

## Pax

This engaging novel, suitable for grades 5-9, tells the story of young Peter and his pet fox. When his father enlists in the war, Peter must go and live with his grandfather and is forced to set his pet free. Peter quickly realizes the error of his action and sets off to find Pax while Pax is also seeking Peter. This compelling adventure story is narrated by both Peter and Pax, allowing for greater understanding of both characters. The book deals with a number of key themes, including war, peace, friendship, forgiveness, and self-identity, and details the personal and social costs of war through a teenager's eyes.

### **CURRICULUM FIT**

**Does the resource support BC curriculum?**

Extensively

**THIS PRODUCT SUPPORTS THE CORE COMPETENCIES OF THE BC CURRICULUM:**

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- Critical thinking
- Positive Personal and Cultural Identity
- Personal Awareness and Responsibility
- Social Responsibility

Pax is the story of a young boy, Peter, who is forced to "set free" his pet fox of five years. His father has enlisted in the war and Peter is off to live with his grandfather. The concepts of self-identity and sustaining healthy relationships apply to the English Language Arts and Physical and Health Education curricula.

### **SUGGESTED CLASSROOM USAGE**

Read aloud; small-group/literature circles; stand-alone novel; prompts for Health lessons (how changes influence how we see ourselves and others; healthy relationships; advocating for others).

## **SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Ability:**

Vola, a main character, has a prosthetic leg following a war injury. She perceives this as her burden to bear for killing someone in the war. There is also mention of PTSD, and "war-sick" people.

### **Violence:**

Vola blatantly states that she killed someone in war, and describes how it felt to be checking his belongings while he was still "warm." Some animals trigger land explosions and their deaths are described in some detail.

### **Ethical:**

The personal and social costs of war are considered, through the eyes of Peter, a teenager.

### **Safety:**

Peter attempts to make his way back to his stranded pet fox through a potential war zone that has already been evacuated.

**Do the social considerations support, rather than detract from, student learning?**

Extensively

## **SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS COMMENTS:**

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Vola, and the "war-sick" people, are presented without any negativity or discrimination. Rather, Vola is a strong and independent woman. The mentions of the fallen soldier, the animals triggering the explosions, and the evacuation create a sense of war which is an important aspect of the setting of this novel.

## **GENERAL CONTENT**

### **CONTENT**

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**Is the resource engaging?**

Extensively

**Is the content current for the intended curriculum and grade?**

Extensively

**Is the content accurate for the intended curriculum and grade?**

Extensively

**Is the content timely and important for student broad understandings?**

Extensively

**AUDIENCE:**

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**Is the content appropriate to the emotional maturity and cognitive level of students?**

Extensively

**Does the resource provide opportunities for creative and critical thinking?**

Extensively

**Can the content be differentiated?**

Extensively

**Is the level of detail appropriate?**

Extensively

**Is the content of particular interest to male students?**

Extensively

**Is the content of particular interest to female students?**

Moderately

**Is the language use appropriate to the emotional maturity and cognitive level of students?**

Extensively

This engaging tale of Peter and his pet fox Pax may be read and appreciated at face value. More mature students may delve deeper into the themes of war and peace, forgiveness, family, self-discovery, and identity. Peter, the main character, and his aggressive father both play important roles in this story of adventure in a time of war. Vola is the lone, albeit strong, female character in this book.

## **TECHNICAL DESIGN**

**Does the resource make effective use of the medium?**

Extensively

**Is the location of illustrations appropriate?**

Extensively

**Is the resource easy to use?**

Extensively

**Is the use of font, text size and presentation uniform?**

Extensively

**Are extraneous elements/illustrations kept to a minimum?**

Extensively

This text is comprised of thirty-three chapters, has a clear font, uniform presentation, and delightful images.

## **PRINT NOVEL**

**Does the text show insight into the complexity of the human condition?**

Extensively

**Does the text broaden students' experiences and understanding?**

Extensively

**To what degree is this text stylistically rich?**

Extensively

### **PLOT DESCRIPTION:**

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Peter loses his mother at an early age and is raised by his aggressive father. He finds and adopts a young fox and keeps it as a pet for five years. Pax is Peter's source of love and companionship in the family home. Once his father enlists in the war, however, Peter is forced to abandon his pet in the wild before moving in with his grandfather. Very quickly, Peter realizes his mistake in accepting this decision, and sets out, alone and on foot, to travel back to find Pax. He breaks his foot and is taken in and cared for by Vola, a war veteran who is learning to find herself again. They develop a deep friendship that gives Peter the strength he needs to see him through his journey.

### **RELATED COMMENTS:**

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This story has many layers and themes including war and peace, friendship, forgiveness, and self-identity. The main characters are strong,

and the inter-dependence of Peter and Vola leads to the development and growth they both seek. The story is narrated by both Peter and Pax, providing for both points of view and allowing for greater understanding of both characters.

**GENRE:**

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Adventure

**LITERARY HIGHLIGHTS:**

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- Complex conflict
- Rich Characterization
- Well-developed themes
- Point of view

**TYPE:**

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Novel

**VISUAL HIGHLIGHTS:**

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Novel

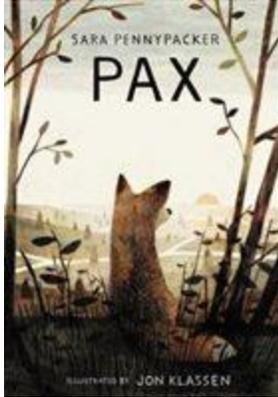
**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

**READABILITY:**

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- At intended grade level(s)

2016 National Book Award longlist Discussion guide for the book is available on Sara Pennypacker's website



**Author/Publisher/Website**

Pennypacker, S.

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**Recommended Grades & Subjects/Courses**

5-9

**Evaluation/Record Entry Date**

Apr/2017

**Subject**

English Language Arts

**ID**

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