

Aaron's Rod by Michael Baum

2 stars

I couldn't finish it.....

The author is an intelligent, highly-respected individual in his field. Unfortunately, his field is not in writing novels. According to my research Professor Baum has enjoyed an impressive, long and illustrious career as a surgeon and I was very much looking forward to enjoying reading what was apparently an interesting murder/mystery.

My enthusiasm on starting the novel quickly turned to confusion and disappointment. I could manage the use of unusual words (it must be the only fiction book to use the word "consanguineous" twice in the space of 20 pages) by referring to a dictionary, but I cannot forgive the numerous grammatical and spelling errors which sprang from every page. The author is clearly erudite and bright but in places this translates into pompous and unworldly on the page.

The inconsistencies in the use of upper case lettering abound and apostrophes are scattered around perhaps in the vain hope that one will land in the right place. Some of the mistakes made me laugh - what on earth is a "provisional university"? I presume he meant "provincial". And the thought of police "frog men" painted a very amusing picture. Simple things which could have been easily checked were overlooked (For instance Monday 23 June is followed by **Thursday** 3 July not Wednesday as stated in the book), while throughout the introduction of the characters for the first 50 pages the author seems to have a desire to impress the reader by his intimate knowledge of London.

The author's use of the vernacular was also suspect. When one of the three brown men (his words, not mine) included the phrase "goodness gracious me" I immediately thought of the late, great Peter Sellers. Additionally, his attempt to replicate the speech of a Metropolitan police inspector might have been more successful had the word "arse" been used in place of "ass" but then Americanisms and American spellings litter the pages which, if not annoying, is a great shame.

So, how can the work of such an astute individual which really does show huge promise beneath the verbosity turn out as it has? I believe it's because a (US English) speech converter was used and the output not checked. If edited properly, rehashed and corrected this could be a 4 or 5 star book but for now it only merits the 2 stars.

mr zorg

Breakaway Reviewers received a copy of the book to review