

AWARD BOOK UNWORTHY

Strandia. Susan Lynn Reynolds. HarperCollins Publishers, 1991. 277 pp., \$16.95 cloth. ISBN 0-00-223590-0.

Despite the fact that *Strandia* won the Canadian Library Association Young Adult Canadian Book of The Year Award, it is obviously a "first" novel. Although the basic plot is solid, Reynolds's development of it is too leisurely. The plot frequently gets lost in the lengthy and overly-detailed descriptions of passages where little takes place. Consequently, the book moves slowly, even ponderously at times. A quicker pace and livelier style would make the novel much more enjoyable to read with no loss of either content or theme.

While the basic plot and the premise of the novel are interesting, the main character is not. *Strandia* depends heavily on a single main character, Sand, and a series of minor characters. While some of the minor characters like Berran, Renellus, and Jinny show potential, the main character remains largely under-developed. She changes somewhat, forced to by circumstances, but there is no real personal growth. The novel begins with Sand walking away from an arranged marriage and ends with her walking away from everyone who loves her. Consequently, she is portrayed as a cold, negative person, using and then dismissing people, particularly men. In fact, her distrust of and dislike for men in general contradicts the fact that the author states early in the book that Sand is close to her gentle and understanding father. Her absolute rejection of *all* human love and friendship at the end of the novel is unconscionably depressing. Reynolds presents Sand as a sad, alienated, and increasingly self-isolated character who makes no effort to halt her own emotional disintegration, despite the proffers of love and friendship from a variety of sympathetic and warm minor characters. Even her supposedly close relationship with the inconsistently portrayed dolphin, M'ridan, never comes across with any emotional intensity. While a strong character, Sand remains unlikeable and difficult to relate to. She is thoroughly modern in the sense that she deliberately chooses emotional isolation and self-absorption. Is this really what we should be encouraging young people to become?

This depressing, negative novel should never have won an award. Not recommended.

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