

Title: *The Weight of Our Sky*

Author: Hanna Alkaf

Genre: Historical Fiction

Reviewer's Name and Grade: Benjamin W. 9th Grade

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This book takes place in Malaysia during May of 1969. The main character's city of Kuala Lumpur has just gotten destroyed as racial tensions between the Malays and Chinese turned into fights. There is a 24-hour curfew set on the city and nowhere is safe except for the refugee camps.

Melati Ahmad has one job for herself. To keep the djinn inside her head satisfied so her mother doesn't die. Melati's mind is constantly imagining her mother's death so she has developed a system of tapping and counting that will keep her safe. Many would say this is a mental illness considering it only started after her father was killed but Melati's mother refuses to have her child sent to asylum. When war breaks out in her city, Melati is caught inside a movie theater with her friend Safiyah by a gang of Chinese men. They're here to kill all Malay citizens. Melati is rescued by a Chinese woman who calls herself Auntie Bee who takes her back to her family. She ends up stuck there as a 24-hour curfew is placed on the city. Her constant tapping is noticed by Auntie Bee's son, Vincient, and he learns about her worry for her mother. Together, they set out into the chaos as Red Cross volunteers to help the people and find Melati's mother. They are soon forced to separate as Vincient's family is leaving to a safer place. Alone again, Melati will continue her desperate search for her mother or die trying.

Melati Ahmad is scared, determined, and in terrible physical condition. She is scared for all the people she loves or cares about. However, she is also determined to keep them alive by keeping the djinn inside her head happy. When she needs to run from the Chinese, she gets winded really quickly. Melati is Malay but pretends to be Eurasian to escape death. Auntie Bee is Chinese and is very kind. She takes Melati and many other refugees in who's homes had been destroyed. She cares a lot about her husband and sons and worries every time they go out. Vincient is Auntie Bee's son and helps all people. He hasn't really faced racial discrimination so helping Malay's doesn't affect him. He is brave and understanding and doesn't judge Melati for her mental illness.

Now, I will answer some questions about the book:

Did the plot keep you interested? - This plot definitely kept me interested. I thought this book would be like a boring history lesson but the author added constant action and plot twists to keep me interested. There was a level of uncertainty that made me want to continue until the end.

Was the pace of the book too fast, too slow, or just right? - I think the pace of this book was just right. A lot went on in the week this book takes place but not so much that I couldn't keep up with the story. The author constantly adds new action to keep the book moving and interesting.

What grade level(s) is this book appropriate for? - I think this book is appropriate for kids in grades 6-11. There was nothing inappropriate in this book and it wasn't too hard to read. This book might be too easy and short for older kids but they can still read it for fun.

What type of reader would you recommend this book to? - I would recommend this book to readers who like a suspenseful book filled with uncertainty. I would also recommend this book to readers who like a good plot with a good amount of action. I would not recommend this book to readers who like a slow book with a lot of details.

What other information do you think would be helpful for teens to know about this book - This book is based off of the real events in May of 1969 that formed the current day Malaysia.

I would rate this book *4 stars*. The book started off sort of slow and boring but really pulled me in once the actual action started. The plot was good and the characters were well described. The suspense and plot twists kept me interested the entire time.