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General

Sea of Hooks
Lindsay Hill
McPherson and Company
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One man's quest for spiritual nirvana is composed of the carefully crafted and intricate details of his internal musings and external struggles.

The life of San Franciscan Christopher Westall is well documented on the page, right down to the time he wrapped the piano keys in his parents old Victorian home with foil to emulate the sound of the harpsichord that he loved to hear. *Sea of Hooks* breaks down Christopher's life into minute passages exposing his thoughts, his relations, and his personal quests in later life. This results in one big book with seductive prose but some challenging narrative structures.

Sea of Hooks is foremost a novel of characters over plot. From Christopher's frantic mother constantly having him change schools for her own piece of mind to his father, Weston, mixing raw eggs for breakfast, to Christopher's internal musings on everything from sound to gravity, no character trait or thought seems to be left unexplored. It's all odd but truly fascinating and well written.

This complex, insightful, and often funny character activity is delivered differently from other works. There are no chapters or numbered parts throughout *Sea of Hooks*, just subtitled passages, one leading to another, which can take the reader from a war-time letter to a dreamscape in as little as a quarter of a page. This unusual style gives the book its own unique narrative structural point-of-view.

However, this is also where *Sea of Hooks* falters a bit as an overall narrative. The language and prose is pleasurable enough that the constant subtitling of each new event (e.g., "Bhutan," "Poisoning," "Falling," "Poisoning," (again), etc.) is often distracting. Hill's well-crafted writing might actually do better with some simple, traditional paragraph composition. There's no question that there's an interest in experimental narrative structure, but this attempt

seems too fabricated and takes away from the novel's greatest asset: the details of the protagonist's life.

Overall, *Sea of Hooks* is a strong work. Readers that like longer tales or even magic realism-type novels will no doubt find the book compelling.

James Burt