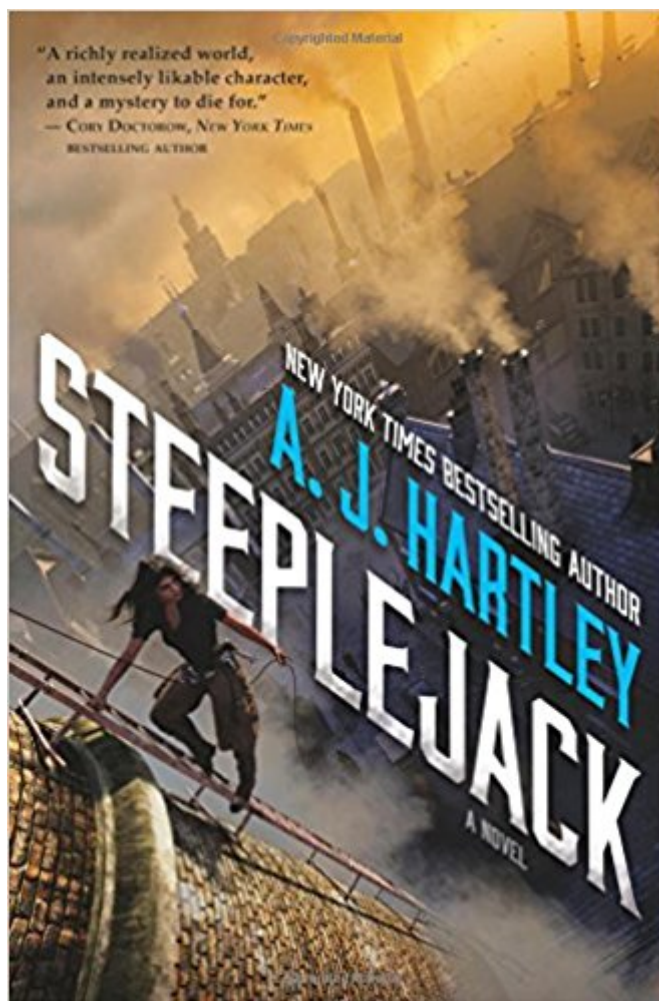


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Steeplejack: Book 1 In The Steeplejack Series



Synopsis

Thoughtfully imaginative and action-packed, *Steeplejack* is New York Times bestselling A. J. Hartley's YA debut set in a 19th-century South African fantasy world. 2017 Thriller Awards Winner for Best Young Adult, YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults Selection, Kirkus Reviews Best Teen Book, Booklist Top Ten YA in Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror. "A richly realized world, an intensely likable character, and a mystery to die for." —Cory Doctorow, New York Times bestselling author. Seventeen-year-old Anglet Sutonga lives and works as a steeplejack in Bar-Selehm, a sprawling city known for its great towers, spires, and smokestacks and even greater social disparities across race and class. Anglet's world is turned upside-down when her new apprentice Berrit is murdered the same night that the city's landmark jewel is stolen. Her search for answers behind his death exposes unrest in the streets and powerful enemies. But she also finds help from unexpected friends: a kindhearted savannah herder, a politician's haughty sister, and a savvy newspaper girl. As troubles mount in Bar-Selehm, Anglet must discover the truth behind both murder and theft soon or else watch the city descend into chaos.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gr 6 Up • Anglet left her humble and poor childhood for the not so glamorous life of a steeplejack. She spends her days climbing high above Bar-Salem's smog to fix the broken bricks of

chimneys and towers. When the city's beacon—a stone that shines a bright, everlasting light—is stolen the same day her young apprentice dies, Ang is swept into the folds of the mystery. Torn between family and cultural obligations, she has to decide whom she can trust and depend on to stay alive. Hartley creates a vivid world with wildlife and landscapes reminiscent of those of South Africa in this alternative 19th-century fantasy. Ang is a character readers will care about, even if her persistent adventures (and ensuing injuries) are unbelievable. Extraneous and convenient secondary characters help to create the multicultural world in which Ang lives. The race relations and political atmosphere in Bar-Salem are great catalysts for discussion. Hartley uses a large vocabulary, but the lack of romance and gratuitous violence makes this story a good option for younger teens. VERDICT A versatile work, appealing to all kinds of readers, especially alternative history and fantasy fans.—Stephanie DeVincentis, Downers Grove North High School, IL

“Hartley’s story is a thought-provoking blend of action and intrigue, with a competent and ethical heroine in Ang and a fully imagined setting whose atmosphere and cultural cues also play important roles. The result is an unforgettable page-turner built on surprises and full of potential.” Publishers Weekly, starred review “Skillful writing, masterful pacing, and a capable and quite likable female detective are just a few of the things to love about this fantasy-adventure. This one won’t stay on the shelf for long.” Booklist, starred review (May 1st), Cindy Welch “The tension stays taut throughout the book, heightened with each precipice Anglet climbs: if she falls, the city goes to war. Smart political intrigue wrapped in all the twists and turns of a good detective story makes for a rip-roaring series opener.” Kirkus Reviews, starred review “In his heart-poundingly suspenseful, elegantly crafted series debut, *Steeplejack*, A.J. Hartley (the Darwen Arkwright and Will Hawthorne series) introduces a tender and steely heroine in a racially tense, class-clashing world harking back to 19th-century South Africa....A city in crisis, breathtaking rooftop chases, harrowing assaults, blood oaths, love and loyalty, brutal betrayals and impressive detective work by the intelligent, intuitive Ang unfold in a fascinating, vividly described setting that includes smog and slums, gas lamps and opera houses, baboons and bushbabies. A political, multilayered mystery-thriller with a strong, impressively fierce heroine.” Karin Snelson, children’s & YA editor, starred review Shelf Awareness “*Steeplejack* is quietly thoughtful and breathlessly exciting, and with two more series installments to follow, Ang’s personal and professional journey is far from over.” BookPage, Teen Top Pick “With its unique South African-inspired setting, richly-drawn and diverse cast of characters, and unstoppable

plot, readers of any age won't be able to put Steeplejack down!

— Carrie Ryan, New York Times bestselling author
“With Steeplejack, A.J. Hartley introduces a dynamic, complex and likeable new heroine who combines wits, skill and courage to face deadly challenges in an exotic world. Teens and adults will love this book and want more, more, more!”

— Jonathan Maberry, New York Times bestselling author of Rot & Ruin and The Orphan Army.
“A.J. Hartley has created an exquisite, explosive, nail-biting, tear-rousing masterpiece, in a world so realistic it might be right around the corner.”

— Faith Hunter, New York Times bestselling author
“What a world Hartley has created! Enough twists and surprises to keep the pages turning long into the night.”

— R.L. Stine
“A unique epic adventure set in a richly imagined world; lush, exotic and masterfully written. It's Sherlock Holmes, Oliver Twist, and Indiana Jones rolled into one.”

— Lissa Price, internationally bestselling author of Starters and Enders
“Smart and socially-aware, this fabulous debut adds to the growing library of multicultural fantasy and is a loudly resounding success.”

— Nisi Shawl, Tiptree Award-winning author and co-author of Writing the Other: A Practical Approach
“With Steeplejack, A.J. Hartley creates a world as complex as its heroine, and a mystery that spans class, race and geography. You can feel the grit and glory of Bar-Selehm, a many-spired city teetering on the edge of the savannah, and the verge of war. The perfect setting for a street-smart young woman who is caught between three cultures, yet refuses to be trapped by them.”

— Sherri L. Smith, award-winning author of Flygirls and Orleans
“Hartley has created a world so gritty and real I could taste the soot.”

— Maurice Broaddus, author of the Knights of Breton Court trilogy
“Steeplejack combines a lively and intelligent plot with an intriguing and well-drawn world, and caps all this goodness with a determined and indefatigable heroine.”

— Kate Elliott, author of Court of Fives
“A rich, atmospheric tale of adventure, morality and consequence, Steeplejack will linger with you long after you read the last page.”

— Kady Cross, author of the Steampunk Chronicles and Sisters of Blood and Spirit series
“Steeplejack has everything a reader could want: Elegant prose, a cracking good mystery, lots of action, and characters to fall in love with and root for. I read it cover to cover in no time at all. In fact, I did so twice! And I was on the edge of my seat both times.”

— D.B. Jackson, author of the Thieftaker series
“I was completely hooked from page one. Ang is a hero to cheer for heart and soul. A thrilling, clever, meaningful read.”

— Leanna Renee Hieber, award-winning author of Strangely Beautiful and The Eterna Files
“Steeplejack is an exquisitely built mystery set in a lush, vibrant world. I was loath to leave Ang and Bar-Selehm

behind at the end of it. Definitely a book to be revisited again and again. Kat Zhang, author of *What's Left of Me*

Anglet Sutonga, protagonist of *Steeplejack: A Novel*, is a heroine for the ages. A.J. Hartley adroitly side-steps the sub-genre of "White Girl Saves the World" found in most YA novels by giving readers a multicultural, multi-faceted heroine whose vulnerabilities are equal to her strengths. Her strengths don't depend on the relative weaknesses of the male and/or other ethnic characters. Race and class are dealt with deftly in the novel as well. In many YA fantasy novels, race and class are literally white-washed and/or have some diverse characters who are side-kicks, marginalized or killed off. Set in a Steampunk version of Victorian South Africa, class and race differences advance, rather than hinder the story. I also like the absence of a central romantic story, which some reviewers didn't like. In many YA novels, I found the romance to be distracting. How can a heroine save the world while wondering if a guy likes her or likes her likes her? I like loner heroines with the promise, but not necessarily the fulfillment, of romance. That probably says more about me than the novel. Finally, a real treat in the book is the joy of language the author expresses. The descriptions, especially the opening sequences, are gorgeous. There's almost a musicality in the language. In creating a character whose livelihood depends on seeing from above and peering at her surroundings from a certain vantage point, Hartley delivers descriptions that provide depth rather than showing off. Engaging heroine. Wonderful descriptions. A multilayered story. Good pacing. Great book.

Steeplejack starts out with following the day to day of a young woman who makes her living climbing and rebuilding tall chimneys in a world that bears a strong resemblance to South Africa. Living on the streets one step ahead of disaster has honed her survival instincts. She is gradually drawn into investigating the death of a fellow street kid. The situation grows and perils come out of nowhere to threaten our heroine. What could be a standard read in less experienced hands is transformed by good writing. I was particularly struck by how the author deftly wove minor characters into the plot with skill and lots of heart. Drawing the good and bad guys and girls into multi-dimensional characters made this a read to be remembered. Recommended.

This is the kind of book I want more of in YA fantasy. *Steeplejack* was entertaining and beautifully written in a city colonized and still dealing with the effects of that, as seen through its structure and its people. Though considered young adult, this book reads a lot more like an adult fantasy in how

dense and intricate it is and I am ALL there for it!! think what first sold me was the world and the writing. Woven seamlessly together, they created a rich and vibrant city of Bar-Selehm, a city with diverse residences and very distinct cultures attempting to fit together in this single space. Did I mention it's inspired by South Africa? How awesome is that?! One of the aspects of Steeplejack that set it apart from other YA fantasies I've read is that it takes on the topic of race and makes it a core idea throughout the entire book. How the characters act, the choices they make, it all ties to their cultural and racial backgrounds and I liked that this was both a large part of the world but a smaller part of the story. And by that I mean that everything was written in such a way that this was the world. It didn't feel out of place or thrust upon the plot to make a point. It simply... was, and it worked while still making a point about the class and race differences, as well as how the characters fit within the world and fought their societal standing. All of this would be nothing, however, without Anglet Sutonga, Ang for short. Told through her eyes in first person point-of-view, you get to live the daily life of a steeplejack, though not your typical seventeen-year-old. She's strong and courageous, caught between two worlds and constantly at odds of how to go forth in the world. But she's still quite flawed and I wondered why someone like her would make some of the decisions she did, and she's a bit "big" for the world, being one of the best steeplejacks out there, but I didn't mind this too much by the end, if I'm being totally honest. I loved that her family had a lot of page time and their relationships, between her and her two sisters, her former community, her deceased father, they all made up a part of her and continued to impact her life. I feel like families aren't really a big part of fantasy, acting more as a plot device than a constant presence in the protagonist's life as in the case of Ang. It was refreshing, to say the least, and used the character's background to bring more to the story rather than relying on unrelated subplots or a romance. Oh right, by the way, for those of you who want to read more fantasy WITHOUT romance (I know you're out there), this is the book for you. Combined, this young steeplejack and this beautifully diverse and intricate world create a mystery packed full of action and secrets. I'm really excited to see where her adventures take her in the next book, Firebrand, and HIGHLY recommend y'all grab a copy of Steeplejack before the sequel comes out!

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