



## Color Song

*Victoria Strauss*

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By the author of the acclaimed "Passion Blue," a "Kirkus Reviews" Best Teen Book of 2012 and "a rare, rewarding, sumptuous exploration of artistic passion," comes a fascinating companion novel.

Artistically brilliant, Giulia is blessed - or cursed - with a spirit's gift: she can hear the mysterious singing of the colors as she creates them in the convent workshop of Maestra Humilita. It's here that Giulia, forced into the convent against her will, has found unexpected happiness and rekindled her passion to become a painter?an impossible dream for any woman in 15th century Italy.

But when a dying Humilita bequeaths Giulia her most prized possession - the secret formula for the luminously beautiful paint called Passion blue - Giulia realizes she's in danger from those who have long coveted the famous color. Faced with the prospect of a life in the convent barred from painting as punishment for keeping Humilita's secret, Giulia is struck by a desperate idea: What if she disguises herself as a boy? Could she make her way to Venice and find work as an artist's apprentice?

Along with the truth of who she is, Giulia carries more dangerous secrets: the exquisite voices of her paint colors and the formula for Humilita's Passion blue. And Venice, she discovers, with its gilded palazzos and masked balls, has secrets of its own. Trapped in her false identity in this dream-like place where reality and reflection are easily confused, and where art and ambition, love and deception hover like dense fog, can Giulia find her way?

This compelling novel explores timeless themes of love and illusion, gender and identity as it asks the question: what does it mean to risk everything to pursue your passion?

## Color Song Details

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Author : Victoria Strauss

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# From Reader Review Color Song for online ebook

## Amy Carothers says

A Renaissance Mulan-esque female painter undercover in the male-dominated art world of Venice? Oh my!

This book had a wealthy older prostitute and her son, a paint shop in a nunnery, a girl fleeing a nunnery, the power struggle for a breathtaking paint recipe, a girl fighting an innately sexist society if only in the small ways she can, and a robust Venice painted as vibrantly as if with Passion blue paint.

I loved the heroine, Giulia. I consider her an excellent example of how to write a fantastically strong female character without falling prey to that annoying Girl Who Punched Stuff trope we see so often in YA. There is a heterosexual love story involving her, and although romance in YA makes me want to punch someone more often than not, I was refreshed and delighted by this one. It reminded me of Poison Study in that when the romantic lead was first introduced, I had no idea that he would pan out to be the romantic lead, and he wasn't portrayed as the sexiest most fantastically perfect man alive. This made the romance seem really, really realistic and it grew organically, which made me root for it a lot more.

I really, really admired the author's deftness in writing gorgeous description that didn't detract from the prose.

This is an exciting and beautiful historical fiction book about fighting for what you want in life.

Why 5 Stars?

I read this book without knowing it was the second part of a two-book series. I would have given it 4 stars because of the slight info-dumping and hurrying of the main character's fascinating backstory, but I realize now that it was just because this was a sequel and that was summarizing the first book's events. This summarizing really only happens in the first two chapters, and the rest of the book was delightful, so no docking of stars.

The only other thing I \*might\* have docked a star for was when the male romantic lead was interested in our heroine while she was dressed as a boy, he voices fears that he may be "unnatural", i.e. gay. But even being bi myself, that didn't bother me. It was done respectfully, and, I suspect, for the sake of historic accuracy, not a reflection of the author's ideology. (And this really is one of the most liberal books I've read in a long time, factoring in the prostitutes portrayed as admirable characters, the feminism, and considerations of religious topics. I really don't think the author is drawing the line at bicurious thoughts.)

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## Meg - A Bookish Affair says

"Color Song" is the continuing story of Giulia, young woman who is forced to go to a convent. The first book in the series was called "Passion Blue" and "Color Song" is definitely a standalone book. However, that being said, you may want to read "Passion Blue" first because it is a very good book and does give some insight into Giulia's means. "Color Song" picks up almost where the last book leaves off Giulia is still in the convent and is dreading her life there. Her painting mentor has just passed away and has left Giulia with a secret recipe that many people would do many things to get. The only thing that Giulia can think of to do is

run away.

While I really enjoyed "Passion Blue," I think that "Color Song" definitely has a lot more action. Again this is a young adult, historical fiction book that takes place during the Italian Renaissance. It's filled with rich detail and great characters. It is definitely a treat for historical fiction fans! All of the action kept me turning the pages! Giulia runs away from the convent in Padua and tries to go to Venice, where she hopes to become an apprentice to a famous Venetian painter. I loved reading about her journey!

Italy is just about one of my favorite places to read about. I especially like historical fiction set within Italy and the Renaissance definitely makes for a very interesting time period. The author does a great job of incorporating a lot of historical detail to really make the setting and the time come to life for the reader! Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed this book and it definitely kept me entertained.

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### **Amber Spencer says**

I did appreciate that these books try to shine a light on the women artists who were almost completely lost and forgotten because they were women living in the 1500s. For those women who push through social norms to do what they love, my heart and respect go out to them, past and present.

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### **Elizabeth Spencer says**

I got this book as part of Victoria Strauss's giveaway!

*Color Song* is a historical fiction about 15th century Italy and an orphan named Giulia who wants to paint. Women are not painters in the 1400s, and the only way Giulia learns is because she lives in an exceptional convent of painting nuns. But when her beloved teacher dies and the convent enters the hands of a woman who hates her, Giulia realizes she may never paint again. Not only that, she was given the secret of her master's most famous paint--Passion Blue--and now the convent and her master's old family will stop at nothing to steal it from her.

*Color Song* is the sequel to *Passion Blue*, which I never read. Consequentially, the first fourth of the novel was a little jarring until I got up to speed.

A lot of this is very classic: A girl looking for acceptance in a repressive society, forced to escape oppression and hide who she is. A lot of the early events (such as (view spoiler)) are common tropes for girl-on-a-journey stories. But once the story gets going, it's magnificent--a beautiful mix of history, wonderfully empathetic characters, and *Venice*, one of the most charming cities in the world.

The climactic moment is perfect--all the characters shine, the tension is beautiful, and the result is... well, perfectly realistic. Despite some very realistic ups and downs, the story ends on an intensely optimistic and sweet note. Giulia is probably the luckiest girl in all of Renaissance Venice, but I still enjoyed her journey.

My only complaints are this: First, it took me too long to get into the story. I think I really, really should have read the first novel first. Second, the color song isn't a very important element of the story. Giulia has the mysterious ability to hear the song of paints. But it's never explained whether this is a result of the spirit she

dabbled with in the first novel or a true gift from God. It plays only a minor role in the story (because (view spoiler)) which is mildly disappointing for something the story is named after.

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## Leeanna says

This review originally appeared on my blog, Leeanna.me.

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I really enjoyed **PASSION BLUE**, the first book about Giulia, a girl who wants to be a painter. But in Renaissance Italy, women aren't painters. They're servants or wives or nuns or prostitutes. Giulia was sent to a convent against her will, but against all odds, she finds a way to pursue her dream inside the convent.

Giulia's story could have ended there, but thankfully, it didn't. **COLOR SONG** is a companion to **PASSION BLUE**, and while it's not super necessary to have read **PASSION BLUE**, it is helpful. Giulia does recap most of her story though, so you could dive right into **COLOR SONG** if you're the impatient sort.

Sequels don't always work for me, but I liked **COLOR SONG** even more than I liked **PASSION BLUE**. I didn't want this book to end, because it was chock full of good stuff. The name comes directly from Giulia's new ability: she can hear colors. Each one has its own song that fits the color. Malachite green has an acid whine, lead white purrs like a cat, and so on. Passion blue, the secret color that causes so much angst and joy for Giulia, has the very best song of all. I really liked this concept of color song, because it added even more to the author's sumptuous descriptions of color.

In **COLOR SONG**, Giulia runs away from the convent and goes to Venice, *the* city for art. Venice was practically a living, breathing character, and I enjoyed seeing the city through Giulia's eyes. I also really liked the descriptions of life in a master's painting workshop, contrasting it to the one in the convent. But the descriptions of Giulia's painting and color creation were the very best of all: I felt like I could really see each color she created. And the processes of creating those colors! So cool. I geek out over that sort of stuff.

Giulia has to disguise herself as a boy to follow her dream, but even as she does, she wonders how long she can keep her secrets. She's not sure if she wants to live a lie, but with the attitudes against women, what can she do?

I could go on and on about **COLOR SONG**, but I don't want to give away too much of the story. Yes, it is a tad depressing because of Giulia's struggles, but she has help from unexpected sources. The epilogue gives a hopeful nod to the rest of her story, and while I would love another book about Giulia, if there isn't one, I'm very satisfied with how everything wraps up.

I recommend **COLOR SONG** if you like historical fiction, art fiction, and/or stories about girls making their own futures.

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**Disclaimer:** I received a copy of this book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review. I also participated in the blog tour for this book.

**See more of my reviews:**

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## **Erin Al-Mehairi says**

Color Song is the second book in the YA historical fiction Passion Blue series by Victoria Strauss, with the first book having the Passion Blue title. Unfortunately, I didn't hear of Passion Blue prior to Color Song, and didn't have time to catch up, but luckily Strauss wrote Color Song in a way that could still be enjoyed by someone who hadn't read the first book! Color Song was a beautiful novel with a lovely voice and intricate details and emotions. I look forward to going back and reading the first novel too!

Giulia yearns to paint, but women aren't artists in Renaissance Italy! She is sent to a convent instead, where she is strong enough to still keep her dream alive and strive towards her reality of being a painter. Strauss is good about letting first time readers know how the colors and the color of Passion Blue play into Giulia's life. That color is very important. I thought that Strauss idea and imaginative writing and storytelling was very clever.

As Giulia runs away to Venice, dressed as a boy, to immerse into the world of art and become an apprentice, we easily can visually see her emotions, her excitement, her fears, and her astounding abilities. Strauss describes Venice with captivating prowess that pulled me in and kept me reading. I could see how not only adult readers would be entranced by this story, but young readers as well. For instance, my almost 11 year old is a higher level reader, and wants to be an artist, and I can imagine her snuggling up in her bed and being lost in the pages of this book!

Giulia can HEAR colors. What an amazing concept. Strauss writes about color so visually with only a pen and paper. She fills in her sentences with phrasing that allows us to SEE the colors that her character hears and read through our eyes not only the words on the page, but watch a canvas before us.

Not only does the book have beautiful imagery and light, there is also the struggle that Giulia has, the secret of the Passion Blue color recipe, new secrets that open up in Venice, fantastical dreams and supernatural elements, and her struggle to hide herself in a new city. There is suspense, angst, indecision, but also personal triumphs and hope. I love Strauss's portrayal of Giulia. She is a brave, independent, and amazing young woman that many young girls, even in the modern world, can use as a role model.

I love historical fiction, and especially love historical fiction surrounding art, so this book was a treasure for me, but as well I am thrilled to find a YA historical! There just aren't enough of these books for young women who don't want to only read dystopian, sci-fi, or horror. With historical fiction, young women can learn history, culture, and as well still read about role models who overcame limitations that others created for them and be able to rise above the turmoil. With this novel, they can get their touch of fantasy as well. I also love fantasy and supernatural and there was just enough of that in this book to hold me spellbound.

I highly recommend Color Song for anyone, or any teen, who loves historical fiction, art, and culture, but especially a coming-of-age novel with some originality.

I was given a copy in exchange for an honest review.

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## Kelley says

(3.5 stars)

When I saw this book on NetGalley, the cover instantly caught my attention, and as soon as I realized that the main character has synesthesia, I requested it! I was thrilled when my request was approved, and delighted when I was contacted to be a part of the blog tour! **This book was part of my synesthesia reading theme for August, and it was just a pleasure.**

It's somewhat common to come across a YA protagonist who's an artist (always scribbling in his/her sketchbook, etc.), but this was a different take on the whole thing, likely because of its historical setting instead of contemporary. Giulia is an artist, but one who is junior and learning under a maestra. She's the lowest one in the hierarchy of painter nuns at her convent, and I found this a refreshing change. **I enjoyed the familiarity of her creative passions, ambitions, and obvious skill, coupled with her feelings of inadequacy due to her position, age, and gender.**

It's clear that the events in *Color Song* come after those in *Passion Blue*, but it truly felt like a companion novel; **there was just enough back-story explanation to help me understand the current situation without being too much of an info-dump** which would bore readers who were already familiar with *Passion Blue*. I was able to immediately connect with Giulia and her predicament(s), and easily felt engaged and invested in what happened to her and the choices that she made.

**Giulia's synesthesia was a lovely touch that didn't overtake the story, but added a note of beauty in an otherwise rather hopeless situation.** To me, it felt very realistic, and I was able to relate to it easily, even though I do not have the same type of synesthesia that Giulia has. It was something about herself that she had to learn to accept and become comfortable with, but it didn't stop her from living her life, and it brought her comfort when she was pretty down.

***Color Song* was an interesting look into 15th century Italy** (and I found myself somewhat comfortable with visualizing the surroundings and the people, thanks to the Assassin's Creed video games!). Life was hard, especially for women, but I enjoyed the rays of hope that shined from a few of the good people who came into Giulia/Girolamo's life. **This was a wonderful story that explored themes of introspection, self acceptance, honesty, perseverance, ethics and morality, and personal growth. Yes, Giulia was the focus of this story, but what made it even richer was that many other characters in this book were rich with their own personality and growth.**

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## Paula M. of Her Book Thoughts! says

What a stupid thing to do. I requested this without knowing that it's a sequel. I blame Netgalley for not putting THAT information. I stopped at page 25 though because it's still very readable. I love the writing. I might check out the series. No rating from me!

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## Margo Berendsen says

4.5 stars - a sumptuous historical, rich characters (Sofia! Bernado!) and an artist's quest that resonated with

my own artist's soul. Not that I'm a painter, but Giulia's passion for creation is universal for anyone who loves to create things, no matter the medium.

Set in 1487 in medieval Padua and Venice with beautiful attention to detail and a living, breathing, smelly, sparkling depiction of Venice. 5 stars for the setting. The convent at Padua also felt starkly real, and the painters' workshops there and in Venice were so well described I feel as if I could open the door and step inside.

5 stars for the premise, too. I simply loved the idea of a color song, the way the newly mixed, still-wet paint colors would "sing" for Giulia, each color with their own unique voice.

As a woman, Giulia's painting is frowned upon, even prohibited. She disguises herself as a boy in order to escape the convent and apprentice herself to a master painter in Venice. Along the way she makes an unusual friend and ally in Sofia, a wealthy courtesan, a fascinating character. Sofia's insight on Giulia:

"I think perhaps I understand you better now." Sofia tilted her head, embracing Giulia in her cool amber gaze. "Why you would leave your home and travel so very far alone to a city where you are a stranger to apprentice yourself to a master you do not know. It is your gift that demands this of you, no? Your gift demands everything of you."

Sofia's son, Bernardo, plays the romantic interest, but he wasn't as distinctive. However, because of Giulia's disguise as a boy, her relationship with Bernardo is based on lies and deception, that added interesting tension to the story. In fact, the theme of secrets vs. truth runs expertly (not too heavy-handedly) throughout the book.

I loved all the Italian words and historical tidbits that sang through this story like battagliole (mock battles on the bridges of Venice) and chopines (platform women's shoes).

And all the details about Venice:

"La Serenissima," Bernardo said, startling her; he hadn't spoken a word since they'd cast off.  
"The daughter of the sea."

...the salt water that ran like blood through the body of this strange city.  
...Then a gondola glided by, its oar dipping, its wake slapping against the foundations of the houses, and Bernardo said softly, "For me, that is the sound of Venice. Water, imprisoned between walls."

Another thing I loved about the story was identifying with Giulia's struggles (and inspirations) as an artist, which any type of artist, not just a painter, could identify with. In the story, a wealthy merchant sponsors this painting contest:

"I have decreed the subject of these works, which is music, but I have permitted the artists to interpret it in the manner of their choosing. As you will see, their inventiveness knows no bounds. There is music here in all its forms, all its history, all its meaning - music made in paint, one art embodying another. Accept this twofold gift of beauty, dear guests. Allow your eyes to sing."



Here is Giulia's description of her painting for the contest, "A Muse of song":

She'd turned instead to other myths, delving into her memory of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, one of the most precious of the books in Maestro Bruni's library. "She'll be holding her instrument but looking up, startled, interrupted in her playing by the whisper of a greater music: the music of the spheres."

And, my favorite quote from the story:

This was not the perfect work that had existed in her mind. It was only the imperfect rendering that was the best her skill could manage. Yet Giulia was not dismayed. For she knew that she would try again – and again, and again, for as long as it took to gain the experience, the judgment, the understanding to get it right. And perhaps she never would get it right. Perhaps she would never attain that flawless blue, never create that perfect image, never find the ultimate point of balance between what she could accomplish and what she could dream. Yet wasn't that the point? To be drawn onward, ever onward, in pursuit of your deepest passion? To look back at the end of the race and know that you had never done less than the most you could do?

I thought Giulia's unique gift of the color song would tie into the plot more, but it doesn't. My favorite genre is historical fantasy, and the premise of the Color Song hinted at some fantasy, but I wasn't disappointed when the book didn't end up going that direction, as the color song did serve a purpose in theme of secrets and truth. There's only a hint of the paranormal from the first book (*Passion Blue*) when Giulia mentions purchasing a talisman with a spirit inside of it, but it turned out to be a grave mistake. In this book, her master, Ferraldi, asks her:

"You speak of talismans and spirits - but do you also pray to God, and to our Savior Jesus Christ?"

"I do, Maestro. I don't worship demons or spirits. I turned to magic once, but I will never do so again."

And as for the unfairness of Giulia not being able to realize her full potential as an artist because she's female, I felt the author found a good balance between the realism of the time and the hope of change in the future (nicely rounded out by the epilogue).

...beauty must also be shared. It had no value if it was hoarded, closed up inside a secret like a miser's gold inside his counting room. And suddenly she could feel it: all the beauty she would create in the years to come, all the splendor that would issue from her hand, burning in her like the light of a thousand torches, so intense that for an instant it seemed she must be consumed.

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## Alysa H. says

A sequel that manages to be better than its predecessor, *Color Song* illustrates how well-matched YA and Historical fiction can be. The former trades in heightened emotions, and the latter raises the stakes -- especially when the main character is a girl of immense talent and heart, in a time and place when women were not considered to be fully human.

While the first book, *Passion Blue*, dealt with Giulia's learning to understand her true calling as a painter in the enclosed world of the convent, *Color Song* finds her leaving to make her way in the much larger backdrop of Renaissance Venice, depicted with much care and vibrancy. While the first book had a naive Giulia falling for the tricks of a handsome boy, this one finds her much more sure of herself and allows love to grow far more organically, and with some very entertaining gender play, for she spends much of the story disguised as a boy.

The story does not shy away from the dark side of life on the streets (and elsewhere), though the darkness is, for the most part, sidestepped easily enough by "destiny" and various plot twists that perhaps come a little too conveniently at times.

In the first book, it's left largely up to the reader to decide whether Giulia's experience of magic and spirits was real or only coincidence stemming from Giulia's interpretation and self-fulfilling prophesy, but here those past events are described, repeatedly, as if the magic were absolutely real. I find that not only detracts from the ambiguity of the first book, but also a bit odd considering that the magical elements in *Color Song* are so slight as to be almost nonexistent, relegated exclusively to Giulia's ability to "hear" colors in a way that sounds more like a fictionalized form of synesthesia than anything else.

Nonetheless, it's a gorgeous book. I couldn't put it down. And although the epilogue more or less closes the story for good by presenting a glimpse of the far-distant future long after Giulia's death, I can't help but hope that Strauss will write another sequel, filling in the gap!

\*\* I received a Review Copy of this book via NetGalley \*\*

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## Hesione says

(note: i'm going to change my star-rating system because a bunch of books are bunched into the 5-star category so I'm going to spread it out a little more. ex: previously, I would have rated it five stars)

I really liked this ending to the duology, and its focus on passion of all kinds and how to live with it and follow it. The only quibble I have is actually just a little thing - Sophia, a courtesan, makes winking statements about the uses of cross-dressing in her profession, but her son thinks that his attraction to a "boy" (i.e. Giulia in disguise) is unnatural, even though he probably should be as well acquainted or slightly less with the non-cis-hetero side of the sex industry. Certainly attitudes at that time were much different than they are now, and I'm certain (because the author had Sophia mention the uses of cross-dressing in the sex industry at least two times) that the author didn't mean anything bad by it, but some modern readers (especially in the YA genre) would make a fuss about it.

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## **Darlene says**

Originally posted at: <http://www.peekingbetweenthepages.com...>

Every so often I find books that I really love and Victoria Strauss's newest Color Song is one of them. The first book Passion Blue I loved just as much. Color Song does stand on it's own but you get a lot of background in Passion Blue that I think makes Color Song all the better. The books are classified as YA Historical Fiction and I do love YA books but I think these books are just perfect for the adult reader as well. I started Passion Blue a few days ago and was completely hooked so when I put it down I immediately dove into Color Song. What did I love so much about the book – the art, the color, the passion, the writing, the characters, and ultimately the beauty of the story itself.

Giulia has been living in the convent she was forced to enter and it is there that she is allowed to do the one thing she loves above all else and that is to paint. Giulia creates beautiful art but she also carries a gift that allows her to hear the singing of the colors she creates and uses. It's important to note that in 15th century Italy it was unheard of for a woman to be allowed to be a painter so it is only behind the convent walls that Giulia's dream can be realized. Maestra Humilita saw Giulia's gift and despite some obstacles has always supported her. When Maestra Humilita lays dying she gives her Passion Blue formula to the one person she knows will honor it the most – Giulia. However in doing so also puts Giulia at risk from others who are desperate to get their hands on the Passion Blue formula as well.

Giulia decides to do the only thing she can do and that's to leave the convent. Giulia never wanted to be a nun and she refuses to be held prisoner and punished for refusing to hand over the Passion Blue formula. But how – how can Giulia survive out there in a man's world? Well there is one way – by pretending to be a boy. Clothing herself in boy's things Giulia escapes the convent on a mission to make her way to Venice. Could she maybe find work there as a painter's apprentice? As Giulia she couldn't but as Girolamo it's a possibility. So starts the journey of a young woman who dared to want more in a time when women had no rights.

I absolutely loved Giulia. What a fantastic character. At eighteen she seemed years older in maturity and I loved her passion for art, color, and life and her willingness to risk everything to get it. The author's writing is beautiful as she vividly describes 15th century Italy and all it's trappings. I listened to the audiobook of Color Song which is narrated by Justine Eyre and she does a fabulous job. She has just the right tone of voice for the telling of Giulia's story and the time just flew by listening to her. I'm really hoping for another look into Giulia's life in the future!

Highly recommended for fans of historical fiction!

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## **Briana (Reader, Writer, Critic) says**

Color Song by Victoria Strauss is about as unique as it gets. There aren't an abundance of books out there that are about painters and their lives as painters, not just about a character who enjoys painting. Throw in the historic and beautiful setting, and the dramatic synopsis, and you've got an extremely intriguing book.

I was not disappointed by Color Song, at least not when it came to the general concept. The blend of elements was very interesting and the drama was stellar.

The plot was very well done with unexpected twists in just the right places. It was dramatic and exciting, imbuing the book with a sense of adventures that reaches out and grips and excites readers. It is anything but boring and readers of all ages will love it.

Strauss does an amazing job of weaving into the story, themes and tough interpersonal issues as well as non-interpersonal issues. Because of this, the story has a surprisingly emotional element to it and is very relatable for many readers. These elements that Strauss incorporates provide a shining example of how impactful issues and themes can be well sewn into stories that you may not expect to contain them.

While I enjoyed the themes brought out in the end, I also felt that the book went in the opposite direction of many of the themes and issues I longed to see addressed. This was frustrating, but by the end I was able to look past the frustration and appreciate the themes that were expressed.

Strauss's writing was very good and she brought Italy to life in a truly amazing way. Her world building was great and she obviously used an abundance of acquired knowledge to make it extremely real.

The characters were interesting, lovable, and brought the story to life. They possessed a depth and dimension that far too many YA characters seen in books today lack. Giulia and her new found friends were relatable and made the book more interesting to read. By the end readers are left hungering for more, dying to find out what happens to their new found, literary friends next.

Color Song is a fun adventure sure to be loved by a wide audience. While it had its issues it was still immensely enjoyable. For a very realistic and vivid read, Color Song is a great choice.

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## **Lauralee says**

Color Song is a companion novel to Passion Blue. Inside the convent of Santa Marta, Maestra Humilita is the creator of Passion blue, a beautiful paint color that has been the convent's greatest accomplishment. Because everyone, including Humilita's father, is so desperate to get their hands on this formula, Humilita has given her secret to make Passion blue to the only one she can trust, Giulia. After the death of Humilita, Giulia finds that she must make a choice: either reveal the secret, become a nun, and give up her passion for painting or to leave the convent and disguise herself as a boy and go to Venice and become an apprentice to Ferraldi, a painter and Maestra Humilita's friend.

The author has created a gorgeous scenery. I like how she portrays Santa Marta's convent as a prison, where she is forced to give up what she loves most. I also love her journey to Venice, where she disguises herself as a boy. It is not an easy journey. I like how she describes Renaissance Venice. For behind the beautiful facade, danger lurks everywhere. In the whole novel, danger stalks Giulia. She is not safe anywhere she goes.

Giulia is an average teenager. She wants to find acceptance. She wants to find a place to be happy and to do what she loves. She is faced with tough situations, and ponders what is the best choice for her. Giulia is a brave, strong, and smart girl, who is willing to do the unthinkable in society to get what she wants. Along the way, she makes friendships and finds love.

Overall, this book is about love, friendship, hope, and acceptance. It is about finding one's identity in a cruel world. The story shows how hard it is for a woman to be a painter in the Renaissance. The plot is fast-paced, and the setting and characters are well-developed. There is a touch of paranormal, for Giulia can hear the voices of paint colors. I have to advise you to read *Passion Blue* before you read *Color Song*. For even though this book is a stand-alone and gives you enough back story, reading *Passion Blue* will give you a full picture and you will appreciate *Color Song* more. For I haven't read *Passion Blue*, and a lot of times I was lost and had to read the back story a few times more to get a deeper understanding of Giulia's character. I recommend this book to anyone interested in art, Italy, and the Renaissance. This book is a great tribute to the female painters of the Renaissance.

(Note: I received a copy of this book as part of a blog tour in exchange for an honest review.)

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## **Julia Nashif says**

Finally, I'm done!

Thank you, Netgalley and Amazon Children's Publishing, for this free book to review!

### **What I liked:**

1. The beautiful descriptions. While plentiful, they didn't bog the story at all.
2. Giulia. Her emotions were woven so well. Everything she felt, I felt too.
3. The quick plot. Yes, it took me two months to read this, but...that's irrelevant, trust me.
4. I didn't read the first book about Giulia, *Passion Blue*, but there was enough back story to have everything make perfect sense.

### **What I didn't like:**

1. The reason why it took me so long to finish is because it's vaguely depressing. The ending is slightly hopeful, but leading up to that? Not so much.
2. Giulia can *hear* music?! That feels like it should be a big deal, but justice is not done here.

Grading:

Language: B or C

Violence: A

Adult Content: B or C. Giulia is disguised as a boy, but when the wrong people find out...she gets away in time though.

Notes: Bernardo's mother is a prostitute. *Color Song* in no way encourages it, but merely shows that when you're faced with difficult situations, you can pull through and come out triumphant.

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