



This Is All: The Pillow Book of Cordelia Kenn

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

First published in a chunky hardback edition in 2005 and now reappearing as an equally chunky paperback, Chambers' new novel takes 'young adult' fiction well beyond most of the previous manifestations of the genre. While its title may be taken as a reference to its being the concluding novel in a sequence which began some thirty years ago with **Breaktime**, it also stands alone as an amazingly detailed, and often explicit, narrative of what its 19-year-old heroine, Cordelia, defines at one point as 'the uneasy, vulnerable, blossoming years of the early teens?'. As she awaits the birth of her first child, a daughter, Cordelia reviews the past few years of her life, with particular emphasis on her educational and sexual growth: the principal motivating force is her compulsion to write, a factor in her make-up enhanced by her A-level English studies and her relationship with Julie, her English teacher. This strong literary influence, together with the Japanese 'pillow book' mode favoured by Chambers, endows the novel with numerous thematic and stylistic layers, sufficient indeed to merit, in this edition, the inclusion of an index. Some of the metafictional techniques 'the use of alternate pages to relate parallel stories, for example' will prove demanding for some readers but, taken together, they will promote fascinating debate as to the nature and significance of fiction itself and its function in shaping, or being shaped by, any one individual's life. This is a novel which will test the emotional and psychological maturity of even the most sophisticated teenager, a fact acknowledged by the 'not suitable for young readers?' statement on its back cover.

Running Order:

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