out that he obtained faith because his underlying refusal to accept death was rewarded by something apparently miraculous. It does seem incredibly convenient that an alien communication device would be RIGHT there where they crashed in the second book when Noren was taking Talyra and Brek out to go disillusion a bunch of villagers. And in a book, you can always blame deus ex machina. There isn't a universal application of that situation, I don't think. If you survive--"miraculously"--you can attribute it to coincidence or divine intervention or whatever, but the truth is that if you don't get a miracle in a situation like that, you don't live to tell about it.

I think that some of what that aspect of the book said about faith was useful, though. Because in that situation, what could that shipwrecked group have done BETTER by accepting that they were going to die? Acting as if you EXPECT to live--perhaps an act of faith--is an expression of self-preservation, and truly enacting desperate measures because you BELIEVE you will survive is, evolutionarily, a very good thing. I don't believe behaving that way has to involve faith, trust, any of that conceptual stuff really. I also see that

in a lot of people, human nature IS such that if they do not believe they are "meant" to succeed (or assured of success), they will not do so.

The ending of the third book did have some discussions of faith that I wasn't sure about . . . I was very satisfied with the ending, but it did kind of bother me how Noren often made decisions about the surety of his mission based on what he thought the aliens observing them might do if there was no hope of survival. I respect that he wanted his species to attain "Federation status," whatever that ends up being (and it kinda annoyed me how elitist it was, but clearly I would just be irritated like Noren to know that it's out there and I can't have it). I got the point that he was being encouraged, subtly, to avoid "giving up" and expecting rescue, but if those aliens thought that they did not interfere in the evolution of Noren's species, I think they're way off.

I guess this is a small and silly thing, but I'm surprised that a society like the Six Worlds had no way to predict their sun going nova until it was nearly too late to save anyone. I know they're not us, but with today's non-spacefaring society, we can detect solar flares and warn people about their possible effects. I would think there'd be a lot more "signs" of an unstable star that could be detected. Especially since to my knowledge it's not normal for a star to explode without warning in the prime of its life, so I'd have thought it would have been leeching hydrogen from a companion star over the course of millions of years before showing signs of instability, or something like that. Though I'm not an astronomer.

Naomi Long says

This book is so unique and so good that I searched high and low for it for years as an adult (I read it when I was 12, but it was part of a circulating library so I didn't get to read it a second time). One day I happened to remember the name of the main character and bought it on Kindle and was really enchanted once again by a fantastically well-thought out science fiction novel like no other. It's the only sci-fi novel I have read that is really discursive and yet has a fantastic storyline. I can really recommend for young adults; it's one of those books that makes you think and stays with you. Still on my list of best sci-fi novels of all time - and I've read a few. It's similar to Arthur C. Clarke's challenging short stories.

Anne says

I originally read the first 2 books in this trilogy when I was in middle school, and it changed my life and affected my concepts of integrity and power through my growing up years. I lost track of the title and author. (At that time, it wasn't something I paid attention to.)

Now in my mid-40s, I've spent years trying to find these books, enlisting multiple librarians and internet searches. I finally found a teen librarian in the little town of Duvall, WA who knew this author and series. I bought this trilogy and re-read them and was amazed to find they were better than I remembered. I had never read the 3rd book. I think it was written after I had read the first 2. The ending is so satisfying and the growth in the characters is believable. I'm so glad I finally found this again.

Anthony Pacheco says

I have the signed, rare, hardcover edition of this updated omnibus and while not my favorite book as far as

the written word goes, it is my absolute favorite collectable.

With that said, this is still a five-star book for me. As the other reviewers have stated, this an omnibus of the three books composing the trilogy.

I devoured these book when I was a young teen. The story got into my head several times and I would dream about it. It's the books that started me on science fiction. There was no turning back. Like what the characters in the third book finally realize, there is more to life then just survival. Engdahl captures and summarizes the yearning to explore and know what is out there perfectly.

As a come-of-age science fiction trilogy, it doesn't get any better.

Sylvia says

This is the omnibus edition of my trilogy composed of *This Star Shall Abide* (known in the UK as *Heritage of the Star*), *Beyond the Tomorrow Mountains*, and *The Doors of the Universe*. It was first published in 2000 by Meisha Merlin, and because Meisha Merlin went out of business, a new edition was published by me in 2012 under my personal imprint Ad Stellae Books. (The cover of my edition was changed in 2015 without any change in the book itself or its ISBN, so its former cover is not displayed here; the new cover is not a separate edition.)

Brett says

I'm at the third book and ready to give up - which is normal for me and trilogies. Mostly, trilogies fail at a certain point. I actually quite liked the first book. However, this writer is a bit repetitive and, while the book is idea-driven, the ideas just aren't as significant as the writer thinks they are. There's actually too much machinating in these books, too much deliberating. When action finally happens, it's either telegraphed or somehow trite, like, not worth the effort. What I liked about the beginning was that the author kind of has the same aims as Ursula Le Guin: they're sci-fi books without the battles; they focus on ideas of humanity and human struggle. Ultimately, she just isn't nearly as talented or deep as Le Guin.

Swankivy says

First, the bad news: the writing style of this book was frequently a bit on the indulgent side. It also had many semi-transparent plot issues in which I predicted the outcomes partially because the characters focused so fiercely on anything but. Essentially, she sometimes gave so much attention and depth to her red herrings that it seemed incongruous when her very cerebral characters never even considered certain possible outcomes until they were presented as revelations. Bit of a dead giveaway sometimes, which did help create the slight "directed written-ness" I sometimes sensed.

But the good news is that even though the story sometimes functions as a frame story for what is apparently the author's partial manifesto (and is liberally spiced with almost unreal idealism), I enjoyed the ideas presented. I thought the main character, Noren, was a spectacular example of a multi-layered character. He questions what he perceives to be an evil system of religious belief and social inequality, challenges it

expecting the worst, finds (of course) many answers and even more questions, and ends up having to acknowledge that the rewards often come to people who don't want them anymore. I enjoyed the incredible reverence with which knowledge is handled, and how preservation of human life and accomplishments were considered so vital that keeping them justified some terrible moral contradictions. This is also one of the only books I've ever read in which faith is relentlessly explored, found to *not* always essentially mean "belief without reason," and found to have positive value without demanding the surrender of the intellectual mind . . . all WITHOUT frequently sounding preachy. I really enjoyed Noren's honest exploration of questions, faith crises, his own and others' psychology, his ability to love and be loved, facing the unknown and unknowable, and ability to self-sacrifice without acting like it didn't hurt.
