



# The Death-Defying Pepper Roux

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Pepper's fourteenth birthday is a momentous one.

It's the day he's supposed to die.

Everyone seems resigned to it—even Pepper, although he would much prefer to live. But can you sidestep Fate? Jump sideways into a different life? Naïve and trusting, Pepper sets a course through dangerous waters, inviting disaster and mayhem at every turn, one eye on the sky for fear of angels, one on the magnificent possibilities of being alive.

*New York Times* bestselling and Printz Award-winning author Geraldine McCaughrean has created a gripping tale filled with dark humor and daring escapades, where the key to a boy's lifelines is in facing his own death.

Join him on the run—if you can keep up.

## The Death-Defying Pepper Roux Details

Date : Published January 19th 2010 by HarperCollins (first published October 1st 2009)

ISBN : 9780061836657

Author : Geraldine McCaughrean

Format : Hardcover 336 pages

Genre : Adventure, Young Adult, Historical, Historical Fiction, Childrens, Middle Grade, Fiction, Fantasy

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## From Reader Review The Death-Defying Pepper Roux for online ebook

### Cairn says

This is one of the very worst books I have ever read. The story was hard to follow and not well-written. It had such potential, a story about a boy who was supposed to die on his 14th birthday. The characters were badly written without much depth.

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### Robert says

I've never read any of McCaughrean's other books (although Peter Pan in Scarlet is sitting on my shelf and awaiting my attention). I only picked up the book because of the title and cover, and the promise of rip-roaring adventures of the most appealing kind.

Well, it is a children's book. Not so much young adult, as proper children's literature.

I'm not even going to pretend embarrassment. I enjoyed this book, and here's the review.

Pepper Roux's death has been foretold the night he was born, in his aunt's dream. His father, a sea captain, is mostly absent from his life. Finally, the deadline gets closer and closer ("by the his fourteenth year"), and, on his birthday, which is the last possible day he can die within the terms of the prophecy, Pepper suddenly tries to run from fate...

...and starts adventures which are exuberant, ranging from sea-faring to horse rustling, from journalism to the soldiering in the foreign legion, from shop work to fighting the mafia. Almost every chapter tells a new adventure - it is a quite episodic book, seemingly meant for reading chapter by chapter, before bed time - and every adventure is worth reading about. I suspect I would have loved this book as a child.

As adult, there are some things that irk. Some of the characters are a little too outrageous. Some of the resolutions a little too easy. And the basic premise perhaps a little too demanding on the suspension-of-disbelief front.

Still, it's a pretty good children's book, and I'd recommend it to anyone with a 10 year old (or an inner 10 year old) who likes to read.

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### Betsy says

One Sentence Review: In a nutshell, it's Candide for kids (take that as you may).

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### Shane Harcombe says

Whimsical. That is the only word to describe this book. I found it to be enjoyable & infuriating at the same

time. I wasn't loving it, despaired at some parts of the story, but wanted to finish reading it. In the end, I (mostly) loved the colourful characters, the style of the writing, but didn't enjoy the actual plot. On a side-note, the writer obviously has a large amount of Catholic guilt from her past, leading her to create a truly horrible character in Pepper's Aunt. I feel sorry for whatever experiences she had that lead to that. Final side note - what an awful cover shown above! I would never have picked up the book if it had the blue, American cover. The original beige/red English cover is the version I read.

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### **Shannon says**

I found this book to be full of clever, and beautiful writing - and the story line was never dull, but I did not find myself fully engaged with the characters. The adventures of Pepper Roux as he defies his fate of dying of at age 14 was entertaining - but to me the characters were not developed enough for me to connect with, or care about them. (Most in my book club disagreed..) Overall, a nice read but not one I couldn't put down. (Childrens Lit genre 10-10-10)

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### **Lindsey says**

At first I had no idea what to make of this book. I suppose given the cover art and title, I was expecting a story of daring escapades in which a boy who thought he was supposed to already have died was completely fearless in the face of danger, leading a crew of misfit sailors into certain death scenarios and coming out completely unscathed. It took me a while to adjust to the fact that, in reality, it's nothing like that at all, but is more of a dark comedy about a clever but unassuming boy who runs from death directly into the arms of various strangers who are not necessarily the best type of people to be surrounded by.

The story generally assumes that most people Pepper encounters are going to try to take advantage of him in some way, or, at the very least, completely misinterpret everything about him. However, if you pull yourself out of the narrative for a moment and recalibrate what you're expecting, the tale of young Pepper is actually pretty funny, especially all of the little narrator intrusions that Geraldine adds throughout the story. My favorite is a little jab at editors mentioning that no editor can read something without changing it. (Having editor disputes lately, Geraldine?)

Anyway, all of that said, don't take the book too seriously, and I believe you will really enjoy the read, especially the jabs at Catholicism, and the base nature of people. Otherwise, you'll likely be frustrated that the book is not something different than it is. I recommend this book to young readers who enjoy a good dark comedy.

-Lindsey Miller, <http://www.lindseyslibrary.com>

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### **Tig says**

This is a rollicking, rumbustious book which careers along wildly as young Pepper Roux skips, lurches and dives through life in an attempt to outrun his own fate. It has been predicted by Saint Constance that he will die on his fourteenth birthday, and so he runs to escape the angels that are surely coming for him. The pace takes your breath away as you follow the twists and turns of life that befall Pepper. The authentic French setting offers a marvellous array of situations into which young Pepper is thrust (or thrusts himself – one of

the big themes of the book is whether we make our own fate): ship's captain, telegraph boy, horse trainer, beggar, patient, journalist, legionnaire. He survives off his wits and own instinct towards the good in all things, and they take him far.

At one level, it's a very simple, almost childlike story. On another, it's deeply thoughtful and tender. The language is stunning: it sings off the page, piling vivid imagery on stinging observation in a baroque style that's both richly inventive and beautifully simple. 'The sky was hysterical with stars'. Doesn't that startling adjective work perfectly to describe a clear star-crowded sky (and something of Pepper's state of mind as he looks at it, a sense of the loss of control he is feeling so that even beauty that he's seen a thousand times before seems teetering dangerously near the edge of insanity?). 'The words rattled down on Pepper like a million horsehoe nails: too hard and sharp, too bent out of shape to be useful'. Perfect – and bonkers. It's an image that can't be picked apart (one million? That would bury him. What are they rattling on – his flesh?) But in its own mad sub-sensical way, it tells us exactly the feeling the words give Pepper. We understand it, without having to construe its sense. 'Even in Pepper's own skull, those words slopped about like molten lead'. Yes! That works brilliantly, for me: the dull threat of molten lead, the sullen onomatopoeia of 'slopped' echoing Pepper's grim sense of distress. There's a passage about angels, fourth paragraph from the end of the book, that I won't quote here because it gives too much away, but watch out for it when it comes. It says so much, so beautifully, and with the most startling original imagery. This kind of writing is dangerous for the author to attempt: it teeters between whimsy on one side and pretentious obscurity on the other. I think McCaughrean pulls it off perfectly.

You could say the plot is a simple shaggy dog tale of an adventure, with nods to magic realism as it blithely sells the reader the idea that everyone in the tales sees in fourteen-year-old Pepper Roux what they want to find: captain, villain, husband and ultimately, and most happily, son. On another level, it's a fable about innocence and gullibility. Margaret Fisher, the noted children's critic, once remarked that 'it is not easy to draw a genuinely good character and make [them] interesting rather than exasperating to readers.' At the heart of this book is Pepper's engagement with all humanity despite being surrounded by brutality and indifference to suffering. Nor does McCaughrean choose to let Pepper be disabused of the unfashionable beliefs he holds. By the end of the book he may have had one of his deepest convictions disproved, but his faith in angels remains, an interesting and pleasing decision. The book treats lightly of such issues as under age sex and cross dressing without ever writing anything that might cause the most puritanical of readers to raise an eyebrow.

The language and the characters are skilful. I haven't said enough about the plot. It races along at too fast a pace for us often to be able to stop and say 'Yes, but...' and most of the time, we just go with it. But there were moments where I feared the author was allowing herself to create inexplicable events to get Pepper out of particularly bad holes and that troubled me: even fantasy ought to abide by its own logic. It was only as the book drew to a close that I appreciated how finely plotted it had been. I loved learning, as Pepper does, how even the seemingly impromptu and puzzling events made sense once one could see the whole. Details that found their place in the resolution had been meticulously woven into the plot, often many chapters earlier. I do love a book that can do that: it had me slowly nodding throughout the final chapters as the author deftly revealed how each plot point had its justified place in the story. The plotting and the language alone would have made it a hugely satisfying read, but without being in the slightest bit preachy, the book also provokes deeper reflections: the idea that guardian angles come in many strange guises, that there may be patterns to our life, even though we can't discern them, that people deceive themselves, and that goodness is its own protection.

I loved this book. I finished it with a feeling of deep satisfaction at having found such a humane, clever, poetic and funny story. It's intelligent and unafraid of writing a lot of words (so many teenage books these days read as if someone has precised them down to the bare bones.) I would put this with *Holes* and *Millions* as one of my top three children's book reads of the past few years. If it doesn't win the Carnegie, the book that does must be something really quite extraordinary.

## Sheenagh Pugh says

I liked this book a lot, but not, in the end, quite as much as I expected to. There's nothing amiss with the writing; as usual McCaughrean is literate, engaging and challenging, not talking down to her readers because of their age. And it's certainly a page-turner, especially in the first half. The problem for me is that in the end, I'm not sure quite where it's aimed and what it's saying.

It is carefully not set in a specified time (the Foreign Legion references aren't conclusive because there have been more French campaigns in the Ivory Coast region than you'd think), but the chronology at the very end implies that its hero must have been born no later than about 1915. Avoiding spoilers as much as may be, young Pepper's childhood has been blighted by an aunt's prediction that he won't live past the age of 14. The book shows him learning, more or less, that his destiny is in his own hands and those of other people, not of saints and angels.

Now it's a fact, of course, that certain children born in the 19th century and the early years of the 20th were pretty well known to be not long for this world, due to what was then known as consumption and later as TB. In the western world, at least, this doesn't happen any more (Pepper himself is clearly not consumptive), and since this book is written for modern children, one must assume she's using this historical condition as a metaphor for something wider, something children can still be affected by. This might well be adult expectations of them and the limits these can place on them. Throughout the book, Pepper exceeds people's expectations of him and gets by pretty well in situations adults themselves have problems coping with. In fact he is accepted as an adult, mainly because, as the book keeps reminding us, people see what they want to see. Only when things have got really sticky does someone get him out of trouble by forcing others, and the reader, to see him at his real age, and this is a clever moment, a reminder of how much we have allowed ourselves to see through other eyes.

Pepper's aunt's prediction is couched very clearly in religious terms; Pepper does literally believe that saints and angels are out looking for him to do him in, and I thought and still think that the logical end of the journey would be Pepper, and the reader, concluding that religion itself was a load of hooey and that angels didn't exist. But that isn't quite what happens; in fact there is a (to me) unsatisfactory explanation for the aunt, late in the book, which basically involves personality failings and isn't terribly relevant to anyone who doesn't have this particular aunt.

The ambiguity, of course, extends to the title. "The Death Defying Pepper Roux" means just about the exact opposite of "The Death-Defying Pepper Roux", which is the punctuation we'd have expected. McCaughrean knows this perfectly well, indeed she uses the hyphenated version of the phrase in the body of the book. So why the unhyphenated title? There could be two reasons: the simpler, which I fear may be true, is that the publishers thought a hyphen in the title looked cumbersome and would Puzzle The Kiddies, most of whom have no idea how to use one because their teachers don't either. If that's so, then her use of the correct version in the text is a subtle rebellion, a signal that she knows how to punctuate even if the marketing men don't.

The other possibility is that she wants the ambiguity, that the book is somehow not about Pepper Roux, who defies death, but about death, which defies (and resists) Pepper. If that's so, I can't see quite how, but the fact that it's even possible rather underlines, for me, that I'm not sure in the end quite what the book's message was. Good read, though.

## Deborah O'Carroll says

I read this a few years back, and, if I'm going to be honest, I don't remember this book very well. All I know is it was one of the strangest books I ever read and I adored it to smithereens. There was this boy named Pepper Roux who thought he was going to die when he turns 14 and there was a lot of running around with pursuits and I think there were candles and scaffolding and back alleys and ships and a best friend I think and it's all from the unreliable narrator point-of-view of the hero and... yeah. That's what's in it. I think. I could be totally wrong though because honestly it's terrifying how little I remember about this. I very much need to get it from the library again and reread it. I just love this author. She's brilliant.

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## Bobby Bob says

I read this one a while ago, and I remembered everything about it, except for the title. Huh, funny considering this is a pretty exciting title. Either way, I felt that the book generally lived up to its name, with its, well, death-defying adventure, and I feel like that at one point I thought this was one of those books that deserved a sequel. Well, looks like a sequel never came out.

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## Shazzer says

As posted on Outside of a Dog:

Sometimes you should absolutely judge a book by its cover. One of my favorite books of all time, Ahab's Wife by Sena Jeter Naslund, is a book I must have picked up at the bookstore about twenty times, drawn to its cover image of a lone figure on a beach, before I ever bought the darn thing and began to read it. Covers can make or break you, and when faced with an overwhelming amount of material and a finite amount of time, sometimes snap judgments must be made, and yes, you must judge a book by its cover. And then there are times when you really, really shouldn't. Geraldine McCaughrean's The Death-Defying Pepper Roux is most certainly one of those times.

I didn't pick up Pepper Roux when it was initially released. I was working at the bookstore then, and passed by the book many times. The cover offered me an idea of swashbuckling adventures on the high seas, and that just wasn't something in which I was willing to invest my time. Fast forward to the end of 2010, when I start to see this title on people's lists of favorites for the year. I start to think, perhaps there is more than meets the eye, and so when it became available, I snatched up the library's copy and took it home to enjoy.

I won't keep anyone in suspense. I loved it, loved every bit of it. I loved it like I love Dickens, and that's saying something. And in fact, The Death-Defying Pepper Roux is quite Dickensian in its own way, telling a sprawling tale full of colorful characters, centered around a young man called Pepper (and often many other names) who has been told by his meddlesome Aunt that he will be and should be dead at the age of fourteen. This information came to Aunt Mireille in a dream before his birth, the death pronouncement made by Saint Constance (who has excellent diction, by the way). This is why, on his fourteenth birthday, Pepper commits the terrible sin of surviving another day and runs off with his seafaring father's jacket, commandeers his ship and makes for the high seas.

Here, it would seem, was the swashbuckling I was dreading, but I found none of it on the page. Instead, Pepper is a quiet captain, living under his father's drunken reputation, and keeps mostly to his cabin,

interacting only with the ship's steward, a cross-dressing man called Duchesse. In fact, Pepper's high seas adventure does not last long at all, and almost before I knew it, Pepper was busy disappearing into someone else's life, escaping the wrath of saints and angels alike by continuing to live. Pepper becomes a meat slicer at a delicatessen, a newspaper writer, a telegraph delivery boy, even the deceased husband of a penniless widow. He makes friends and enemies with his peculiar ways and continues to evade the heavenly hoards he just knows are hot on his trail, ready to take him in.

I found so much to love in Pepper Roux; it's hard to know where to start. I loved Pepper, for one thing. He grows from a single-minded child to a complex human with an incredible heart, an increasing penchant for lying and a natural tendency towards goodness. Not to mention a hell of a survival instinct. I loved Duchesse, especially when the character returns for the novel's final act. I loved his "dear hearts" and his brute kindness. I pictured him a giant of a man perfect for squeezing like a teddy bear. And I loved the humor of it all. Pepper's naiveté made for some easy laughs, for sure, but some expertly made sentences were just as enjoyable. Sentences like, "It voided a pellet of undigested mouse parts: its own little explanation of what it had been up to lately" made me laugh out loud, often without really knowing why. That's the Dickens in it again. Little moments of humane hilarity that tickle the funny bone without so much as lifting a finger to do so.

I'm dreadfully sorry I judged Pepper Roux by its cover in the beginning. I'd like to say I've learned my lesson, but if I didn't learn it with *The True Meaning of Smekday*, I'm unlikely to have learned it now, either. But I am truly grateful to have been turned on to Pepper Roux and I look forward to being able to press this book into just the right child's hands and say, "You have to read this."

One last note on the cover: it has grown on me, but I've since discovered the originally UK cover, and much prefer it.

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## Terri says

I tried. I never abandon a book, but I just couldn't get through this one. We read it for a children's literature book club that I belong to (and most members of the group felt the same). Then, when I read the inside back cover and realized that it was by British author, Geraldine McCaughrean, I knew why I didn't like it. McCaughrean also wrote the award-winning "White Darkness," another book that I had trouble getting through.

My biggest beef with the book was the poor use of time and place. It began with the cover, which was very misleading. On first look, the book looks like it is going to be a pirate adventure (1400 - 1500's?), which threw me off in terms of the time in which the story takes place. It isn't until terms like "steamship" and "typewriter" are used that one begins to figure out that the time period is later. I had to read the MARC record information on the back of the title page, which states that the story takes place in the 1900's?

In reality, the book follows the episodic adventures of protagonist Pepper Roux, an unrealistically clever fourteen year old. In addition, for the American ear, McCaughrean's wording and cadence are choppy and confusing. I felt the book was a hot mess. However, it is apparently very popular in England. Unfortunately, I don't think most American teens will find much to like here.

## Lizzy says

“On the morning of his fourteenth birthday, Pepper had been awake for fully two minutes before realizing it was the day he must die.” This is the opening line of the rip-roaring adventure awaiting the “le pauvre” (poor thing) –Pepper Roux. Pepper and those around him, his parents and aunt, had known since the day he was born that he was not to live beyond his fourteenth birthday. Everyone was resigned to it, even Pepper. The night before he was born, Pepper’s spinster aunt Mireille had a dream of St. Constance, who told her, “in perfect diction,” that Pepper Roux was to die by fourteen. To make sure that Pepper would indeed be going to heaven, his aunt and mother made him go to church and pray all day, every day, on his calloused knees, making sure he was truly sorry for whatever "wrongdoings" he had committed since the last time he prayed. His Aunt Mireille filled his pockets with prayers and messages to give to the saints and family members in heaven. But when the day came for Pepper to die, he, in fact, did not die. He did not want to disappoint, but in truth, Pepper wanted to live. He wondered how this could happen: had he somehow sidestepped fate, shaken off the saints that were to capture him and whisk him away to heaven? He did not know, but felt like an intruder in life, an escapee, and that at any moment the angels and saints would realize their mistake and come after him in a flourish of fire and ice. But even so, when given the opportunity, Pepper sought out a life not his own.

His attempts to slip into other peoples’ shoes propelled him all over France and from one life to the next. He donned the Sea Captain hat of his father, the apron of a butcher's assistant in a fancy department store, as well as stepping into the life of a horse trainer, newspaper writer, telegram deliverer, juvenile delinquent and many more. Through each of these misadventures Pepper was a bit naive, always seeing the best in others and too trusting of some unsavory characters. In every life he led he inadvertently caused mayhem while trying his best to spread joy and goodness in the depraved lives he saw around him. Yet Pepper knew too well that Death was after him. Ultimately, Pepper (with the help of a few surprising friends) came to learn to finally face his own death, and that things and people are not always what they seem. Pepper Roux is one extraordinary character –unforgettable, and the kind of person you would want to know in real life. You want Pepper to succeed and overcome the obstacles in front of him; you also want to protect him from the danger around him. This is a wonderfully crafted story filled with plenty of adventures. It's a book that once finished is not easy to leave behind.

I also must suggest checking out the audiobook version of this story, narrated by Anton Lesser. Mr. Lesser brings the characters to life with such vibrancy and articulates the French words with flavor. Ms. McCaughrean’s sentences twist and turn and are filled with humor and wit; Lessen brings this humor to light in an incredible way that helps the story break out from the pages.

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## AJ says

3.5 stars

This book started off really good for me. I thought that it was an interesting concept about a boy who is told that he's going to die when he's fourteen. In order to avoid his death, he steps into other people's lives and roles and "becomes" them. I enjoyed reading his transition from a ship's captain, to a department store employee, to a newspaper journalist, etc.

Around the middle to end of the book was where I started to lose interest. I thought the ending became really

disjointed and confusing (but, at the same time, it almost seemed supposed to be that way, as all the different people come together and figure out exactly who this boy really is.)

And then the end.... I didn't really like it. The speeding summary through Pepper's life, ending with his death at ninety-something, just didn't work for me. No reader wants to find that their beloved character has moved on from us and lived his entire life in the course of two pages.

Swearing: A couple mild swear words as well as one (or maybe two?) instances of a harsher word.

Sexual content: none

Violence: There's a stroke of violence toward the end, as Pepper's friend Duchess gets into some fist fights with other characters. There's also an army sergeant that tries to shoot at Pepper (and, in the process, other people in the crowd.)

Religious/spiritual/magical content: There are frequent references to God, the saints, and priests as Pepper tries to avoid the death that Saint Constance "promised" his aunt.

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### **Karin says**

Reminded me of a Don Quixote-style picaresque tale. Rollicking historical adventure featuring a naive 13yo boy who has been told his whole life that he would die before his 14th birthday. When that day approaches and death hasn't found him yet, he takes off to try and steer clear of her clutches and has a series of mishaps and adventures, meeting a number of colorful characters along the way. Though not completely to my taste, I was very impressed by the author's command of character, plot, etc. Solid, high-quality, children's lit.

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### **Ms S M Main says**

This book is about a boy called Pepper Roux who, on his fourteenth birthday, wakes up and realizes it is the day he must die. This is wrote by Geraldine McCaughrean. She's one of the most highly acclaimed children's authors and has won The Carnegie Medal, the White bread kids book award, three times, the Guardians Children fiction award and finally the Blue Peter book of the year award.

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### **Matthew Hendricks says**

It had its moments, but I wouldn't recommend it

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### **Quinten Kempf says**

Personal Response

Personally, I really liked the book *The Death-Defying Pepper Roux*. I love the fluctuation of Pepper's

emotion throughout the book. I also like how many of the people in the book know Pepper is not an adult, yet none of them call him out on it. I am also amazed how easily Pepper got away with stealing the identity of all those people.

### Plot Summary

The book is about a boy named Pepper Roux who was fated to die when he would turn the age of fourteen. On the day he was destined to die, he stole his father's ship by pretending to be Gilbert Roux- his father. While on that ship Pepper found out the true nature of his father's work. He would sink his ships and collect the insurance money. Pepper knew that the ship was destined to sink and he was willing to go down with it. He had nothing left to go to, so he was going to end his own life. But the plan backfires when he turns up washed up on a beach. From there he starts his life over again and pretends to be other people, to forget about his past and run from all his sins.

### Recommendation

I would recommend this book to kids the age of 10 to the age of 15. I would recommend this age restriction because the book is very unrealistic and I believe running away from your family is a fantasy for a lot of younger people. I also believe this book could set a good example to younger teens about what actually happens in the real world. Adults may think these things are obvious which would make this book a bit boring for older people.

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### Bailey Olfert says

The best thing about this book is its beginning, which quickly draws interest. Unfortunately it could not sustain my interest, but I acknowledge that I'm not the target audience for this story. Only recommended for those under 12 years old.

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### 221bgallifreystreet says

A fourteen year old boy runs off on an adventure, sprinting even, to always be a step ahead of his certain fate: that he will inevitably die when he turns fourteen (which is now). On this journey through France\* and its surrounding waters, Pepper changes his identity multiple times and yet wherever he goes, he seems to cause havoc.

Does this sound in anyway original? Haven't we encountered this type of storyline in various forms across the board? Possibly, but I promise you: this is something else.

(Note aside: this review contains two minor spoilers. They are marked.)

Why? I suppose it's a combination of various ingredients: the many eccentric, fascinating and highly original characters (like the Duchesse for instance), the way the plot flows perfectly from one sentence to another, and of course McCaughrean's writing style, which is filled with humour and lovely literary tools. Take this sentence for example: "His heart cannoned like a billiard ball off some green wall of his innards.". That's original.

I also liked the character of Pepper Roux. Aged fourteen, he is surprisingly ignorant of the world. In his

travels, he is plunged into reality. A kind, warm-hearted, honest and genuinely good-willing boy is exposed to the harshness and cruelty of life. He reacts to murderers and thieves he encounters in an almost neutral way, not hating them but just accepting them. One question I asked myself was whether I had expected any more character development: in the end the only thing different with Pepper is his (SPOILER SORRY SPOILER) willingness to detach himself from his family. In his heart, though, he hasn't changed. So this clearly can't be called a coming-of-age novel. But, somehow, I find this fits. The fact that the world didn't change his good heart is de facto a part of Pepper's character.

Pepper's unusual adventures had me gripped, there were surprises in stall frequently. It was one of those books whose end isn't in any way unexpected, but still leaves you feeling warm. Lovely is the word to describe it. You see, it's not one of those books that is soaked in metaphors, or symbolically deep, but it's an extremely pleasant and entertaining read without being cheap and trashy. It's relaxing. As for the intended age-group, it is clearly older children, nine to twelve year olds maybe. I (fourteen years old) was unaware of this on starting to read the book, and was actually tempted to stop reading when I found out who it was meant for. But I must say that this book is so refreshingly different from "common" literature it could appeal to a wider age-group. I may be wrong, of course.

So if you have this book at home or are thinking of borrowing/ buying it, go ahead! You'll be surprised. It's ideal for a holiday or stressy times.

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\*As to the setting, it becomes clear pretty soon that it is France. When it is set is something readers are deliberately kept in the dark about. First, due to the ships and how these were described, I thought it was sometime in the late 1800s. Then motorbikes were mentioned and I, still favouring the 1800s, was forced to conclude early 1900s. However, then came the mention of Russian communists and so it had to be post-1917. There are references to Ivory Coast campaigns of the Foreign Legion but there have been so many this piece of information is not very valuable. And then, it was said that (SPOILER-ALERT BEEP BEEP) Pepper builds skyscrapers in New York and Paris in later life and that can only be in the 1920s-30s. So my best guess is that it is set in the 1920s, although going by the other descriptions I would still think late 1800s.

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