



Rash

Pete Hautman

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"Of course, without people like us Marstens, there wouldn't be anybody to do the manual labor that makes this country run. Without penal workers, who would work the production lines, or pick the melons and peaches, or maintain the streets and parks and public lavatories? Our economy depends on prison labor. Without it everybody would have to work -- whether they wanted to or not."

In the late twenty-first century Bo Marsten is unjustly accused of a causing a rash that plagues his entire high school. He loses it, and as a result, he's sentenced to work in the Canadian tundra, at a pizza factory that's surrounded by hungry polar bears. Bo finds prison life to be both boring and dangerous, but it's nothing compared to what happens when he starts playing on the factory's highly illegal football team. In the meantime, Bork, an artificial intelligence that Bo created for a science project, tracks Bo down in prison. Bork has spun out of control and seems to be operating on his own. He offers to get Bo's sentence shortened, but can Bo trust him? And now that Bo has been crushing skulls on the field, will he be able to go back to his old, highly regulated life?

Pete Hautman takes a satirical look at an antiseptic future in this darkly comic mystery/adventure.

Rash Details

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Author : Pete Hautman

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From Reader Review Rash for online ebook

Laura says

somewhere between 3 and 4 stars, so I rounded up.

Duffy Pratt says

In this dystopian satire, the USSA (the extra S is for safety or socialism) has criminalized most marginally unsafe activities. For example, you must wear a helmet and pads to walk down the street. This may seem silly, but it does not appear that law abiding citizens work. And the government has eliminated its prison system. Instead, it contracts out its prisoners to companies. Thus, criminalizing behavior has become a good profit center for the government, and it can increase safety while securing a cheap labor force, and while putting its thumb on the mostly young male population who might step out of line with the norm. Sound far-fetched? It is, but I'm not sure by how much.

The main character is a kid who gets sent up for several heinous crimes. He forgot to take his anger medicine. He didn't wear his protective knee pads during a running race. He insulted a fellow student. He attempted, but failed, to beat up that same student. And my favorite, he involuntarily caused an hysterical rash among the student body at his school. For these crimes, he gets three years working for a McDonalds pizza factory in the arctic.

The history of McDonalds is a hoot. It merged with General Motors. Then several years later, the merged manufacturer was taken over by the great Chinese retailer, Waltong. During the diplomatic wars with China in 2050, the USSA nationalized the company, then sold it to local interests. They, out of a sort of nostalgia, re-named the company McDonalds.

The prison/factory is a much different place. There's little concern for safety. The prisoners work 16 hours a day. All they eat is reject pizza pies. Anyone who gets out of line is liable to get put outside of the plant, where they would likely either freeze to death or get killed and eaten by polar bears. This would get written off as "died trying to escape."

The hero improves his position by winning a spot on the boss' pet football team. Football, of course, has been illegal for a long time. The boss, and the boss of a nearby Coke factory, keep teams on the sly, and arrange for a game between the two companies. It's a fiasco, lasting only about five plays, before the teams break into a riot.

This book is quite a bit of fun. The characters are very thin, but that's pretty much par for the course for most satire. The extrapolations are a bit over the top, but again, that's the stuff of satire. There are quite a few things that Hautman constructs quite well. For example, while the main character was at school, he worked on developing an AI as a computer project. In 2070, all high school students must show competence in creating an artificial intelligence which would pass the Turing test. The AI that he develops becomes one of the better characters in the book. In the end, this book falls more on the side of being clever, rather than being moving. Usually, that's a minus for me, but this one was done so nicely that it won me over.

Shannon says

Can you imagine a world where safety procedures rule...literally? Dropping fruit, failing to take medicine, and walking without a "safety helmet" is actually illegal in the late 21st century U.S.S.A. (The extra "S" stands for safety.) Not surprisingly, up to one-third of adult citizens are in corporate-owned prisons at any one point of time. After all, someone has to do the "dangerous" jobs that keep the country and economy going. (Did you ever realize how dangerous it is to produce frozen pizzas? Factories with unprotected cement floors, sharp cornered-walls, rivets that stick out—a total death trap!)

Bo Marsten is rash—easily angered and impulsive. He inherited this from his father. Combine this with a miserable high school experience, spreading hypochondria, unrequited love and a teenage bully, and Bo's fate is sealed. He ends up in the frozen, polar-bear inhabited, tundra of Canada, making pizzas with other juvenile delinquents. Of course his experience would not be complete without a masochistic jailer, named, what else, the "Hammer."

In prison, no longer shielded from the "dangers" of the world, Bo makes friends and enemies. He also learns about himself, freedom of choice, and the brutal realities of 20th century football. With his athletic skill, wits, and a school-project-gone-wrong, Bo manages to survive. The question is, however, will he continue to be so rash?

Dniemuth04 says

The novel, "RASH", By Pete Hautman is based on a fictional world in the future with safety being the top priority in society. Laws and restrictions get out of hand and are taken way too far. It gets to the point where you get thrown in jail just for being overweight. The main character, Bo, is on Levor, which is a pill that gives him extra time to react to a dangerous situation. For example, one of these situations would be verbally assaulting another human. Bo calls Kahlos, the popular jerk of the school, "a dog's anus." This lands him in the principal's office where he is warned to not commit another minor act against the law. He eventually does it again and gets sent to a prison camp that makes pizzas in a factory called 3-8-7 McDonald's. Being new, he was considered a paperback until they found out that he could run like no other. Football at this time was illegal and the factories boss has a special team of gold shirts that have better hours and food than most of the workers there. The paperbacks are always stuck eating pizza and drinking Pepsi. Bo's artificial intelligence bot, named Bork, helps black mail the factories boss to release Bo. Fortunately for Bo, he is a good runner. The boss is known for being a ruthless guy. The town of safety is near, but Polar Bears stand between safety and death. Bo eventually earns a diploma and takes his running skills and goes to South America where he can play football where it is still legal.

Bo, the main Character of the book, is the main focus point. Everything that happens in the book has a relation back to Bo, like his feelings for Maddy; his crush, Karhlos; his rival, and his family. Bo's family has always been sort of the bad boy's family, so everyone expects it from him. Bo sometimes blames his actions on his bloodline inheritance. Hammer, the boss of factory 3-8-7, is a much built big man that used to play professional football until it became illegal. He has a harsh personality and doesn't care much for the well being of any of the people at the factory because all of them are replaceable in his mind. Bork is Bo's cyber intelligence bot that grows smarter and can talk more like a human the more Bo trains him. Eventually, Bork gets an opportunity to blackmail Hammer and gets Bo out of the factory. Bork turns into a rogue which is illegal and is eventually terminated by the Security&Safety Department.

This novel is based on a fictional world that takes place in 2074, in the future and is now called USSA, which stands for United States Safer of America. Every unsafe action is criminalized and Bo breaks it one too many times. He is then sent to the rough frigid Canadian Tundra, where he will serve his time in prison doing work for a Big Business Corporation Such As McDonalds. When he escapes the hard work he end up in a hospital from a bear crushing him as someone shot it just before he got mauled by it. Races and competitions between Karhlos and Bo were all done at the school where Karhlos faked getting a rash and blamed it on Bo. This is the start of his criminal acts that forces him to be sent away. Another major area of the story is in South America where he now plays football.

The main theme that I got from the book was safety; this book demonstrates acts of extraordinary and unusual precautions to daily life. It takes being safe to a whole new level of intensity that is completely unnecessary. Bo tests the system because of how corrupt and unjust it is and just can't accommodate the extreme rules and regulations.

I would strongly recommend this book to a person that is willing to stick with the book and not give up half way, because the beginning half is boring and just overall frustrating to read about how poorly he is treated. The story doesn't get interesting 'til he gets sent away and starts to become more skilled with football and other common things that are illegal in the book.

Justine says

Divertissant, ça se lit. Mais j'ai pas compris l'intérêt du livre... :/

Amanda says

My immediate thought after finishing *Rash*: Huh. For it is a peculiar novel. And I'm still not entirely sure what to say about it. I enjoyed it, but didn't love it. However, I think its target audience would love it. That audience is teen and preteen boys, and heaven (aka Barnes and Noble) knows there aren't enough books out there for them.

The novel is set in the not too distant future of the United States, which is now known as the USSA (United Safer States of America). In this dystopian-lite future, anything that is dangerous to one's safety has been outlawed: no drinking, no smoking, no contact sports, no fast food, no foul language. Children can't play outside without the appropriate safety gear. Most of the populace is taking a cocktail of drugs to maintain their health and well-being (including Levulor, which dampens the instinct toward anger). The reason for the emphasis on safety is that it has significantly increased the lifespan of the average human. The trade-off is that one really can't enjoy that extra-long life. (And if you think this future is a ridiculous hypothesis, look at national, state, and city legislation attempting to yank toys out of Happy Meals, make walking and using an electronic device illegal, implement Body Mass Index requirements at public schools, etc.)

In this society, even the most minor of infractions can be a criminal offense that sends you to a prison work farm. These work farms perform the potentially "dangerous" (by this futuristic society's standards) jobs no one else wants to do. They produce goods and produce, and they also maintain the nation's infrastructure. Bo Marsten's famously short-tempered family knows this first hand: his father (convicted of road rage) works at a shrimp farm and his brother works on a road crew. It's only a matter of time before Bo's own temper gets the better of him and he's sent to a production facility in the arctic that is run by a football fanatic who

arranges illegal sporting events for his own entertainment. Because of Bo's ability to run faster than anyone else, it isn't long before he's recruited to the team and learns first hand what pain really feels like.

There are a lot of draws here for teenage boys: very short chapters, rapid fire pacing, frequent changes in topic (you'd almost think Hautman himself is ADD as frequently as events and settings change), a futuristic society whose ridiculousness makes it simultaneously frightening and funny, and, of course, football.

Cross posted at This Insignificant Cinder

Sofia T. (♥ Dimitri Belikov) says

Read for uni!

Boyd says

Welcome to the future: a United States so safe that it's been renamed the USSA (United Safe States of America). Here everything from football to skateboarding to drinking has been banned. Walking down the street requires protective pads and a safety helmet. Everyone's safe and happy. Or at least that's the theory. Rash by Pete Hautman tells the story of Bo Marsten who doesn't exactly fit into this cowardly new world. He causes a skin rash outbreak at his school and finds himself packaging pizza for McDonald's Corp. in Alaska as part of the penal industry that serves as the labor force for this dystopic society. Combining humor, social criticism, and a likeable protagonist, this novel was another one that I absolutely ripped through in a day, barely pausing to eat.

Easton Groskreutz says

PERSONAL RESPONSE: I really enjoy reading *Rash* by Pete Hautman, because it deals with futuristic problems that seem like they won't be true. I love books that find their own adventure and new ones in the middle of the book too. This book takes place during a time that I now like, because Hautman added so many interesting laws in the future and the way the USSA teaches is pretty interesting too. I love the fact football is a banned sport in the USSA (USA) but when the main character is playing football and he both likes it and is good at it, it changes the whole perspective of this book. The book goes from not so interesting in the beginning to super interesting in the end; all together this has got to be one of the best books I have ever read.

PLOT: The book actually doesn't specify the time but the book takes place sometime in the future estimating around the late twenty-first century. WindO's are the new computers and they have a virtual robot that teaches the students in the schools. Bo Marsten (who is the main character 'first person') really hates a kid who keeps getting him into trouble in school. Bo's family history is guilty for a lot of things like road rage from the dad because of the law of the future three strikes you're out. Bo tries to pick a fight with the guy he really hates one day and he gets tranquilized by a robot that hangs on the wall in the mall. Bo then gets sent off to where teenagers go when guilty by court; in the Canadian Tundra, at a factory for McDonalds doing labor by making pizzas. Bo learned many life lessons through the months of prison time. When he returns

home his life is much easier from what he learns.

Recommendation: I recommend this book to anyone that is 12 years or older and to any gender. I also recommend this book to any readers who look for a good adventure taking place in the future or if they are interested in books with main characters that find a new adventure themselves. In this book Bo finds better friends and they show readers that anyone could do anything no matter how hard they try or how different they are from others. Readers will like it when Bo's enemy has made this make believe Rash that spreads just within the school just because they think they may get it or catch it. I believe anyone can and will enjoy this book if they have the time to sit down for a moment and read a great book.

Montana says

Rash is an amazing book that takes a look at the possible future of the United States and all the weird laws and procedures that people will enact for their own safety. In the year 2070, the United Safer States of America now relies on its massive penal system for the bulk of its work force, public service and even big corporations are paying the government to use inmates as factory workers. The book follows Bo Marsten and his family that have a large history of violent tendency. With extreme laws set in place, Bo's father was sent to jail for road rage and Bo's brother was put away for picking a fight. After Bo lets his anger get the best of him while fighting over a girl with another school mate, he too is locked away in jail. While he is put away, Bo learns that the jails around the USSA play sports such as football that were made illegal over 30 years ago. Without his consent or wanting, Bo is forced to play football for his jail's team where he ends up loving the sport and the violence. I would definitely recommend this book to anybody that likes a short but engaging read that will keep you reading no matter where you want to stop.

Austin Baehnman says

The book "Rash" by Pete Hautman is an exciting action filled book that I think would be fun for everyone to read. I think this book is pretty good, but it wasn't what I expected. What I was expecting was more like a "Hatchet" type book, but what I got was a futuristic society that is crazy about safety. When someone puts another person's life in danger they are sent to a work camp for a number of years. This ties into the main character and his family because the men in the family are known for aggressive behavior.

The plot is based in a 22nd century U.S.A where you could get sent to a prison work camp for endangering the safety of others. This is what happens to the main character; Bo Marsten, his father, and his brother. Bo is accused of plaguing the whole high school that he goes too with a rash even though Karlohs Mink put the wrong face creme on his face which made him have an allergic reaction. The rash was from people worrying about if they were going to catch the rash or not. He was forced to stay home and he wanted to say sorry to his girlfriend Maddy Wilson. When he went to find her he found her with Karlohs. Karlohs had his arm around her which made Bo mad and he went and punched Karlohs in the face and got sent to a work camp which was McDonald's plant 3-8-7 where he played football which is highly illegal. After he got back from the plant he couldn't return to school so his grandpa asked him if he wanted to go down to Brazil and run in an actual race.

This story we follow the main character Bo and his problematic family. His family has a history of being very violent. His dad, Al, and his brother, Sam, are both already in work camps because of their high tempers. Sadly, Bo follows in both his brother and his father's footsteps when he gets sent to McDonald's

plant 3-8-7. Bo is a 15 year old high school sophomore who attended Washington high. He loves running and his girlfriend Maddy Wilson.

The impacts of setting on Bo were very substantial because of Bo's high violence gene pool, he wasn't good in the setting. When he went to 3-8-7 the plant manager, Hammer, had tryouts for the gold shirts or the football team. Since none of the characters have ever even touched a football it was interesting to see Bo get the running back position. About halfway through Bo's sentence Hammer told to football players that they would be playing in a game instead of just practicing all the time. The football game was more like an all-out brawl instead of an actual game.

I would recommend this book to all high school students (9-12) because the story line and the plot are very good. This book wanted to make me read it and not put it down. I couldn't wait to start reading this book again after I put it down. This was a very good book.

Amit Sarker says

Rash is a brilliant piece of literature written by Pete Hautman because it shows what happens in the future and also shows on the behavior of what really does happen in the future. The book is really about a teenager boy named Bo who loves running. He wants to set a school record for the 100 meter dash in sprinting but obviously has other problems. Everything changed in the United States, even the name. Now in 2050 (present time) it is called USSA. Technology and all other health circumstances improved, life expectancy is now over 100 for people living in the USSA, and safety is at its highest. Now, students who are playing any sport are required to wear helmets, knee pads, and any other safety outwear that covers their entire body. They even have to take Levour, which is a pill that is supposed to slow your thinking down by a tenth of a second. This is supposed to give students a chance to think of what they're going to do twice before actually doing it. However, Bo always finds himself in trouble and after his third warning; he is sent down to a prison camp where their punishment is to make pizzas and to deliver them to other restaurants. There, he meets other friends, and eventually, the person in charge of the camp teaches them to play football. Football is banned from the USSA, mainly because of the fact that it's a contact sport, but the prison factory is in the middle of nowhere, so they might as just well play it. Bo becomes a great runner, but is eventually kicked out because his "lawyer" also a computer hoax that Bo himself created, threatened to reveal this case about American Football to the authorities if they don't let Bo get released. So, that's what happens, and Po has to walk 23 miles to the nearest city. And the story mainly has an ending there, but it keeps on going with his father coming back and Bo being able to go back to school. I believe that it's a really great book, and everyone should read it because it's so exciting and you would also have the temptation to find out more especially because of the ending. When I was reading it on my I-Pad, I didn't even realize I was on the last page until I couldn't flip the page anymore. I continuously was swiping the screen from left to right, but eventually found out that the book ended. But in conclusion, I really think that it's a great book and it's also a book worth reading.

Ana712 says

In Rash by Pete Hautman, the main character, Bo, lives in the author's interesting perspective of late twenty-first century America. Being kind-of a rebel, Bo spends most of his life running: From being caught doing something robot controllers won't like, being in trouble with his family, being in trouble with his girlfriend, avoiding trouble he's already in and avoiding trouble he knows is yet to come. He spends most of his life

running, physically and metaphorically, and in a way, so do I.

I've always ran away from troubles so that I don't have to face them. I know that's not healthy. Whenever I know somebody is angry at me, I avoid any sort of contact with them.

Once, a girl I am no longer friends with was going to confront me about how she thought I was lying when I said I had plans. (I was, but that's not the point of the story.) The point of the story was that I was so afraid of confrontation that I literally ran from her from three days. I had people whisper to me that she was coming, and I made up excuses for my constant need to use the bathroom. In the end, all that running just gave me more to deal with than if I had let her confront me in the first place.

Hopefully without sounding too mean, this girl was a girl who nobody really likes, and who I did not want to be friends with anyways. When I remember her chasing after me, I am reminded of a scene in Rash.

Bo had just escaped his factory/training camp in the arctic wasteland of Canada. He was being chased by robot polar bears who he had heard would tear him into tiny pieces before they ate him. The way he kept running and running as the polar bear viciously drew nearer and nearer to him, well, as I said it kind of reminds me of my experience with that girl.

I think running is something we all do. I think we all try to run away from our problems, and in doing so just make the problem bigger. I mean, don't you run away? Running is the easiest way to have peace, even if it is only short-lived. Running provides sort-of a safe haven, where you can pretend everything is happy and peaceful.

I have a friend who has been running away from her feelings toward her friend for the whole year, and is only now starting to realize how much that friend terrorizes her. She is only now defending herself. My other friends and I had known for the whole year how mean the girl is, but our friend just kept pushing these thoughts away.

This is what I think everybody does. Short term, you are happiest if you push your problems away from you. Long term, it just hacks away at you.

In Rash, Bo was safe for a while as he hid from his girlfriend, Maddy. She was angry at Bo for yelling at a guy who he thought was being too flirty with her.

Although he had time to plan out how he was going to act, he succeeded in making her only more angry by hiding from her.

While running is a bad idea, I don't recommend stepping up and facing your problems either. It's kind of a lose-lose situation.

Remember the girl I ran away from? Well eventually I let her confront me. I let her tell me all about how she thought I didn't like her, and how sad it made her feel inside. I knew it was bullshit, and I knew that when I apologized, she would continue to be mean to me. So I told her that I didn't want to be her friend, that I felt like she pressured me into doing everything with her and that she was unkind to me.

What good that came out of that was that now I am no longer friends with her. But much more bad came out. I felt like the meanest person in the world because of what she said to me and what I said to her.

When Bo finally outran the Polar bears, he still faced the trouble of the eskimos he had heard to be unkind, and if he avoided the eskimos he would face starvation. A lose-lose situation.

I hate that that can happen. I hate that there are problems we all face that just can't be resolved. It just reinforces the idea that the world is unfair. But you know what, that's a problem that can't be solved either.

Jennifer Wardrip says

Reviewed by Karin Perry for TeensReadToo.com

Picture, if you will, life in the year 2076. You are living in The United Safer States of America and things such as obesity, verbal abuse, and dangerous activities are against the law. The legal driving age is twenty-six. Even sports such as football are illegal. Sports that are allowed are hindered due to all the safety gear the

participants are required to wear. This is the world that sixteen-year-old Bo Marsten inhabits.

Bo has inherited a bit of a temper from his father who has been in prison since 2073 for road rage. He has been in trouble at school many times for "failing to control his antisocial impulses," but when he is falsely accused of causing a rash that spreads throughout the school, his anger gets the best of him and he assaults a classmate. This action lands him in a work camp in the middle of the Canadian tundra that is surrounded by hungry polar bears.

The work camp Bo is sent to is a factory that makes pizzas. He becomes a member of a four man team with the responsibility of using the pepperoni gun. Each pull of the trigger on the pepperoni gun delivers twenty-six pepperoni on each pizza. When the team works in sync, life isn't so bad. There is only one group that causes Bo problems while he is there, the Goldshirts. The Goldshirts are an elite group at the pizza factory that have special privileges like a variety of food, when the others only have defective pizzas to eat for every meal, every day. The Goldshirts main job is to play football for the warden.

All new editions to the work camp eventually have a tryout in front of the warden. This entails running and catching a pass. If you catch it, you become a Goldshirt and are placed on the team. Bo makes the team and experiences physical activity without protective gear for the first time in his life. The warden requires that the team practice every day for several hours in order to prepare for an illegal game with another work camp. If you want to remain a Goldshirt, you play even if you are injured.

After surviving work camp and brutal football games, Bo, with the help of an unlikely attorney, is released from his sentence and allowed to go home. Bo begins to think about life in the USSA and considers where else he can go that would allow more freedom.

Pete Hautman has written a unique sports novel for the sci-fi/fantasy lover. This interesting look at what might happen to a society more concerned with safety than freedom is a page-turner. The reader will enjoy comparing today's life with the life Hautman has created.

Nathan Togstad says

Bo was just a kid whose father and brother had anger problems. He went to school and was a great track athlete. He liked to work on his AI (artificial intelligence) whose name is Bork. He had a few anger problems but was living a decent life with his mother and his grandfather. One day when he was at track, he got in an argument with his worst enemy, Karlos. In the future, slinging around a few hurtful words is a felony. Bo had to go to court, but the judge was easy on him and gave him a warning. The next time he saw Karlos he swung at him. This was the moment that Bo's life changed.

Bo got sentenced to two years to the McDonald's prison camp in Canada. He had to make pizza with a bunch of other prisoners. His roommate was a kid nicknamed rhino. He was nicknamed rhino because he was over 350lbs. They had a rough start, but they became friends over the course of their prison time. They were doing good with making and eating pizza every day. Then one day the leader of the prison, Hammer, was holding tryouts. When it was Bo's turn to run the football, he scored a touchdown on the people he was against. He made the team, but his catching ability was almost none. They had a lot of practices and were slowly getting better as a team. one day Hammer told them that they had a game to play against the Coke plant.

The game did not go well for either team. They both had several injuries and the game was called off about half way through. They were going to get time to heal so they can play again in two weeks. When they got back to their camp, Bo's AI had contacted him. He was acting like a lawyer. He contacted Hammer and asked for Bo's release. When Hammer heard that he threw Bo out into the wilderness to run twenty six miles

to the next town. He was in sight of the town when a polar bear started to chase him. There was a tour of polar bears going on so they tranquilized it, but the body still landed on Bo. He woke up in the hospital. He was eventually able to fly back to his house. Bork was also able to free his father. When he met his father, he didn't know how to feel. His dad was a hot head around the house and eventually signed away to go back to the prison camp. Bo was told that he needed to leave the country from Bork, so he was going to go to south america and run for a living.

Bo was changed a lot over the course of the book. He went from being a hot head and snapping every now and again, to someone who was thinking about what they wanted to do with their life. Prison was probably the best thing that happened to him. It made him see what he actually wants to do with his life. He may have gotten hurt along the way, but it made him mature enough to make important life choices.

This book is probably more for the teenage audience. Kids of any gender older than 12 would probably like this book. It shows how someone's decision making rapidly matures over the course of a prison sentence.

Teens would be able to relate to what Bo was going through.

I think that the book was ok. The futuristic aspect of the book was not really interesting. The inventions that they had are some that we could probably have within the next ten years. It was nothing to crazy that made you think about what could happen. That was the only real downfall of the book. The action in the book was not extreme, but still enough to want to make you keep reading.
