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INFO 677 - YA Lit & Literacy

Book Review: *Fire*. By Kristin Cashore. Dial Books, 2009. 480 pages. \$26.99.

Across the mountains from the kingdom of her *New York Times*-bestselling, award-winning debut *Graceling* (2008), Kristin Cashore's *Fire* takes place in the Dells (10), a land populated by beautiful, entrancing "monsters"—including one human monster. Able to control people's minds but refusing to do so except in self-defense, 17-year-old Lady Fire (19) is summoned from her lonely northern home to the kingdom's capital, where its young king makes a plea: use her power for the good of the kingdom, to stop the impending war—by entering the minds of captured spies. But the capital holds its own dangers for Fire, including a wary prince whose mind is the only one Fire can't reach. Conflicts both personal and public escalate to an unbearable degree, and Fire must make a choice to fight for her independence—or the safety of the Dells.

With elegant prose, memorable characters, and swift pacing, *Fire* feels strikingly relevant. Through a protagonist dealing with unwanted attention in the form of hatred, violence, shame, and objectification, Cashore deftly explores themes of manipulation, sacrifice, secrets, loneliness, and the cost of loving. *Fire* is an emotional journey about force of will that any reader will find relatable, in a setting that will set their imaginations alight. (Fantasy. 12 & up.)