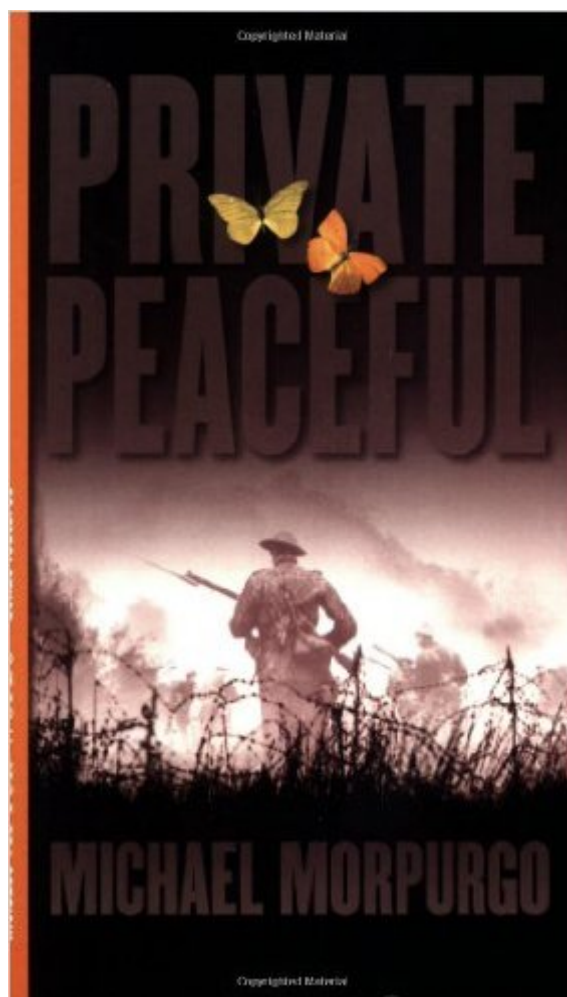


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Private Peaceful (After Words)



Synopsis

From the Children's Laureate of England, a stunning novel of the First World War, a boy who is on its front lines, and a childhood remembered. Includes After Words bonus features. As the enemy lurks in the darkness, Thomas struggles to stay awake through the night. He has lived through the terror of gas attacks and watched friends die by his side. But in the morning, Thomas will be forced to confront an even greater horror. As the minutes tick by, Thomas remembers his childhood spent deep in the countryside with his mother, his brothers, and Molly, the love of his life. But each minute that passes brings Thomas closer to something he can't bear to think about--the moment when the war and its horrific consequences will change his life forever.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 860 (What's this?)

Series: After Words

Mass Market Paperback: 202 pages

Publisher: Scholastic Paperbacks (May 1, 2006)

Language: English

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Product Dimensions: 0.5 x 4.2 x 6.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 4.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars See all reviews (76 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #90,078 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #51 in Books > Teens > Historical Fiction > Military #103 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Family > Siblings #106 in Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > Military & Wars

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

This short book is set in two contrasting locations the ugliness and agony of the First World War as well as the main character's home environment, the Devonshire countryside. The book tells the tale of two brothers growing up in a poor but supportive home environment, which gets progressively worse after the death of their father. It shows how the local gentry could force those without resources to do as they were instructed. This conflict between the gentry and the working classes is

one of the main motive forces in the story. Michael Morpurgo shows how ultimately the older brothers refusal to be broken in spirit led to his undoing. A very well written and enjoyable book, not just for young adults. Its a book that speaks up for those soldiers who were put to death by the the officer corp of the British Army. A final thought on this topic; Back in 1997 Tony Blair seeking election as the next Prime Minister made an election promise to give posthumous pardons to these men. to date he still has not delivered on this promise. OK so in the end Blair came through with the pardon when he was needing a boost the polls just before an election if memory serves.

Having never read any previews of this book it took me a little while to catch on what was taking place. It is a well written book exploring the avenues of childhood with all the ups and downs of that part of life with absolutely brilliant descriptions of life in those times with a time to enjoy life and recognize nature around us which many now a days just do not notice or appreciate. Perhaps in this year of the anniversary of the start of the 1914-1918 war it is a book which should be read to enlighten one as to the horrors of life of those who fought in it and in some cases how they come to be there. I finished this book 4 days ago and I am still remembering chapters scenes and lines from it. I find the hard part of the book is to try and decide who it is for, as while in the lead up to the going to war could well be directed towards children but wwhen it moves on to war and the culmination it is definitely adult material.

What a sad story. The eldest son in a financially oppressed family makes one bad choice after another, causing trouble. When both sons are sent off to the war (though Tommo is too young), his ways do not change. Charlie is still the same strong-willed young man he was before he went. His sense of right and wrong never takes the authority of others or the possible consequences of his actions into consideration. Though there were several amusing scenes in the book, for the most part it is very depressing. The end is not conclusive, and we do not know what becomes of Tommo. Just an all-around sad tale. And I wanted to shake Grandma Wolf. She was awfully judgmental to Charlie and all the Peaceful family, and then we find out she had been living in sin herself. She was a horrible woman, and I was glad when she left them. The story is well written and keeps your attention, but I would not read it again.

Although PRIVATE PEACEFUL is categorized as a novel for young adults (YA), I found it much more than that. Because I'm an Old Adult (OA), and found the story absolutely captivating from start to finish. It brought to mind, of course, Stephen Crane's The Red Badge of Courage (Enriched

Classics (Pocket)) and its young hero, Henry Fleming, who, like Morpurgo's Tommo Peaceful, wanted desperately to prove he wasn't a coward. Going to war to prove one's manhood has long been a theme in literature. A more recent novel of the Second World War, Nick Arvin's *Articles of War*, is even closer in theme to Morpurgo's book. Arvin's novel owes much to William Bradford Huie's non-fiction classic, *The Execution of Private Slovik*. Morpurgo was, I suspect, very careful to avoid usage of the kind of casual obscenity that is endemic to the speech of rank and file military men. In so doing he was able to preserve his status as a writer of YA books. His descriptions of young (16) Tommo Peaceful and what he is thinking as he endures military training and then his various baptisms of fire in the horrors of WWI trench warfare are simply dead-on. You ache for this boy, who quickly, out of necessity, becomes a man. And the love felt between the Peaceful brothers - also brothers-in-arms - quickly becomes a unifying element of the story, from their childhood onward. Simply put, *PRIVATE PEACEFUL* is just superb story-telling for any audience, YA or OA. Now I have to find a copy of Morpurgo's companion piece, *War Horse*.

Private Peaceful has a very interesting premise: Set against the backdrop of World War One, we follow brothers Charlie and Tommo as they grow up and subsequently enlist in Britain's army to fight the Hun. Each chapter begins sometime during a very long night as Tommo remembers all the adventures and trials he and his family endured together. Morpurgo does an excellent job of building suspense as we learn slowly that Tommo is dreading the coming of morning, though the reason is unclear until late in the book. By then, we are so emotionally vested in this story that the realization of what's coming is devastating. *Private Peaceful* (Peaceful is the family name) is a short book that packs a wallop of emotion. However, at times Morpurgo doesn't move the story along as quickly as I'd like, though of course war itself is like that. Tommo doesn't waver in his commitments, whether to his brothers, his soldiering, or his love for his brother's wife; it's this love for Molly that I found immature on his part. The brothers are realistic in their devotion to each other, and Morpurgo is skilled in bringing us to the climax that tests those bonds. Overall I enjoyed this book, though I felt it might have done a little better with Tommo being less focused on his own feelings. The book would make a great addition to a history teacher's repertoire; it illustrates the devastation of trench warfare and the unrealistic notions of young men enlisting to fight an unknown enemy. Ultimately packing a powerful punch, this is indeed a book I find easy to recommend.

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