



Echo

Pam Muñoz Ryan

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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 solo stories converge in an orchestral crescendo.

Echo Details

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Author : Pam Muñoz Ryan

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From Reader Review Echo for online ebook

`Ashlula` Ayse says

I heard about this book from my daughter, who heard about it from her friend who read it 3 times within 10 days. So we were both interested in seeing what it has to offer.

This is a beautiful story which centers around music and a special harmonica. The music unites the stories of 3 protagonists, children that lived during the WWII era. Through 3 different stories and 3 pieces of music (Brahm's Lullaby, Auld Lang Syne, America the Beautiful) we are shown how prejudice, focusing on far-right nationalism, race and ethnicity dissects and separates; and music as a supreme language unites. The harmonica substituting as a breast plate in tough times and adding polyphonic texture to life is beautiful use of symbolism.

I loved the books' motto:

“Your fate is not yet sealed.

Even in the darkest night, a star will shine,

A bell will chime, a path will be revealed.”

This book can be a wonderful gift for ages 10-14.

Elyse says

10 hours of listening.....

The audiobook is *enchanting* within seconds from the start ...

Otto is playing a game of hide and seek with his friends. He drifts further into the woods.....sits down by a tree, and begins to read a book he bought from a gypsy earlier that day.

The historical stories are narrated by 4 different voices.....and take us to Germany, Pennsylvania, and California. The storylines are interconnected and all centered around music. Tales about the Holocaust, two orphans and an orphanage, segregation, and a Japanese Internment camp, A magical harmonica ties these stories together.....(especially at the end)

But no matter what I write about this book , the plot, the characters....(2016 Newbery Honor), ...masterfully written for all ages by Pam Munoz Ryan....

"Echo" is about music....

I can't imagine that 'reading' this book could compare to the AUDIOBOOK EXPERIENCE.

LISTENING to the orchestra is **harmonious**.....and the storytelling is wonderful.

HIGHLY -recommend for audiobook fans

FEEL GOOD.....

MAGICAL....

SUSPENSE.....

WARMTH....

FRIENDSHIPS....

HEART....

Listen when walking, folding laundry, resting in a sauna, cutting veggies during dinner prep, or close your eyes lying on the couch.....and feel the vibrations!

||Swaroop|| says

#wow -- this one word could be my review for this *enchanting* novel, as I truly don't have any words to tell the world what an *amazing experience* this book has been. Just Incredible!

I can feel a quaver inside me, when I think of that moment when I almost decided not to read this book.

This book can best be described as "joyful" reading, right from the first word.

...and every night as they lay in their beds wondering what joy tomorrow might bring yet knowing how precarious life can be... They repeated the words "Your fate is not yet sealed, even in the darkest night a star will shine, a bell will chime, a path will be revealed..."

Brandy Painter says

I read this back in February, but forgot to review it, rectifying that now.

Okay. This book is getting a lot of buzz and love, but again I feel out of step with everyone. I really liked aspects of it, but the entire conceit of the novel didn't work for me. There are three historical storylines bound together by a magical harmonica that is the key to releasing three princesses from a curse. The three historical plots are incredibly well done on their own until they all reach their cliffhanger ends, and then I just found myself frustrated each time. Ryan brings it all together in a flash forward at the end, but it feels forced and has a lot of info-dumps so had a rather clumsy feel to it.

Then there's the magical harmonica/cursed princess frame for the story which did not work for me AT ALL. I would have preferred it if the stories had just been tied together by a non-magical harmonica without this frame. The frame really ruined the book for me and seemed pointless. The fantasy element sucked all the magic out of the story for me. Ironic.

Susan says

585 pages of historical fiction magic! I started this one on the eve of a second snow day in a row (of snow days I am NOT a fan) and actually woke up the next morning wishing for snow day #3 so I could continue reading! Now that, folks, is a HIGH recommendation! I loved the way Ryan wove three stories together across a tapestry of music, sprinkling a dust of magic from beginning to end.

I support independent bookstores. You can use this link to find one near you or order ECHO on IndieBound: <http://www.indiebound.org/book/978043...>

Katie Hanna says

Friends and neighbors, I have an exciting announcement to make.

clears throat

Y'all need to read this book.

And when I say you need to read it, I mean you need to read it TODAY.

It's just . . . it's just so . . . I MEAN . . .

falls on the floor in a heap and hyperventilates because HOW DO I EVEN WORDS RIGHT NOW

Honestly, this has got to be one of the most brilliant literary masterpieces I've ever read; and I'm seriously not kidding when I say that. It's beautiful and magical and gorgeous and achingly deep and heart-wrenchingly suspenseful and just SO SO SO GOOD. The triumphs and the tragedies and the cliffhangers almost killed me . . . and then the final chapters pretty much finished off what was left of my poor heart. (In a good way, though. Not going to say anything else; because of #spoilers.)

I don't really know how to talk about the plot without messing everything up . . . but I'll try. Basically, this is a story about music and the joy it can bring into our lives, if we let it--even in the midst of terrible hardship and sorrow. More specifically, it's the story of a magic harmonica which travels from owner to owner and infuses each one with its own special strength. The whole book has this amazing, ethereal, fairy-tale-ish quality, while still managing to be deeply realistic and down-to-earth. I cannot believe I never heard of this book before my mom brought it home from the library. IT NEEDS TO BE ON EVERY BESTSELLER LIST IN THE NATION EVER. It's just that good.

It's also six hundred pages long. I definitely skimmed parts of it, not gonna lie. (I NEEDED CLOSURE, PEOPLE. CLIFFHANGERS. LEAVE ME ALONE OKAY.)

Also, there's this: (view spoiler)

Donalyn says

Read twice. Still pondering it. The writing is lovely and the characters are memorable.

Alienor ✕ French Frowner ✕ says

For a few hours, Echo healed my cynical heart with pure hope. Beautifully written and compelling, what I will call an historical fairytale - with all the hardships that come with it - **enchanted me** from the very first page, and my interest never wavered : Friedrich, Mike, Frankie, Ivy... They all earned a little place in my heart.

One might say that these stories are not free of some kind of simplistic resolution (and I agree), but in my opinion **the novel's worth lies elsewhere** : in the heartwarming and hopeful messages that music can bring people together and that we all can find the place where we **belong**, no matter how different we think we are, no matter how intolerant our contemporaries are being, no matter how idiotic and selfish people can be.

As it turns out, I shouldn't have worried about the age target. If I could see straight away that the story was aimed at children, I think that **there's a reason we adults come back to fairytales** sometimes. As much as I love my Dark Fantasy novels, as much as I complain about the stupid and intolerant comments I see every day on the social medias, there's a part of me that needs to *believe*. I wouldn't be a teacher if I didn't hope for the future to be more open-minded, more accepting, less scared of differences.

Everyone needs to believe in a better world once in a while, to let a bright day overtake the clouds of ignorance.

Now I'll patiently wait for someone to translate Echo in French to throw it into my pupils' hands.

PS. I'm rating this book according to its age rank.

For more of my reviews, please visit:

Pauline says

Wow...you know the magic you felt the first time you read Harry Potter? Yeah, that. I felt that as I read this book - it's hefty and complex and there are multiple storylines - but, it is SO worth the investment of your time and energy!

The genre here is blurry - fantasy, fairy tale, historical fiction, multicultural - what exactly is happening? There is this magical element that is all about the **POWER OF MUSIC** and that sustained my interest. This book is beautifully written; I laughed, I cried, and the entire fourth part gave me goosebumps as I realized how the threads all came together...

This book comes out in February 2015 - do yourself a favor and pre-order it with your local bookseller now!

Hannah Greendale says

Echo opens like a fairy tale: Otto is lost in the woods and meets three strange women who tell him of a prophecy concerning a rare harmonica. Enter Friedrich, Mike, and Ivy - three children facing daunting life challenges in the shadow of World War II. In each of their solo stories, Friedrich, Mike, and Ivy are in possession of the same rare harmonica, leaning on music to get them through the hard times.

Myriad themes are explored in this book, but the thread that ties everything together is music. Various instruments and the sounds they produce are described with an audible richness. Music is presented as a metaphor for mankind, where each person is an instrument adding layers to the melody of life:

"Music doesn't have a race or a disposition!" said Father. "Every instrument has a voice that contributes. Music is a universal language. A universal religion of sorts. Certainly it's my religion. Music surpasses all distinctions between people."

Gershwin heard music in the midst of noise, and saw the piece as an array of all that was American: a composition of people of every color, rich or poor, quiet and loud, a mishmash of humanity.

Some of the darkest moments in history are explored in *Echo*, introducing young readers to the subtle ways in which people succumb to malevolence, forgoing their freedoms and losing their humanity:

"Their hearts hurt. people who used to be friends are no longer friends. Neighbors are not neighbors. During a war, people feel they must blame and take sides. Hearts grow smaller."

Yet another powerful message in *Echo* has to do with the importance of recognizing and nourishing budding talent in young children. The book suggests that when a child's passion for an activity emerges and a parent is supportive, the child flourishes, resulting in a more fulfilling life.

Each child's story is told separately, which lends itself to the reader feeling a *bit* disjointed; just when the reader is fully vested in a child, their story halts and a new character is introduced. This might have been a point of dislike had the author not woven all of the stories together with such finesse before the final page.

Echo is a smartly structured, engaging tale that weaves history with heartfelt stories of memorable characters.

Amy says

A book worthy of great mention is the type of book:

- a) That makes you ache when closing the back cover.
- b) That makes you mourn when you say goodbye to its characters.
- c) That has characters who live in your heart long after you have finished it.
- d) That will bear recommendation for years to come, when you have a student who is ripe for a meaty read...one with extra depth and substance.

Echo IS that book! While some students may be afraid of its size, I would encourage them to look at it as 4 books within one...woven with a common thread...or a common sound. :) As a teacher/librarian, I want to conquer the obstacles that my students will have when they think *Echo* will take them too much time to read. It is worth the time! I would love to encourage them to take one story at a time...stop by and talk about it with me. Then move onto the next one. What a great conversation that will be!

If only there was time in the school day to collaborate with our music teacher and create our own band of Harmonica Wizards! This book has much life to it! Thank you, Ms. Ryan...for introducing me to Friedrich, Mike, and Ivy. They are dear ones!

Taryn Pierson says

Don't read this book.

Listen to it.

It would be positively criminal to read a print copy of *Echo* when such a stunning audio version exists. Even if you've never tried an audio book, even if you swear it doesn't count as real reading, get off your high horse and just try it. Your mind will be changed in the first half hour.

The performances by the four readers are amazing, but what puts the production over the top is the seamless

incorporation of music from start to finish. Before anything else, Echo is a book about music. I can guarantee you there's no comparison between reading a printed reference to "Some Enchanted Evening" and hearing it performed by a professional orchestra. And that blues harmonica duet? Get outta town. In print, you only get half the story.

Admittedly, half the story is still really damn good. There are actually four strands to the plot, told one at a time until the very end, when they come together in a beautiful (dare I say harmonious?) way. Each character has a discrete story that could stand on its own, but all four of them are linked through time and distance by a harmonica. Don't question it—just go with it. That's the beauty of middle grade literature; you can start with a humble harmonica and end up with a symphony.

This is my feel-good book of the year. Listen to it in the car with the whole family next time you go on a road trip. Listen to it in your kitchen as you make dinner. Listen to it as a pick-me-up when you're feeling sad.

Just please, please, please—*listen* to it.

More book recommendations by me at www.readingwithhippos.com

Colby Sharp says

Ryan is a master storyteller.

Rachel Reads Ravenously says

5 stars!

"Everybody has a heart. Sometimes you gotta work hard to find it."

So I read this book based on work recommendations from fellow librarians. These are the librarians who do not rate high very easily and all of them told me this book was a 5 out of 5. I had ZERO interest in reading this book. I mean it's historical fiction AND magic realism? Totally not my thing. But I pulled up my big girl pants and checked it out and gave it a chance, and I am so glad I did!!! This book is something else, and I feel all ages could read it.

Echo tells 3 main stories: Friedrich, Mike and Ivy. All are children of preteen age, they all live in different times, places and circumstances. We get to read each one of their stories separately, and the power of music is what connects their stories in ways you wouldn't have guessed.

"Music does not have a race or a disposition! Every instrument has a voice that contributes. Music is a universal language. A universal religion of sorts. Certainly it's my religion. Music surpasses all distinctions between people."

I cannot say much else than that because SPOILERS. What I can say is that from the first page I couldn't put this book down. The way it's written and the stories involved in it, it's **magical**. I loved the themes, how

many of them are still relevant today. The characters felt so real to me, there were moments where I was in great big tears because apparently I am a wuss. This is a book I can see myself rereading in the future and giving it to a lot of kids to read.

Honestly, I ask you as an adult to read this book. Or read/give it to the child in your life whether it be your child, niece or nephew, family friend, anyone. I know it's aimed at middle grade age range but I feel it's a book any age can love. It's amazing.

I have also had people tell me and read reviews on here where people have said to listen to the audiobook. My friend played me a small bit of the audiobook and I can agree because it plays music that enhances the story.

“She said people on hard times deserved to have beauty in their lives as much as anyone else, whether or not they could pay their rent or were walking to a breadline. Granny said that just because someone was poor didn't mean they were poor of heart.”

Rashika (is tired) says

****This review has also been posted on [The Social Potato](#)*

Actual Rating 4.5

This book. Oh my god this book. I'd be lying if I said I didn't know what I was getting into before I started reading the book but knowing how many emotions you will be bombarded with doesn't really prepare you for them. Nothing does until you'll sitting there yelling at the book for giving you too many feels (this happened). **This book is so gorgeously written and so beautifully imagined and I don't know where to start.**

Perhaps I shall start with the one thing that didn't work for me and then move on to all the good stuff because good stuff.

There is so much build up and so many emotions running through this book that by the time I got to the ending, I had expected something big and huge but I didn't get that. **The resolutions seemed too easy after everything our characters had been through.** And while it may be surprising that I am even suggesting this given the size of the book (it stands at a whopping 592 pages... for the final copy), I think this book should have been longer. I needed a stronger resolution. One that didn't leave me feeling like I had missed out on a big chunk of these characters' lives.

So there, bad stuff out of the way. Now on to the good stuff. The stuff I cannot even begin describing because I am not sure I am capable of doing justice to this book with my limited vocabulary. Sooooo... this book IS AWESOMESAUCE. **It's heartbreaking, it's diverse and it's so so GOOD.** It takes you on a roller coaster of emotions and when you start to fall, you are left hanging, hoping for the best, hoping against hope that there will be a happy ending even though real life offers few. How can I explain the roller coaster of emotions? How can I even begin to explain how MUCH PAIN I WAS IN. How much joy I felt and all the mushy gushy feelings in my heart. Stupid hearts. Making you feel stuff. I think I need to take a break from my heart. HEART, I NEED SPACE OKAY?

This book is divided into 4 parts. The first 3 introduce you to three different characters who are all connected by one simple harmonica, a harmonica that will bring them joy when life will seem bleak, a harmonica that has a magical background story and a harmonica that has a purpose.

Friedrich lives in pre World War II Germany, in a world where he gets to slowly experience Hitler's rise to power. He is witness to all the injustices committed against his fellow friends and even his own father. It's heartbreaking to read about all these injustices and it's even more heartbreaking to know what might happen to Friedrich if they don't leave Germany. **The thing that is so fascinating about Friedrich though is how he manages to retain his beliefs even knowing what could be done to him because of them. The only reason he isn't out there screaming about the injustice of it all is because he doesn't want to endanger his family.** His story, unsurprisingly, is a heartbreaking one.

Then we have Mike and Frankie. Their story is just as heartbreaking even if their lives aren't as affected by the World War. What they are is orphans, living in a time period where no one cares as much about orphans. Mike, at the young age of 11, has to be in charge of his younger brother and making sure that the two aren't separated. At the tender age of 11, he has to put someone else's safety and happiness above his own and if that isn't heartbreaking, I don't know what is. Mike is just as brave and lovable as Friedrich and his journey just as beautiful to read about.

The last main character we meet is young Ivy who lives in California. Who, on top of having to deal with moving to a new place, has to deal with injustices at school because of the color of her skin. She just wants to play her music but she cannot even do that in peace. She has to hold her family together, because she promised her brother who is away at war but how can she do that when she has trouble holding herself together? Throughout her story, we get to see Ivy grow into herself and mature. We see her make new friends and we see her grow protective about a Japanese family she hasn't even met. **It makes you wonder how these kids can even stand to think about someone other than themselves when their situations are so dire.** Their hearts must be so ginormous.

I don't want to talk too much about the historical and magic realism contexts of this novel but know that Pam Ryan Munoz knows what she is doing. **This novel may not be about the historical events but the historical setting is NEVER forgotten.** It's what affects all of these young kids' lives.

The stories of these three young kids are moving and heartbreaking but at the same time, they offer hope. They show us that not all is lost even when things look like they are never going to get better.

This book is so important and so beautiful and I don't know what else to say except that you all need to read this. I went into this book knowing I would love it since Ryan is one of my favorite childhood authors and all I can hope is that when you read it, you'll love it just as much as I did.
