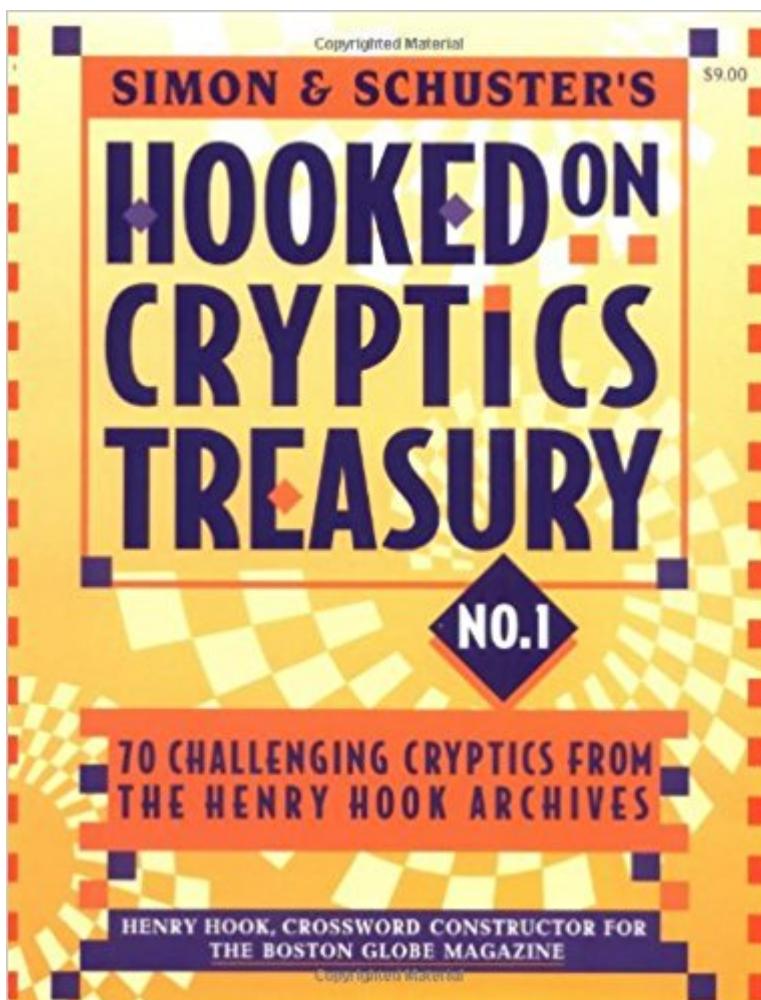


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Simon & Schuster Hooked On Cryptics Treasury #1: 70 Challenging Cryptics From The Henry Hook Archives



Synopsis

Book by Hook, Henry

Book Information

Series: Simon & Schuster Hooked on Cryptics Treasury (Book 1)

Paperback: 96 pages

Publisher: Fireside (December 1, 1995)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0684808927

ISBN-13: 978-0684808925

Product Dimensions: 8.5 x 0.3 x 11 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.6 ounces

Average Customer Review: 2.8 out of 5 stars 2 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #2,771,175 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #12 in Books > Humor & Entertainment > Puzzles & Games > Crosswords > Cryptic #3923 in Books > Humor & Entertainment > Puzzles & Games > Puzzles

Customer Reviews

Book by Hook, Henry

What ruined this book for me were the frequent obscure words or dated proper noun references. It's frustrating to be stuck and not know whether I'm missing the twist, or whether I simply have never heard the term before ("in a pet") or the reference is dated but not clued a such ("nancy" for first lady). I prefer The Atlantic Monthly's style of declaring how many obscure and proper nouns are used in the puzzle. Beyond that, as a fan of aesthetic mathematical puzzles, I find Hook's basic grid boring. I much prefer Cox and Rathvon's puzzles that layer a logic or diagramming puzzle on top of the cryptic, and add a unifying theme. I find such puzzles more meaningful, and the overarching connectivity gives critical help when I'm completely stuck on a wordplay clue that involves a word I simply do not know. A great delight of a Cox/Rathvon puzzle is backsolving all the letters of an answer, and then looking it up in a dictionary to discover it is a word that means exactly what the clue says. This is missing from Hook's puzzles. Also, it's rewarding to "crack a puzzle" and discover the secret theme or hidden treasure, which gives a sense of elevated accomplishment even if I can't solve every crossword clue. This book will definitely kill time on long airline flight, but it's simply not as fun as Cox and Rathvon's work in the Atlantic Monthly.

If you know and love cryptic crossword puzzles, this book really doesn't need a review. You already know Henry Hook and his puzzles, and know whether you like them or not. For the cryptic-crossword neophyte, this book offers a brief--possibly too brief--introduction to solving cryptic clues before launching into the puzzles. If you're just starting out with cryptics, you'll probably feel you're in over your head very quickly. (However, many people who like cryptics ENJOY feeling in over their head.) I'd recommend the Random House Cryptic books as a better starting point, because they open with some really simple puzzles (though by the end, they get trickier than the puzzles in this treasury). The book's seventy puzzles are relatively tame (as cryptics go), with the occasional really-obscure light or the "how-on-earth-does-THAT-parse?" clue, but nothing that'd pose a problem for your semi-seasoned solver. The last dozen or so puzzles venture into variety formats--I'd have preferred more variety puzzles, but tastes vary on this count. In the end, this book is no sumptuous feast of verbal bedevilment, but it is a good bread-and-butter type fix for your cryptic cravings.

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