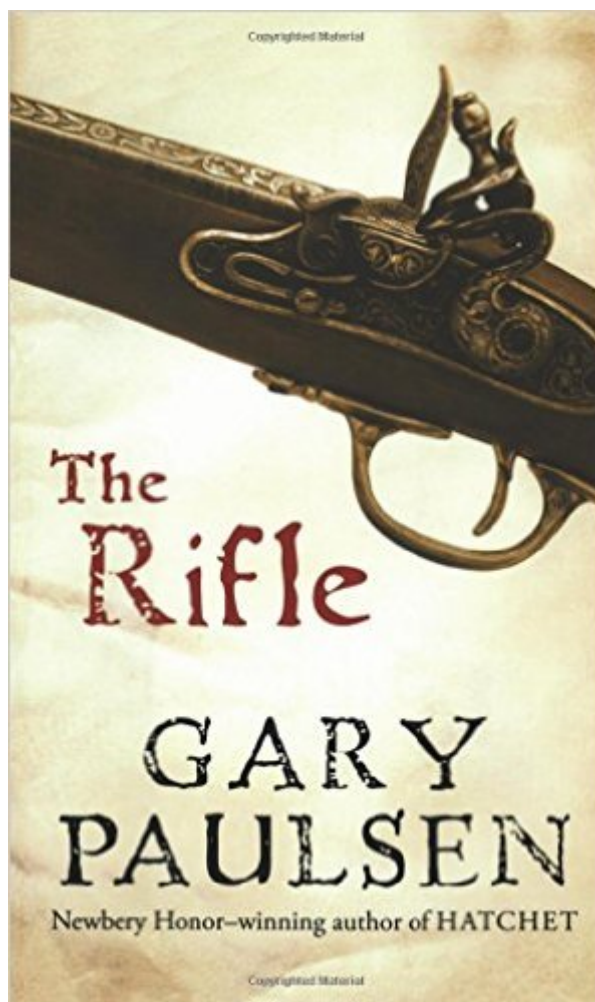


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The Rifle



Synopsis

A treasured rifle passed down through generations is the cause of a tragic accident in this timely tale. With subtle mastery and precision, this tough, thought-provoking novel challenges the idea that firearms don't become instruments of destruction and murder until they are placed in human hands. Each book includes a reader's guide.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 1480 (What's this?)

Paperback: 112 pages

Publisher: HMH Books for Young Readers; 1 edition (November 1, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0152058397

ISBN-13: 978-0152058395

Product Dimensions: 4.5 x 0.3 x 7 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.2 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (101 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #162,816 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #38 in [Books > Teens > Historical Fiction > United States > Colonial & Revolutionary Periods](#) #62 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Violence](#) #118 in [Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Violence](#)

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

I have been a police officer in a major US city for 23 years, and before that I was in the Marines for 6 years. I've carried a gun virtually every day of my adult life. Along the way, I've seen numerous people who were shot, and more than I would ever want to see that were dead from gunshot wounds. In fact two horrible instances involving juveniles killed by firearms that I personally dealt with stand out. Both involved shotguns. In one instance the shotgun was hanging on the wall when a kid took it down, pointed it at another kid, and pulled the trigger. A rifled slug entered the 14 year old victim's head just behind his left ear and took most of his head with it as it exited out the right corner of his forehead. The scene was horrible beyond description. In the other instance, two 8 year olds were playing in a wood pile when they found a shotgun apparently discarded or hidden by someone with criminal intent. One 8 year old pointed it at the other, pulled the trigger, and a double

ought buck round hit the victim in the stomach at nearly point blank range. He ran about 25 feet and died on the driveway in front of the house. With all that as my foundation, I bought this book with a rough understanding of the plot, thinking I would give it to my 12 year old son. In my house, we don't "treat every firearm as if it is loaded". There is no hypothetically loaded gun. Every firearm IS loaded. Always. Forever. World without end. Simple. Don't point it in an unsafe direction, ever. I figured this would be a fine book to hammer that point home a little deeper for my son. Luckily, I read it first. This book misses that objective mark completely. By my way of thinking, in order to really have a good book, there needs to be an element of credibility, some degree of genuine believability. There is no credibility in this book. I think it's ironic that Paulsen paints the NRA member as being so unintelligent. That is the same level of intelligence I would expect of someone who takes this book seriously. I have never seen a situation that involved a gun going off without being controlled by a human being. Never heard of any situation like that either. The story takes off on a wonderful trajectory in the description of the rifle's creation, but degenerates into a stupid horror movie with a gun that kills everyone it comes in contact with, then hides in the attic until it gets one last victim. It seems like Paulsen was so intent on writing something that generated fear of guns, fear of people who possess guns, his brain slipped a cog. Maybe he was drunk. That's the only way it makes sense to me. I wish it hadn't taken such a ridiculous direction. I thought it had potential when the plot was roughly described to me. My son won't be reading this at 12 years old. Maybe when he's 14 or 15 I'll revisit the idea, let him read it then as an example of anti-gun propaganda.

This book was handed me by a good friend (with a smirk) who knew of my hobby of building rifles much like the central "character" of this little tome. Paulsen uses the skills acquired in authoring volumes of young adult fiction to preach the agenda - guns are bad, to be in the presence of one instantly will "taint" you much like a piece of radioactive material, and no matter how beautiful and superbly crafted, association with it can only lead to DEATH.... All who are associated with it die, most horribly. About half way through the slim little volume, one begins to catch on - Paulson is instructing the impressionable young audience with a piece of propaganda. He uses all the skilled writer's gifts: Making the owners die in very bad states; like the first owner, a frontiersman who joined the American Continental Army only to be "seduced" by the rifle's evil spell, and ends up a sniper; shooting "unsuspecting" British officers in what Paulson hints subtly in a cowardly manner....and who dies of dysentery (which Paulson describes as vividly as possible as wallowing in his own excrement..Using the EEEUUUU!! factor, eh Mr. P?) and the whole succession of successive owners, like the itinerant Gun Show Trader, who Paulson describes like a Junkie;

addicted to beer, living in a motor home he uses to travel from one Gun Show arena to the next; living a life of a lonely outcast so he can hug his beloved GUNS. (And, of course, no women or significant others in the picture either. Mr. P hints broadly Gun Nuts repel girls - take note teen guys!!) Then Paulson introduces the ridiculous plot device of the 200+ year-old loaded flintlock set off by a stray fireplace spark (in a NEIGHBOR'S House, no less - how's that for projected guilt?) with the ball striking the well-loved and exceptionally talented young man next door decorating the family Christmas tree killing him instantly with a massive head wound Paulson describes in excruciating detail that would make the most meticulous Senior Medical Examiner's report sound like a hasty jotted note. The cheap plot device that insulted me was the description of how the first owner (Remember the dying excrement wallower?) had "arefully packed the flintlock's touch hole with "bear grease" so it would be "waterproof". Well. Mr. Paulson only finished part of his homework - if the touchhole was packed with grease, the deceased owner wouldn't have been able to dig it out inside of a week. Not the way you waterproof a flinter. (BTW - you smear TALLOW around the outside of the pan after loading and priming. The 17th century shooters did exactly the same thing) No matter how well it was protected, the powder in an antique flint firearm will ALWAYS be "dead" and will not burn. How do I know? In 35+ years of running a gun shop, I've dug original heavily oxidised balls out of more than one 100+ year old muzzleloader. And, I was curious about it, so I tried it. Several times..Sorry, myth debunked.... But my sorrow about this book is that a piece of subtly and seductively crafted anti-firearm propaganda that has succeeded in landing itself on middle school library shelves. And our side usually cannot get our message of responsible and law-abiding safe legal use on the school grounds. What a waste by talented man that I understand does really love the outdoors - but not OUR outdoors. No, I didn't buy it - and my friend didn't either. But it made a fine fire in his trash barrel.where it belonged.

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