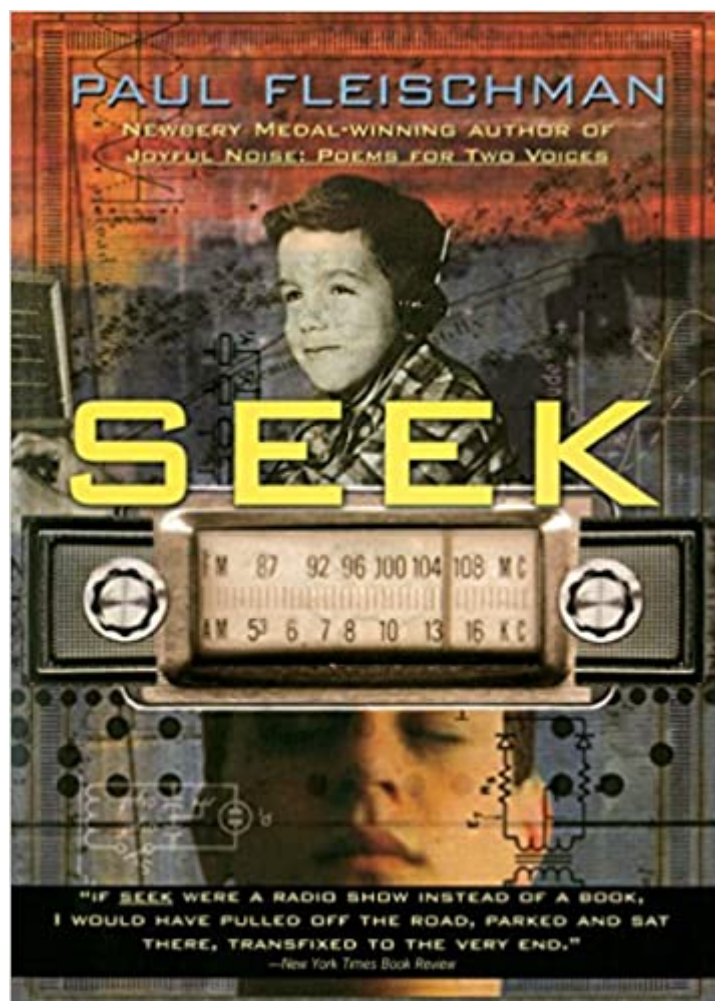


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Seek



Synopsis

Assigned to write his autobiography, high school senior Rob Radkovitz decides to "listen" back on his life. As he remembers the voices of his younger self, his quirky family, and his closest friends, one stands apart -- the haunting voice of his long-absent father, left behind on a single tape from one of his radio shows. Told in a collage of past and present voices, *Seek* follows Rob's obsessive search for his father, pursued not through San Francisco's streets, but through the labyrinth of the airwaves. Open the cover and listen in -- to psychic readers and pirate DJs, and to Rob's transforming views of his past and future.

Book Information

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Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Being a Teen

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

Late night. The boy listens to the radio and twirls the dial aimlessly to catch fragments of a talk show, a baseball game, jazz, rock, country & western, a Spanish soap opera, the curtain calls for a grand opera, a sermon, a newscast... This is the raw material for the sound collage Paul Fleischman has put together to make an extraordinary novel that tells of a young boy's ongoing search through the airwaves for the DJ father he never knew. Added to the radio sound bites are other voices: love and wisdom from the boy's grandparents and mother, banter with his friends, hilarious bits from their alternative newspaper, scenes from his childhood--and his own voice reading from a school-assignment autobiography. Characteristically, the boy's father has left him

only sound: a sound-effects record and a taping of his Golden Oldies call-in show. These become the recurring chorus for this cacophony that somehow takes on the shape of an engaging narrative, as the boy seeks and seeks, and finally outgrows his need and finds his own direction. Paul Fleischman is the distinguished winner of a Newbery Medal (*Joyful Noise*), a Newbery Honor (*Graven Images*), two Golden Kites, and the Scott O'Dell Award (*Bull Run*). His interest in sound for its own sake has often taken him in new directions, none more audacious than this: a book which is entirely aural in a visual age, meant to be experienced through the mind's ear (instructions for performance are included) rather than the mind's eye. (Ages 12 and older) --Patty Campbell --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Readers will strongly detect Fleischman's (*Joyful Noise*; *Bull Run*) ear for language and appreciation for family history in this story of a teen's life, which emerges as a lyrical symphony of voices. High-school senior Rob, inspired by his fascination with radios, chooses to write his autobiography (assigned for English class) in the form of a radio play. The narrator presents a series of monologues and dialogues that capture the essence of those who have influenced him most: his trilingual mother, his history-professor grandfather, his storytelling grandmother, the aunts who helped raise him, and his school friends. However, Rob is most conscious of the silence created by his absent father ("Somehow, that missing voice seemed to outweigh all those that were present," he reflects). In an attempt to fill the empty space left by the man he's never met, Rob tunes into radio stations across the country and beyond to listen to announcers, one of whom might just be his DJ father. The novel which combines elements of poetry, fiction, essay and drama will be best appreciated in a readers' theater kind of setting; otherwise, it can take some time to get one's bearings, as the narrative moves between flashbacks and contemporaneous conversations. But those who stick with this lively cast of characters, revealed solely through dialogue, will be rewarded. Ages 12-up. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The idea of writing children and teen books that should ideally be read aloud is not particularly common. Just the same, author Paul Fleischman has excelled at it time and time again. Long ago when I was young and unappreciative of anything that didn't involve "The Phantom of the Opera" (don't ask...it was a faze) I was given Fleischman's lovely Newbery Award winning, "Joyful Noise: Poems for Two Voices". I didn't really take to the book, partly because I was a little old for it when it first came out. Looking back at it recently, I could acknowledge that it was a lovely idea wrapped up

in a succinct little book. Fast forward some thirteen odd years later to the publication of "Seek". A particularly daring young adult novel, Fleischman has written a tale that is so flexible that it can either be read on the page or heard in a form of Reader's Theater. This is perhaps the first book I've read that was meant to be read on the radio. Robert has a happy life in many ways. Living in San Francisco he shares a home with his adoring mother, grandfather, and grandmother. He has multiple aunts that dote upon him and a stable home. Though Robert appreciates these things, it's the absence of his father that affects him the most. Lenny, Robert's pop, left his mother when he found out that she was pregnant with their child. Because his father was a radio dj, Robert has a tape of one of Lenny's radio shows. Using this voice as a guide, the son embarks on a quest to ride the radio waves to find his missing dad. Covering a scope of many years and tracking Robert's heartbreak and eventual acceptance, the book is written like a radio program. Songs, snippets of voices from the past, sound effects, fades, crossfades, and other techniques all give the viewer a multi-layered look into one boy's head. Reading this book, I admit right here and now that I was shocked at how mature "Seek"'s style was. I thought I was going to read your normal run-of-the-mill teen novel. Instead, I was caught completely off-guard when I found myself reading "We hear a wordless recording of wetland sound effects". From page one you realize that this is not teen drivel. It takes a bit of maturity and effort to get the feel of the book at the start. I can guarantee, however, that if you keep going you'll find yourself amply rewarded with a story that is as honest as it is enjoyable. Authors tend to play with fire when they introduce the parents-split-up-and-child-decided-to-find-one/get-them-back-together plotline. The danger is always there that the book's going to turn into a treacly (and dishonest) "Parent Trap" deal where everyone ends up happy nuclear family again by the end. I knew Fleischman was high on style, but how well can he actually... you know... write? Well, it turns out that he's superb. There's life and character to this tale. There are even (I kid you not) laugh out loud moments. As a child Rob often puts on a radio show for his family that's hilarious. As a teen, he's constantly ridiculing people in positions of power, hopefully giving readers some ideas of their own. And as for Rob's Union grandfather, I'm in love. I've yet to meet a grandfatherly figure in a book with half the vinegar and personality of that particularly fantastic character. I'm not going to give away the book's ending or anything. Let's just say the author of "Seek" knows what he can and cannot do in this tale. I think the moral of this story is spoken by Rob's mother near the end. "Forgiving doesn't mean you approve of what someone did. It means you understand why they did it". I think that is, in essence, the gist of what Fleischman's trying to say here. But just as important as what he says is HOW he chooses to say it. For any kid who thinks they're up to the challenge of reading something a little out of the

ordinary, "Seek" has their number.

If you are looking for a book with a plot that takes you by the hand and leads you through the whole book without so much as a bump in the road, this book is not for you. But if you are looking for something different, look no farther. This book is written in a collage of voices ranging from radio broadcasts to Mexican soap operas. At first this muddle jumble of voices is very discouraging because it is almost impossible to figure out what is happening and ultimately what the book is about. But after you get past the beginning and the plot becomes more clear, you can begin to piece together all the voices and find their unique part in the bigger picture. This is a very good book that has everything. At some parts it might be very sad or serious, while at others it was extremely funny. Since I have as of yet told you nothing about the plot, I will describe the plot in one sentence. The book is about a boy's search for his father. I will tell you no more because the rest of the plot is for you to figure out. And perhaps it is the fact that you have to figure out the plot yourself that makes this such a great book.

In *Seek*, High School teenager Rob is assigned to write an autobiography based on his life so far. Rob reflects back on his life not with writing descriptions and dialog but with sound bites. He remembers his grandmother telling him stories, his grandfather teaching him history, his mother watching Spanish soap operas with him, he and his friends creating a controversial and popular newspaper in school and most importantly his continuous love for the radio. He remembers listening the radio, searching the many channels in hope of one day hearing his father's voice come over for once, the father who abandoned him and his mother before birth because he didn't want a child. *Seek* is a really great book. This novel/play is a familiar story but told in an unfamiliar way, instead of descriptions it's told through simple sound bites. If you're in the mood for an honest, touching, and often humorous story about a boy's search for his father and growing up in the world this is defiantly for you. It's a rarity you see a YA book with such heart.

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