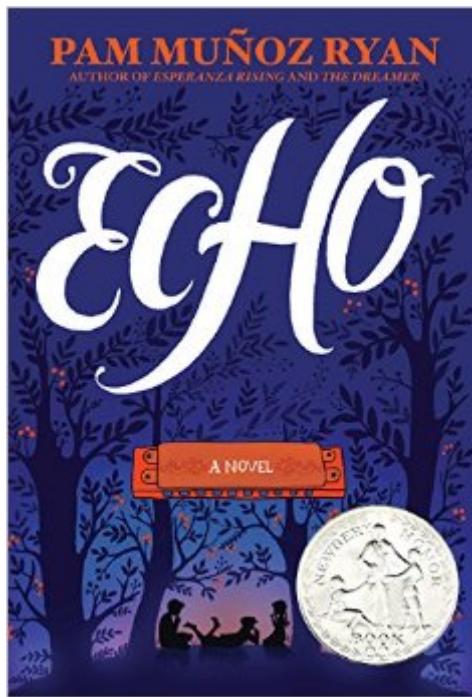


The book was found

Echo



Synopsis

Winner of a 2016 Newbery Honor, ECHO pushes the boundaries of genre, form, and storytelling innovation. Lost and alone in a forbidden forest, Otto meets three mysterious sisters and suddenly finds himself entwined in a puzzling quest involving a prophecy, a promise, and a harmonica. Decades later, Friedrich in Germany, Mike in Pennsylvania, and Ivy in California each, in turn, become interwoven when the very same harmonica lands in their lives. All the children face daunting challenges: rescuing a father, protecting a brother, holding a family together. And ultimately, pulled by the invisible thread of destiny, their suspenseful solo stories converge in an orchestral crescendo. Richly imagined and masterfully crafted, this impassioned, uplifting, and virtuosic tour de force will resound in your heart long after the last note has been struck.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 680 (What's this?)

Hardcover: 592 pages

Publisher: Scholastic Press (February 24, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1338133020

ISBN-13: 978-0439874021

ASIN: 0439874025

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 2 x 8.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars (See all reviews) (249 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,141 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #8 in Books > Children's Books > Arts, Music & Photography > Performing Arts #8 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > Social Skills #15 in Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction

Age Range: 10 - 14 years

Grade Level: 5 - 9

Customer Reviews

It will be interesting to see how young readers take to this ambitious book. My paperback copy stretches to just under 600 pages, always a consideration with books for children. That said, the font is quite large and the spacing between words quite generous. The book starts and ends with a fairy tale, but the bulk of it is divided into three main stories, all linked by a harmonica. The first story is

like a young readers' version of THE BOOK THIEF. That is, Ryan digs into the endlessly ample Nazi mine by telling the story of young Friedrich, a boy with a birthmark in 1933 Germany. Nazis have little use for "physical deficiencies" and Friedrich's eccentricities (he conducts to music in his head) don't help. Add a dad who has little sympathy for the new Nazi leader (some Hitler guy), and you see trouble arriving sooner rather than later. It does. Section II takes a page out of LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE, only in this case the setting, Philadelphia, offers little brother orphans Mike and Frankie. They both love -- surprise! -- music. And like Friedrich, Mike is a whiz on the harmonica. His issue is first a wicked boys' home head mistress (Miss Pennyweather, as opposed to Miss Hannigan), and then a foster mother who doesn't want to foster him (or at least both him and Frankie). Earnest Mike does his best to keep the brothers together, but can he pull it off against all odds? While somewhat derivative, both Parts I and II are stronger than the last, which covers the story of Ivy, a Mexican-American girl in California whose family befriends a Japanese clan that is targeted by anti-Japanese sentiment and sent off to an American camp. Ivy receives (ten guesses) a harmonica -- the same one with an "M" on it that both Friedrich and Mike once held. Her brother is in the service. Her father is trying to help the Japanese family. It's a multi-cultural win-win scenario in the making. The end pulls all of these strands together satisfactorily -- as long as you don't mind a little coincidence and good luck with your coffee. Overall, the style of the book is a classic one. It reads like something written a hundred years ago, it's so squeaky clean. Will it fly in young Peoria? Will teens and tweens take to it? I'm as interested as the next guy. It could be the next big thing because it's so well-written. Or not.

The way the synopsis of this book was written, by the publisher, I was expecting something with a little more fantasy to it. Instead what you get is some historical fiction, some present day fiction, all dealing with some pretty heavy topics of racism, insecurities, class-ism, definitely heavier topics than what I was expecting and certainly pretty deep topics for a children's book. I like the way the author approaches the different topics, especially the way the historical fiction is set in Nazi Germany, and I do feel these are appropriate for young adult readers; this narrative should open up all sorts of discussions between parent and young reader as far as social inequalities and injustices go. As a reader, I was disappointed because I was expecting a different sort of story and found that the characters' narratives all flowed very predictably; being an adult reader it was clear this was directed to and written for a younger audience, which isn't a bad thing! I think this book is appropriate for mature young adult readers as some of the subjects broached might be a little sensitive.

Echo is a grand, epic novel that tells the story of three children, all in dire circumstances, whose lives are changed by a harmonica that possesses magical powers. The narrative is intricate and involved, beginning with a tale rich in folklore and fantasy which then turns into a tale of brutal realism. Friedrich is dealing with the rise of the Third Reich, Michael is a destitute orphan, and Ivy is struggling with poverty, discrimination, and other family issues as she tries to do her part on the home front during World War II. The prologue, and the first two parts of this book are brilliant and powerful. Friedrich and Michael's stories both end with cliffhangers that are resolved at the end of the novel. The events are compelling, and the characters are so well portrayed that readers will be glued to the page to find out what happens next. It's during the final story of this trio that the novel begins to lose steam, the prose at last becomes heavy handed, and the author fails to maintain the emotional heft that is present in the earlier parts of the story. Echo is an amazing tribute to the power of music to change lives, and is a skillful blend of genres that creates a story that truly sings.

Despite some miscues in the last portion, when stilted dialogue and thin characters dilute the book's powerful message, Echo is still an enthusiastic recommendation for young readers grades 4 to 8. I hope that the book's imposing size does not scare off readers, as this is a fast read filled with emotion and history. Kids will be engaged by the fantastical elements and will gain valuable historical perspective. Echo is an epic story that is truly memorable and will find many fans among young readers of historical fiction who are open to some new possibilities.

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