

# “The Burning Sky” Review

**Title:** *The Burning Sky*, book one of “The Elementals” trilogy

**Author:** Sherry Thomas

**Genre:** Fantasy, Historical

**Rating:** 4/5

*The Burning Sky* is book one of Sherry Thomas’s trilogy, “The Elementals”. It’s a high fantasy novel, taking place in a sort of alternate-universe Victorian Era Britain. Iolanthe Seabourne is an elemental mage, dedicated to advancing her studies and taking care of her ailing Guardian. She’s content with small goals, until an unintentional display of her powers pulls her into a fight for not only her life, but the fate of the realm. Reluctantly, Iolanthe joins Prince Titus, who always seems to have a plan of his own, in attempting to overthrow the Bane and bring freedom back to their world.

There are *so many* reasons to read this book. Iolanthe is a great protagonist to experience the story through. She’s different from what’s become the standard YA female lead; she’s stubborn, thoughtful, tough, and has a refreshingly healthy sense of self-preservation. She’s also a rounded-out character with her own set of flaws that she works through throughout the series, and becomes stronger for it.

Thomas’s characters are all engaging, good or bad, and have their own role to play. Even ones you think are side characters are important at some point in the trilogy. The distinct personalities of each character creates a dynamic atmosphere instead of interactions falling flat.

I was pleasantly surprised to find that the romance didn’t play as large a part as I expected. I went into it expecting at least the usual dose of longing gazes and somewhat forced declarations, but actually found the romance, while present, to take a backseat to the larger conflict. Given Thomas’ background as a romance writer, the romance itself is very well written and thought out. It’s easy to see how Iolanthe and Titus fit together, and readers will end up immersed in their relationship without having it shoved in their face.

The trilogy, despite being a high fantasy, includes topics relevant to today. Oppressed people must rise against the oppressor, to take a stand for their freedom and the right to independent rule and expression of their own culture. Thomas is herself a great example of this, as a Chinese immigrant to the U.S. and with English as her second language.

Scenes discussing the ideas of fate and destiny versus free will and the power of choice are balanced by riveting battle scenes complete with magic and dragons. The world built by Thomas is complex and interesting, but the setting can be a bit ambiguous in the first book. The later books, though, expand on it and develop various cultures and histories for it. Whatever you're looking for in a book, this trilogy has it.