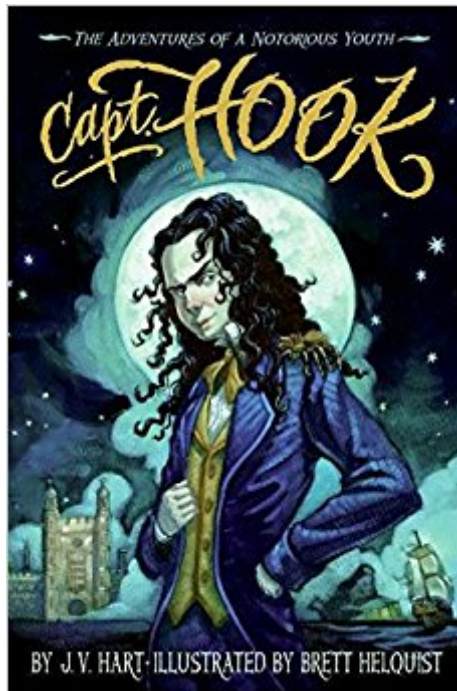




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Capt. Hook: The Adventures Of A Notorious Youth



Synopsis

With his long black curls, a shadowy family tree, and an affinity for pet spiders, James Matthew bears little resemblance to his starched-collar, blue-blooded peers at Eton. Dubbed King Jas., he stops at nothing to become the most notorious underclassman in the prestigious school's history. For James, sword fighting, falling in love with an Ottoman Sultana, and challenging the Queen of England are all in a day's skullduggery. But when he sets sail on a ship with a mysterious mission, King Jas.' dream of discovering a magical island quickly turns into an unimaginable nightmare. Screenwriter J. V. Hart traces the evolution of J. M. Barrie's classic villain from an eccentric outcast to the scourge of Neverland.

Book Information

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Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 5 and up

Customer Reviews

Grade 6 Up
Opening with young James's arrival at Eton and following him to the beginning of his life at sea, this is a disturbing and engaging portrait of a young villain. At school, he feuds with the young Arthur Darling and falls in love with the forbidden Sultana Ananova. After taking his revenge on Darling and pursuing Ananova, James and his friend Roger join the crew of the Sea Witch, a ragged ship with a cruel captain. When its identity as a slave ship is revealed, James sides with the slaves to earn his own name, Hook. Throughout the story, his dreams of finding a magical Neverland set the stage for his future role in Barrie's classic story. Hart, whose

screenwriting credits include the movie *Hook*, has taken information from Barrie's Peter Pan, including his protagonist's attendance at Eton, his yellow blood, and his unusual appearance, and used it to create a character of his own. James's illegitimate status and its prominence in the story seems to be Hart's own invention, and while it provides ample motivation for James's actions, it takes away from the story's appeal to younger Peter Pan fans, who may also be confused by some aspects of British school life. This is a much darker Pan prequel than Dave Barry and Ridley Pearson's *Peter and the Starcatchers* (Hyperion, 2004). Helquist's illustrations add slightly to the text, but seem an attempt to appeal to *Unfortunate Events* fans. Overall, this is a detailed look both at Victorian life and what a young Hook may have been like.

—æ Beth L. Meister, Pleasant View Elementary School, Franklin, WI Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an alternate Library Binding edition.

Gr. 7-10. Hart wrote the screenplay for the 1991 film *Hook* and in this sprawling novel, he imagines the notorious villain's troubled youth. When he enters England's storied Eton school as a teen, James (the future Hook) has never known his mother and has only met his aristocratic father a few times. He channels his loneliness and rage into superior scholarship, plotting wild "devices of revenge" against sadistic classmates. At last, he escapes to the high seas, but he unwittingly boards a slave ship that reveals horrifying brutality and family secrets. Hart's novel is much more challenging and dense than *Peter and the Starcatchers* (2004), Ridley Pearson's and Dave Barry's spin on the Peter Pan story. The elevated language, slow pacing, and lengthy specifics of swordplay and Etonian culture may deter some readers; others may be startled by the bloody torture, both at school and at sea. Still, some determined, sophisticated readers will be pulled in by the magical, tall-tale details; James' triumph over bullies; the exciting adventures; and the thought-provoking portrait of a villain who is capable of both murder and great sympathy.

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What kind of a childhood results in becoming one of the literary world's greatest villains? According to J.L. Hart's vision of Captain Hook, a childhood of abandonment, isolation, and too much time spent alone reading history books, created a young man motivated by revenge and with an obsession to prove he is superior to everyone else. James Matthew is suspicious when the father he has never known, a powerful lord, sends him to an elite boarding school to finish his education. James knows he will be never fit in, and he arrives angry and determined to destroy anyone who

gives him a hard time. The middle of the story drags. There is hazing by upperclassmen towards the newbies, a hugely important sports event that James uses to humiliate his enemies, and a weird love-at-first-sight between James and a beautiful princess visiting from the Middle East. Of course, the romance results in James being expelled from school, and his father sending him to work on one of the family's trading ships heading across the ocean. Captain Hook is a dark story. James Matthew is creepy and violent. He is not a likable protagonist. The crisis and climax of the story are set up to redeem James and show that he is a just and compassionate person, but that did not ring true. Why does a desire for justice and compassion show up in James when he is on the ship when there was never a glimmer of either quality while he was at the school? That said, readers who are curious about Captain Hook or fans of adventure stories will probably enjoy Captain Hook. A few may even look forward to the sequel.

I loved this book when I borrowed it from a friend and wanted my own hard back edition. What I got was hardback but looked as if it had been dropped in water and then a weight placed on it so it wouldn't accordion up. The pages don't line up and look worn at the edges. This was supposed to be in good condition. It was in fact terrible condition and I now have to buy a new one so I can "proudly" display it on my book shelf.

It is exactly what I wanted!

I have always loved the villains the best in stories: Long John Silver in Treasure Island; Professor Snape in Harry Potter; Captain Hook in Peter Pan; and the list goes on. Now, after all these years, someone has the clever idea to write a book explaining the who and why and how of Captain Hook! I think it's marvelous! An extraordinary concept that I wish I'd thought of - and been talented enough to have been able to have written such a book! It doesn't take any of the magic away from the original Peter Pan story for me at all (as another reviewer claimed it did for him)! Not one bit. In fact, it simply adds to the Peter Pan fantasy's rich and long-lasting mystique!

I was so happy to receive this book and in good condition. I would definitely recommend this product to anyone who wonders about Captain Hook's background.

And that's coming from an adult! It's a great look at Captain Hook's early life with plenty of shenanigans that you know he'd get into.

Some authors have no shame. Unfortunately, this is the case of J.V. Hart. He shamelessly use James Matthew Barrie's famous character, Jas. Hook, to give to his book some "automatic" importance. I found myself really disappointed when I compared Barrie's Hook and J.V. Hart's version. Once you read this book you come to the conclusion that it doesn't alter that much to change Jas. Hook's name to William or Steve; it's a whole new character that stole the name of Barrie's character and bears little--or any--resemblance to the one we all know and respect. Another thing that annoyed me is to see how some authors, in this case Hart, fall in love with their own characters that don't allow nothing bad (or extreme) to happen to them. This is the case of King Jas. Throughout all the book we see how everything works in his favor. The best example being the highly expected duel between King Jas. and Arthur Darling that turned out as insipid as it could be and full of clichés. I compared King Jas with actor Steven Seagal where in his movies not a single punch is landed on his face--he beats them all like almighty god. Really annoying and lacking creativity. Just because he is the main character doesn't mean he has to have it easy. One question arises, if J.M. Barrie had the opportunity to read this book, what would he say about it? Probably: "No! That's not my Hook... He changed it!" For those who never read the original Peter Pan story probably won't see my points in this review. But for those who did be warned. There's an uncomfortable amount of romance in the book! But if you still insist, read it at your own risk...

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