



Blurb: India, 1855. There are two kinds of magic in Chompa's world. The kind her mother favours: writing-magic, which anyone can do if they take the time. Write a spell in Farsi, and wait. It's calm, controlled, safe, says Ammi. It's slow, frustrating, boring, thinks Chompa. Then there's finger-magic, which only those descended from ancient djinn are born with. Immediate, powerful - and dangerous, for every act of finger-magic leaves a trace, and comes at a price.

Growing up in an isolated village, hot-headed Chompa has never understood why her mother forbids her from using her potent finger-magic - until, one day, Chompa defies Ammi, and casts a spell. Soon after, a group of pale men attack their home and snatch Ammi. In desperate search of her mother, Chompa must travel to another world: to England, and the smoky, bustling streets of East End London, where the powerful Company is transporting magical people like her and Ammi for the most sinister purpose.

Mrs Simpson's Book Review:

On one level this is a fun and exciting adventure story, coloured with the author's deep historical knowledge and personal experience, full of richly realised characters and with a fantastically feisty, defiant main character (and delightfully villainous villains). But it doesn't shy away from hard themes, and it shines an uncompromising light on British oppression and exploitation. Dig a little deeper and there's an enormously important wider story being told - this is a book about the nature of identity, the responsibility of power, loss, betrayal and colonial oppression.

There is so much to love in the writing and clever storytelling - deeply personal, sometimes very funny, sometimes chilling. I loved its capture of detail, beautifully evoking the sights, smells and feels of very different settings. It's as rich and colourful a story as its vivid cover suggests!

And ... South Shields even gets a mention!

Recommended age: 9+