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Reviewer username: Anonymous

School: Troy High **Grade:** Sophomore

Book Title: Hope Ablaze **Author:** Sarah Rana Mughal

Rate: 4.5

Hope Ablaze, by Sarah Rana Mughal, tracks the character development of Nida, a Muslim student as she fights for her freedom of speech in a post-9/11 America that isn't so free. She comes from a line of poets in her family- but when one of her more private scathing poems criticizing one of the presidential candidates in the upcoming election is secretly entered into a nationwide poetry contest and published all over social media, she doesn't know what to do. This novel emphasizes the struggles she faces that erupt from both internal and external pressures placed upon her by her Amma (mom) and community.

This is honestly one of the better novels I've read, as it broadcasts a beautiful message: even when haters try to drown your words out with their own, you have a loving army supporting you behind your back. It's also pretty captivating, as Mughal Rana describes Nida's emotions in such great and accurate detail that you can't help but relate to the unfortunate circumstances that she's been placed in as well as both her fury and joy. However, there are a lot of character foils that aren't extremely significant, which makes the novel a little hard to follow sometimes. Despite this, it's one of these characters that I liked the most- Aunty Farooqi (the "cool and fun" aunt who isn't actually a relative and phonetically mispronounces "ice cream" as "ass cream").

I would recommend this book for those who have some time on their hands, as it took me a few hours to read (and I'm a relatively fast reader). Those who enjoy historical fiction would definitely like this book as well, as it's somewhat historical. It also tackles Islamophobia, something that's been prevalent in the past and is still seen a bit today. This novel also reminded me a bit of dystopian fiction like Animal Farm due to Nida's lack of ability to express herself (but with a good ending). Overall, this is such a great book! You wouldn't believe that Mughal Rana is still in university.