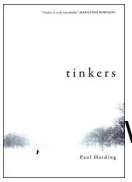
Tinkers by Paul Harding



When *Tinkers* [1] won the Pulitzer Prize, I put it on my to-read list where it lingered for two years. I had a hard time summoning enthusiasm after reading the description every time I went looking for a book. A few months ago, I deleted it off my to-read list acknowledging that I would probably never read it.

Last week I thought I would give it another shot and now I wonder why I waited so long. Paul Harding's first novel sucked me in right from the hallucinatory beginning and I didn't want it to end. The banalities are such: George is dying and reflective on his life, family and career. The narrative alternates to a time when George is very young and focuses on his father, a man who ends up being unfairly defined by his grand mal seizures. In between these paragraphs, there are excerpts from the fictional book called The Reasonable Horologist and other shorter paragraphs that seem nonsensical at first, but end up working at the end. Time and memories are the main theme and this book has a rural New England setting.

I've read that this book is defined by language. I think that this book is really defined by structure. The language isn't hard or obscure, but the sentence structure and narrative structure aren't technically difficult but challenging and interesting. This is a beautiful book to read and may only get better with a second reading. Not a lot happens, so I would recommend this to readers who aren't driven by plot but enjoy the focus on words and characters. Similar reflective and rural books include *Gilead* [2] by Marilynne Robinson and *Out Stealing Horses* [3] by Per Petterson.

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Posted by Sarah B. on Apr 12, 2012

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