



# Seek

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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.

## Seek Details

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Author : Paul Fleischman

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## From Reader Review Seek for online ebook

### Barbara says

Seek was an interesting novel. I actually had to read it twice. It's written in the form of a play and there is a lot of dialogue between the characters. Characters? There were a plenty... all very interesting, especially the main character's family. The mom in the story was pretty interesting because she, throughout the book, would speak in both Spanish and French... I understood what she was saying. I wouldn't mind reading over again.

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### Becky says

This coming-of-age story is written in the form of a radio script, sound effects and all. The main character, Rob, is a radio junkie by way of his absent father, who is a DJ. When Rob's father left, he left behind a sound-effects album and a recording of his own radio show. Young Rob plays both recordings obsessively, and eventually becomes obsessed with broadcasting as well, starting with novelty shows that can only be heard within his own house, but progressing to his own pirate station.

Through it all, he draws parallels to the man who ran out on him. He scans the radio dial tirelessly, hoping one day to hear his father's voice. When Rob starts broadcasting, he wonders if his father lives near enough to listen to his show, and if his father will one day reach out to him.

The book is full of characters, many of them incidental, and sometimes the mob of voices becomes confusing. The "lost father" theme also seemed a little too hammered-home at times, and I wondered if the book could have been shorter. All in all, though, this is a timeless story in a unique format -- worth reading, probably worth rereading, and worth performing with some of your friends.

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### Elena says

This ended up being a bizarrely personal read for me. I say "bizarrely" because in the usual way of things, this is precisely the kind of book I least enjoy reading: experimental style that causes distance from the characters, boring old mainstream fiction (I tend to prefer fantasy), not much of a plot, no action to speak of. Nevertheless, my reading experience was so personal, in fact, that what follows is hardly even a review, but more an exploration of my own past and how it intertwined with my reading of this novel.

I think this is the first book I've ever read about a fatherless kid whose father isn't dead. Oh, there are books about adopted kids, kids whose dads took off post-divorce and just send cards for birthdays, kids who have deadbeat dads who just show up every once in a while and then disappear again, kids whose dads are abusive or drug users, etc. etc. There are plenty of negligent fathers in YA fiction. But this is the only book I've read that approximated my own situation: a father who couldn't handle the idea of fatherhood and took off before the kid was even born, never to be heard from again.

I found I could empathize with Rob intensely, not because of any real characteristics of the story (I still maintain that bizarre stylistic choices like the one Fleschman made here only distance readers) but because his experiences mirrored my own in many ways, right down to his feeling supplanted in his mother's affections when she has her first serious relationship when he's in high school (for me, it was middle school)

and the way he reacts when his father finally does show up. (My dad still hasn't bothered with any mysterious out-of-the-blue phone calls, but I'd imagine my reaction would be pretty similar to Rob's.)

As I read the story, I found myself caught up in the ways in which my own experiences were similar to or contrasted with Rob and his relationship to the idea of his father, and I was stunned at how, well, *true* it was. This book didn't have much plot. There was zero action. There wasn't even much drama. This is how life actually is.

In the opening of the third Aladdin movie (shut up, I was an Aladdin fanatic as a kid), there's this song about how Aladdin grew up without a dad and how he'll never be a man and be able to marry Jasmine and start a family of his own until he finally finds his father and discovers what kind of man he'll be. My 12-year-old self nearly ripped the tape out of the VCR and threw it against the wall. I grew up without a dad, and I certainly don't feel some giant, gaping lack of father figure in my life. In fact, like Rob in *Seek*, I felt really resentful when a man moved in and started monopolizing my mom's time. Would I have liked to sit down and have a conversation with my father about what an asshole he was? Yes. Would never having that conversation have an adverse effect on how I lived the rest of my life? Hell no. But most fictional representations of kids with only one parent basically convey the message that you can't be a whole person unless you have (or have had in the past) two parents, and that pisses me off.

This book didn't piss me off.

(At least not on that count. I still maintain that if Fleischman wanted to tell his story using sounds, he should have just released it as an audiobook and not done this weird textual representation of something that isn't meant to be text. \*cough\*)

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### **Kyle Weiscopf says**

So in my introduction i think Seek is a good book because it starts off with "high school senior Rob Radkovitz. which he decides to "?isten"back on his old life". Also it talks about alot of radio announcers in this story. Secondly another reason i love this story it is very exciting like at one point i wanted to know more on what happened to Rob in this story. More characters are Boy Rob and Robs Grandfather. So overall i really enjoy reading this book it is very amazing.

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### **Diane says**

Rob lives with his mother and grandparents, but has never met his father. All he had of his father's is a sound effects record and a tape of his *Golden Oldies* radio show. Rob is determined to catch a glimpse of his father on the radio, so he stays up at night searching the airwaves: first with a regular radio, then a ham and then a shortwave radio.

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### **Liz says**

An interesting book about a boy's coming of age and his search through the airwaves for his absent DJ father, Lenny. This book was unique in that it was written to sound/read like a radio drama. It would be great adapted for a stage performance!

I liked Seek for it's groundbreaking format—the radio drama—because it gave a theatrical and technological twist to what could have been a more dark and depressing story. I thought the author conveyed Rob's feelings and frustrations well in an interwoven autobiography and made the reader feel as though the story were being told over a scratchy radio frequency. There were a few instances toward the middle/end of the book when I thought Lenny would appear, like before Rose and Andy got married, and give good reason for his departure however, this didn't happen until way too late (I thought) in the book. I thought the most noteworthy characteristic of Seek was the way in which Fleischman created a kind of symphony of voices with his multitude of characters, lending a melodic quality to a well-written novel.

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### **Evelyn says**

Paul Fleischman likes unique formats, doesn't he? In this book, the "unique format" felt rather choppy in the beginning, but after the first few pages it evened out. I don't have much familiarity with radio, yet the portrayal felt accessible. Themes of family and "finding yourself," so easily overdone, were elegantly handled; I found the resolution satisfying rather than saccharine. Perhaps the message is "honor the past but know when to move on."

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### **Hilary says**

It's the day for reader's theater! Fleischman always does such smart stuff that takes on multiple characters or perspectives and winds it together in a clean, neat way. Seek was no exception. At first, the overlapping, layered, multiple voices format was confusing--there are just so many characters--but I quickly got the hang of it. It's a coming of age, reflective, boy's search for meaning kind of story, filled with wacky people like his Marx loving grandfather, yoga doing stepdad, baseball announcers, radio personalities, girlfriend, etc. We're going to listen to this in class on Thursday and I'm excited for it.

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### **Alison says**

Simply, I LOVED IT. The first few pages were a slight struggle to get the various voices straight in my head, but after that was accomplished, I flew through the book. I was captivated by Rob's quest through the airwaves for his dad and actually let out an audible gasp when I realized who was on the phone that Halloween night. I loved the clarity Rob achieves when he realizes he's pleased with his life and could not ask for more, not even his forever absent father. I also like how Fleischman wrote this to be easily made into a play, able to be performed in any time period.

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### **Sarah says**

Rob is required to write his autobiography for school, but his life has always been about sounds. He decides to create an audio experience using the people he loves, radio clips, audiobook clips, poems, and other miscellaneous audio to tell his story. Rob's father left around the time he was born. His dad never wanted a child, but Rob's mother wanted him dearly. Rob's mother and grandparents have raised him with all the love, but even with their love he must confront these issues he has with never knowing his dad.

I read this novel, though I wish I would have seen it performed as a reader's theater or better yet, heard on an audio book. It was good for what it was and I think guys dealing with parental issues could see themselves in this book.

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### **Melissa says**

At first the multi-voice format was frustrating. It disrupted my ability to read smoothly, and forced me to go back several times so that I could be sure I had attributed something to the correct character. However, I can see this being a very successful class project where each YA reads for a different part. In that way, I could see the confusion disappearing. It would be much less frustrating to hear this book, which pairs perfectly with the idea of an audio-autobiography of memories. I also appreciated the addition of characters, like the grandparents, who added necessary humor to a book that could have been quite sad. I really enjoyed the main character, Rob. He was written as such an interesting person, and I found myself wishing that he would locate his dad. When his father finally did phone him, I was so happy for him, but then so relieved when he realized how great his life was even if he didn't have this man in it. Part of me was hoping for the Disney-style happy ending where he'd have this great relationship with his father, but part of me was glad that he was able to accept that this man didn't need to be part of his life. I think that YAs who are readers by nature would enjoy the book. YAs that are more reluctant readers would probably respond more positively to the book being used as a performance in class, as that might be easier to follow. I would not hesitate to recommend this book.

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### **Jo says**

So, I read this once years ago and liked it, but I forgot what it was called. I happened upon this copy in my local used book shop for \$1, so I pounced all over that, though I didn't remember that this was the book. The part that stuck with me most was the little bit where Rob's mom says that Lenny could take the hum of an airplane's engine and make a whole little ditty out of it, with the engine as the drone. I thought that was *so* cool. But I remembered all the radio stuff, too. I'd get to talking about it with someone or it'd come up in some class or another, and I'd be all, "Oh, yea, that happens with radios and radiowaves and stuff."

Anyway, that's kind of besides the point, which is that this book is kind of awesome. It's more like a script than a novel, which, for me, makes the voices more unique. But because it's more of a radio script, it's easier to get through than a real script, where the stage directions and descriptions can get in the way as much as help you imagine the setting. And I can hear different people in my head saying these things. And, yea, that happens anyway, but while reading *Seek*, it was more like hearing different people than like hearing different versions of me, which is kind of how it can be reading a regular novel. Or hearing me-colored versions of different people.

Also a bonus: I started it on the train to school in the morning and finished it by the time I got home. It's the perfect book for me to go back to as a quick reprieve from stress without feeling guilty for spending too

much time reading and not enough time working or studying or practicing. Win.

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### **Walter says**

On September 14, 2001, at the Sonoma County Library in Santa Rosa, I adapted and directed the world premiere of this work, a radio play in novel form. We performed it as a radio play in front of a live audience, a collaboration between the local Sonoma County NPR affiliate and the Central Santa Rosa branch of the Sonoma County PL. One of Fleischman's richest and most demanding works, it screams to be performed and not left on the page. It was a glorious experience--the author was in attendance--and the play was very well received.

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### **Desmond Dean says**

This was not the best book I have ever read. The reason I didn't like this particular book was I got lost in about the middle of the book start really bad and then it started to talk about his mom and it really didn't make any sense at all. I also didn't like how the Author wrote the book it was like he tried to make the book a very long play for the reader which I hated that's another thing that might have made lose what is happening. If you are thinking about reading this book I highly advise you not to read it. overall this is the worst book I have ever read.

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### **Krystl Louwagie says**

2007 audio book review:

This book was about a boy that had to write an autobiography for school, and that's what the book was. However, this was almost meant to be an audio book instead of a real book, because the whole theme of the book was radio clips and sounds, clips of voices and conversations, interviews, etc. This was because the boy's father had left him when he was just a baby, but he was a radio dj, and he left the boy some recordings of his show when he left. The boy was obsessed with listening to the radio, trying to find where his dad was now-so the the radio sound bits were really important to him.

This book was a full cast, and everything sounded EXACTLY like it had been from a radio and then collaged together. It was really neatly juxtaposed together.

The story and what happens in the book, and the conclusion, aren't exceptional, but they way it's all put together is.

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