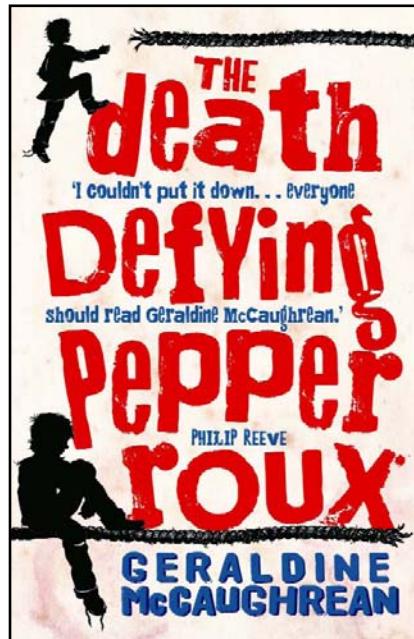


The Death Defying Pepper Roux

The little hero with a big heart

Geraldine McCaughrean



Contents

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How to Use this Pack

This pack contains enough material to run an hour long session based on *The Death Defying Pepper Roux* by Geraldine McCaughrean. Ideally staff running the session should be familiar with the book being discussed, however this pack can be used by staff who have just stepped in at the last minute or who haven't had time to read the book.

Suggested Session Plan (Times approx)

- Welcome (5 mins)
- Getting Started (10 mins) - choose one or two warm up ideas that suit your group
- Quiz (5 mins)
- Activities to get your group talking about the book (30 mins) The activities 'Good News', 'People see what they expect to see', and writing scripts, aim to encourage lively discussions about the characters, plot and structure of the book. They can take about 15 to 30 minutes to complete depending on how fast your group works.
- Choosing Books - use the titles from the further reading list. (5 mins)

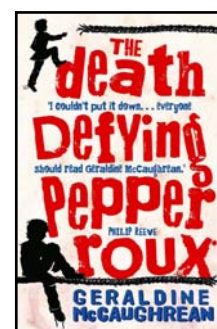
Useful Tips

- Use the material to suit your group
- Be flexible and have fun. Photocopy sheets to use as handouts.
- Play Geraldine McCaughrean's video at your session. Use your library's pcs and visit the Pepper Roux website www.oxfordchildrens.co.uk/pepperroux.
- Use the interview with Geraldine McCaughrean as a group activity – get members to read out the interview.
- Organise activities for children joining in as individuals, in pairs or as a whole group.

Website

www.oxfordchildrens.co.uk/pepperroux

Get your group to visit the website for information about the author, extracts from the book, and a video of Geraldine McCaughrean talking about her story.



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Interview with the Author – Geraldine McCaughrean

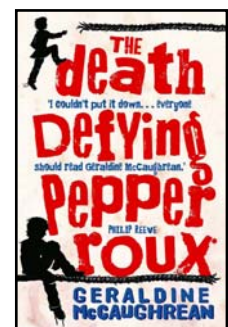
How old were you when you wrote your first novel? What made you want to be a writer?

From the age of about eight I was always writing, so it is hard to say when I attempted a novel for the first time. As a teenager I was forever writing novels – adult novels on subjects I knew nothing about. But that was all right because they were not meant for anyone’s benefit but mine. I wrote for the fun of it. All the same, my brother Neil had had a book published when he was 14, so of course I couldn’t help thinking from time to time, “Wouldn’t it be wonderful to have a book in print with my name on it!” So finally I started to send off my novels to publishers ‘just in case’. I tell you: there is no sadder sound in the world than the noise of a manuscript thudding back on to the doormat along with the morning post. I took exactly twice as long as Neil to get published: I was 28 when my first book came out, and that was a retelling rather than a novel.

As for wanting to be a writer – it never occurred to me. I thought you had to be clever – academic – to do that kind of job, and I was not very bright at school. So I only ever thought it would be a hobby for my spare time, travelling to and from my proper job. After ten years of travelling to and fro, I was able to stay home and write books, but it was too late by then for me ever to think of myself as an ‘author’. I had an argument with a busker on a train last week, and I heard myself say, “How dare you! I’m a writer! I’m an artist like you.” Good grief. Listen to the woman. What an idiot.

What inspired you to write *The Death Defying Pepper Roux*?

I wrote the first page three or four years ago – taking Pepper to the point where he walks out of the house and keeps going. I didn’t have a clue where he was going to go – only that he would pretend to be a series of different people and along the way he would have an adventure. It is what I do, you see – climb inside a new life every time I write a new book. The idea has always fascinated me, of escaping the here and now and going somewhere else and becoming someone different – cleverer, more resourceful, more interesting, doing exciting things... The ‘grain of truth’ at the heart of my story (and there is always a grain of truth) is that my husband John, as a lad, was told by a fortune-teller that he would be dead by the time he was thirty.



Pepper Roux has lots of adventures and takes on lots of different roles in the novel. If you weren't a writer what would you like to be?

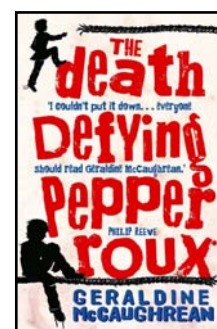
Put like that, I should want to be an actor, shouldn't I? But I'm far too shy and I have a terrible memory, so I never even thought about that. I would have liked to be a photographer – an idea I explored in my book "SMILE!" – because a camera can trap a moment in time and pin it down on paper. You can do it with words, too, sort of, but it takes longer. Of course if I had been a photographer I would have been forever forgetting to put film in the camera or take the lens cap off.

You've written lots of novels – do you have a favourite, and why?

I do have a handful of favourites. *Peter Pan in Scarlet*, because it was useful, [as proceeds from every copy sold benefit Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children] and you can't very often say that about a book. It was fun to write as well.

Stop the Train and the sequel *Pull out all the Stops!* stayed light and bright, even when the characters were having a bad time, so I enjoyed writing that. I keep meaning to write novels for readers of 10-12 but they creep up in age appeal as I work and end up being for 14-year-olds. Set in a railroad town on the Oklahoma prairie, *Stop the Train* stayed the age I meant it to be.

The White Darkness became very, very real while I was writing it (which is the best thing possible as far as an author is concerned) and it gave me a chance to say lots of things I felt about being a teenager. It was very odd and ambitious and I didn't think many people would understand what I was on about. I wrote it for my daughter and her friends, really . . . and then loads of teenagers read it and said they loved it and felt the same way as the heroine, which made me extremely happy.



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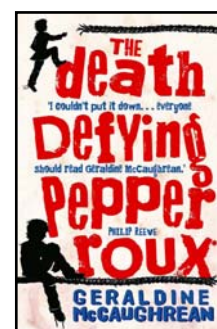
What books do you like to read? Do you have a favourite?

My mind goes oddly blank when people ask me that. I have read so many books and closed them at the last page and thought, “That was the best book I’ve ever. . .” but at different ages different books seemed wonderful. When I was nine it was *The Silver Brumby* books by Elyne Mitchell (though I can remember nothing about them now). When I was 15 it was the *Gormenghast* trilogy by Mervyn Peake; they would be too rich for my taste nowadays. I loved Rosemary Sutcliff’s historical novels – I think that’s why my first novels were all set in the past. I like adult writers like Michael Frayn who are intelligent but don’t keep saying ‘Look at me, aren’t I clever?’ with every long and complicated sentence they write. When I’m feeling wistful and sad and romantic, I like the Russian writers, like Ivan Turgenev because they are all wistful and sad and romantically doomed. It’s all a matter of what age you are and what mood you are in and what you had for breakfast. Of the writers who are around now, I think Philip Reeve gets better and better. I adore Frank Cottrell Boyce and admire Hilary McKay and Jan Mark and Gillian Cross and James Riordan, and all Kes Gray’s picture books and . . . and . . . you see you should never have got me started.

What tips would you give someone who wants to write a book?

Don’t even attempt it until you have written lots of shorter stuff – stories, poems, diaries. Unless you are different from most, you will find you have a brilliant idea and can’t wait to get going . . . but that your energy peters out after a couple of chapters. Keep all your beginnings – don’t throw them away, because you were right: the idea was brilliant. The more you write, the stronger your writing muscles get, until all of a sudden you find you can go back to your brilliant idea, pick it up, run uphill with it and not even get out of breath by Chapter 17. The other hint is to gather around you a bunch of characters you want to spend time with because they are interesting and unusual and a bit unpredictable. Get to know them inside your head and soon they will be able to whisper in your ear what happens next in the book and you will think it was their idea and not yours. Charles Dickens used to spend days on end wandering about in woods talking to his characters before he started writing the story for them to inhabit.

And don’t expect to get published. Write for the fun or release it gives you – then if your book gets published, that will be the icing on the cake, won’t it?



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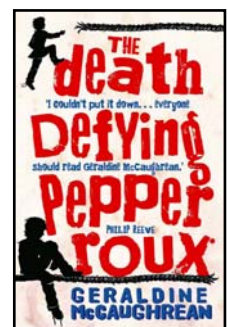
Booklist

A selection of Geraldine McCaughrean's other novels:

Gold Dust - pbk, £5.99, 9780192755292, OUP
The Kite Rider - pbk, £6.99, 9780192755285, OUP
A Little Lower Than The Angels - pbk, £5.99, 9780192752901, OUP
A Pack of Lies - pbk, £5.99, 9780192752031, OUP
Plundering Paradise - pbk, £5.99, 9780192719942, OUP
Peter Pan in Scarlet - pbk, £6.99, 9780192726216, OUP
Stop the Train - pbk, £5.99, 9780192718815, OUP

If you like *The Death Defying Pepper Roux* you'll like:

The Museum's Secret (The Remarkable Adventures of Tom Scatterhorn), by Henry Chancellor - pbk, £6.99, 9780192720849, OUP
Olaf the Viking and the Pig Who Would be King, by Martin Conway - pbk, £5.99, 9780192720887, OUP
Here Be Monsters, by Alan Snow - pbk, £6.99, 9780192753847, OUP
The Great Elephant Chase, by Gillian Cross - pbk, £6.99, 9780192789938, OUP
The Ship Between the Worlds, By Julia Golding - pbk, £5.99, 9780192754837, OUP



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Getting Started – Quick Warm Up Ideas

Finding Words

As a group, in pairs or as individuals, in 3 minutes write down all the words you can make from ‘*The Death Defying Pepper Roux* by Geraldine McCaughrean’

French Words

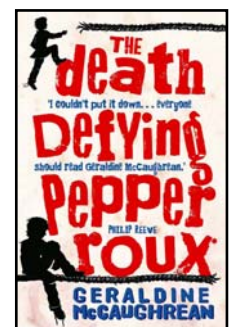
Get together all the French Dictionaries off your library shelves and look up the following words - Pepper, Poor, Ship, Horse

Rhyming Words

Write down as many words as you can that rhyme with the following words. Curse, Sea, Horse, Dog, Ship

Predictions

Pepper Roux’s Aunt Mireille predicts ‘To think, he’ll be dead by fourteen, le pauvre.’ Get everybody to write down two predictions secretly so nobody else can see what they are writing. These predictions can be serious or funny. They can be a statement about what they think might happen in the future – e.g. ‘Emma Watson will marry Dan’ or they can be a personal prediction – e.g. ‘At half term you will go to Disneyland Paris with your friends.’ Get everybody to fold up their predictions and put them in a box or hat and then take turns picking out the predictions and reading them out.



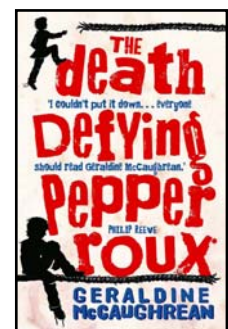
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The Death Defying Pepper Roux Wordsearch

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T | R | X | S | A | L | A | M | I | B |
| E | F | U | Y | V | L | G | G | Q | C |
| L | C | O | N | S | T | A | N | C | E |
| E | C | R | U | L | A | Z | G | X | F |
| G | L | R | B | R | O | E | Q | H | L |
| R | M | E | J | I | T | D | P | U | U |
| A | F | P | Z | R | G | E | B | Z | W |
| M | W | P | P | W | J | S | E | R | O |
| S | S | E | H | C | U | D | A | N | E |
| L | O | P | T | Q | R | T | R | L | B |

Can you find the following words?

- Pepper Roux
- Big Sal
- Salami
- Fourteen
- Telegram
- Beowulf
- Constance
- Zed
- Duchess



The Death Defying Pepper Roux Quiz

Circle the correct answer

1. What is Pepper's real name?

- a. Paul
- b. John
- c. Pierre

2. What did Pepper's aunt prophesy when Pepper was born?

- a. That he would become a famous sailor
- b. That he would die by the time he was fourteen.
- c. That he would join the Foreign Legion.

3. What stories does Pepper like to read?

- a. Pirate stories
- b. Fairy stories
- c. Adventure stories

4. What does Pepper's father do?

- a. He's a butcher
- b. He's a horse thief
- c. He's a ship's captain

5. What country does Pepper live in?

- a. France
- b. Spain
- c. Italy

6. What colour are the famous wild horses of the Camargue?

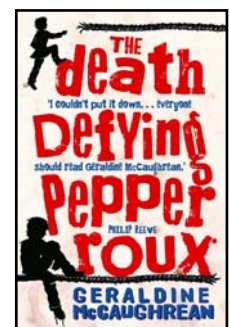
- a. Brown
- b. Black
- c. White

7. Who stole Pepper's clothes when he went for a swim?

- a. The Duchess
- b. Konstantin Kruppe
- c. Saint Constance

8. What did Pepper steal from outside of the hospital?

- a. Bicycle
- b. Taxi
- c. Car



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9. What was the dog called that Pepper rescued from being put down?

- a. Beowulf
- b. Duchess
- c. Yvette

10. What are the names of the two telegraph boys?

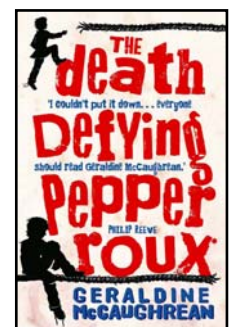
- a. Roche and Yvette
- b. Nadir and Mustafa
- c. Eex and Ygreck

11. What card game did Pepper teach the staff of Big Sal?

- a. Pontoon
- b. Pairs
- c. Poker

12. How did Pepper Roux die?

- a. He got hit by a car when he was 21
- b. He drowned at sea when he was 19
- c. He died in his sleep at 91

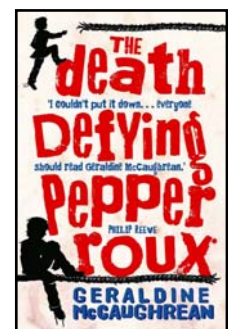


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The Death Defying Pepper Roux Quiz

Answers

1. What is Pepper's real name?
a. Paul
2. What did Pepper's aunt prophesy when Pepper was born?
b. That he would die by the time he was fourteen.
3. What stories does Pepper like to read?
a. Pirate stories
4. What does Pepper's father do?
c. He's a ship's captain
5. What country does Pepper live in?
a. France
6. What colour are the famous wild horses of the Camargue?
c. White
7. Who stole Pepper's clothes when he went for a swim?
b. Konstantin Kruppe
8. What did Pepper steal from outside of the hospital?
a. Bicycle
9. What was the dog called that Pepper rescued from being put down?
a. Beowulf
10. What are the names of the two telegraph boys?
c. Eex and Ygreck
11. What card game did Pepper teach the staff of Big Sal?
b. Pairs
12. How did Pepper Roux die?
c. He died in his sleep at 91



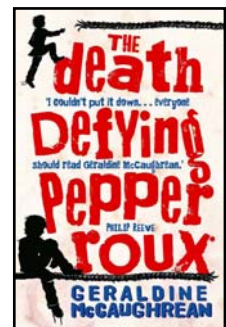
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Good News! Good News! Good News!

Pepper Roux only tells people good news. He won't deliver any telegrams that are sad and unhappy. For example to the girl whose sweetheart had jilted her – he told her instead, that her boyfriend had joined the Foreign Legion and been killed in Africa, with her name on his lips. What stories would you tell to turn bad news into good news?

Bad news: You have to tell all year 7 that the government has cancelled half term. All the children have to spend the week at school doing extra Maths and English classes.
What would you tell Year 7, turning this bad news into good news?

Bad news: You have to tell Simon Cowell his programme X Factor is banned from TV on Saturday night.
What would you tell Simon, turning this bad news into good news?



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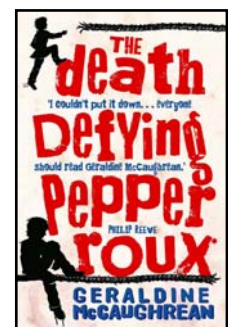
People See What They Expect To See, Don't They?

Pepper Roux takes over many roles including a ship's captain, a telegram delivery person, a journalist and a sausage seller. Who would you like to swap places with? Fill in this form and then share your ideas with the rest of your group.

Who would you swap places with? (e.g. film star, pop star, celebrity, friend, politician, book character, film character)

Why have you chosen this person?

Write down some things you would get up to as this person.

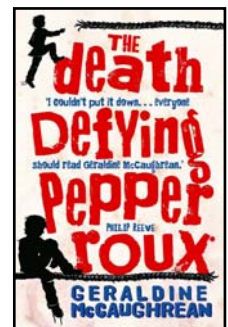


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Writing Scripts

The Death Defying Pepper Roux would make a really good film. Help write the film script. Work as individuals, in pairs, or as a whole group.

- Choose a part of the book that you think would make a good film script. Keep it short.
- Read this section out loud to get a feel of what it is about.
- Write down the characters who are involved
- Write down what happened – keep it short and simple
- Turn the story into a script using the dialogue in the book or writing your own words.
- Take turns reading out your scripts



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