Echo

AUTHOR: Pam Munoz Ryan
PUBLISHER: Scholastic Press
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GENRE: Historical Fiction, Realistic Fiction, Fantasy
SETTING: The settings are Germany, Pennsylvania, and California.

SUMMARY:
Echo is the story of a harmonica that is blessed with magic. The story weaves three different tales as the harmonica gets passed from person to person through the years.

BOOK TALK:
Echo is a unique story because it begins with the telling of a tale about three sisters who are trapped. As a result, they give a young man a magical harmonica that can play three melodies at one time. The sisters tell the young man that he must send the harmonica out into the world so that they can be freed.

The story begins with the reader being introduced to Friedrich. Friedrich is somewhat peculiar because he hears music when others do not. Friedrich dreams of being a conductor of a grand orchestra one day. Because Friedrich’s school thinks he is not mentally well, Friedrich must join his father in the workplace. Friedrich works in a harmonica factory during the Nazi invasion of Germany. The night that Friedrich and his father are planning to leave and escape, soldiers take Friedrich’s father away.

Like Friedrich, the next two characters who come in contact with the harmonica have difficult situations to overcome. Find out what happens with the three characters and how the harmonica is intertwined with each of their stories.

BOOK TRAILER/AUTHOR DISCUSSION:

AUTHOR’S BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH:
AUTHOR’S NAME: Pam Munoz Ryan
Author’s Website: http://www.pammunozryan.com

Other books written by the author:
The Dreamer (2010)
Paint the Wind (2007)
Becoming Naomi Leon (2005)
When Marian Sang: The True Recital of Marian Anderson (2002)
Esperanza Rising (2002)
(Pam Munoz Ryan has written several other children’s books.)

Other information: Pam Munoz Ryan has written over 25 books for young readers. She has won numerous awards for her writing. She grew up in and currently lives in California.

SIMILAR BOOKS/BOOKS WITH A SIMILAR THEME:
The Book Thief by Markus Zusak
The Harmonica by Tony Johnston
Esperanza Rising by Pam Muñoz Ryan
Moon over Manifest by Clare Vanderpool
Separate is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez and Her Family’s Fight for Desegregation by Duncan Tonatiuh
So Far from the Sea by Eve Bungin, and Baseball Saved Us by Ken Mochizuki
Hitler Youth: Growing Up in Hitler’s Shadow by Susan Campbell Bartoletti
The Journal of Sean Sullivan by William Durbin
“A Witch, a Kiss, a Prophecy” (fairy tale)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:
1. Why is the preface important to this story?
2. How did Otto end up in the woods? (p.10, preface)
3. Why did Elisabeth leave home to live with another family? (p. 80, pt. I, ch.6)
4. What is the one item that Frankie and Mike bring with them to the boys’ home and why is it significant? (p. 216, part II, ch. 3)
5. What happened to the Yamamoto family? (p. 416, pt. III, ch. 6)

ACTIVITIES WITH STANDARDS:

Language Arts:

- Look up information about the town of Trossingen in Germany. Why is this place referred to as a “music town”? Compare what you know about Trossingen from the story to what you can learn from information sources. [Resource: Discussion Guide from Scholastic] (pt. I, ch. 1-26)

Conduct short research assignments and tasks to build knowledge about the research process and the topic under study. Formulate a research question. Gather relevant information from multiple sources, and annotate sources. Assess the credibility of each source. Quote or paraphrase the information and conclusions of others. Avoid plagiarism and provide basic bibliographic information for sources. Present information, choosing from a variety of formats.

Music:

- Listen to recordings of the pieces of music that introduce each part of this story, preferably played on a harmonica. How do the songs feature in the lives of each main character? Discuss the importance of music in their lives.

Resource: Discussion Guide from Scholastic

Key Ideas and Details
6-8.RT.2 Determine the central ideas or conclusions of a text, piece of music, or song lyrics; provide an accurate summary of the text distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

RELATED INTERNET SITES:

http://www.teachingbooks.net/book_reading.cgi?id=10862  (author sharing excerpt from Echo)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KSCuVFKnTRA (Brahm’s Lullaby - harmonica duet)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kVKwMffHqxE (America the Beautiful – harmonica duet)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1_4IrDdFa20 (Auld Lang Syne - harmonica)
http://www.slj.com/2015/02/interviews/pam-munoz-ryans-echo-reverberates-with-hope-interview/#_ (interview with the author)
CHALLENGING WORDS:

**precipices:** (prĕs′ə-pîs) an overhanging or extremely steep mass of rock, such as a crag or the face of a cliff. (p. 10, preface)

**euphoric:** (yo͞ o-fôr′ē-ik) a feeling of great happiness or well-being. (p. 25, preface)

**palpable:** (păl′pā-bəl) capable of being handled, touched, or felt; tangible (p. 59, pt. I, ch. 4)

**grebes:** (grēb) any of various swimming and diving birds of the family Podicipedidae, having a pointed bill and lobed, fleshy membranes along each toe. (p. 68, pt. I, ch. 5)

**stigma:** (stĭg′mə) an association of disgrace or public disapproval with something (p. 97, Pt. I, ch. 9)

**conjecture:** (kən-jēk′chər) opinion or judgment based on inconclusive or incomplete evidence; guesswork (p. 98, pt. I, ch. 9)

**benevolent:** (bə-nēv′ə-lənt) characterized by or given to doing good; agreeable. (p. 108, pt. I, ch. 10)

**disposition:** (dĭs′pə-zĭsh′ən) one's usual mood; temperament; a habitual inclination; a tendency; a physical property or tendency (p. 167, pt. I, ch. 22)

**emissary:** (ĕm′ĭ-sĕr′ē) an agent sent on a mission to represent or advance the interests of another (p. 170, pt. I, ch. 22)

**gangly:** (găng′gлē) awkwardly tall and spindly; lank and loosely built (p. 201, pt. II, ch. 1)

**metronome:** (mĕt′rə-nŏm′) a device used to mark time by means of regularly recurring ticks or flashes at adjustable intervals (p. 219, pt. II, ch. 3)

**quarantined:** (kwŏr′əntên′) a condition, period of time, or place in which a person, animal, plant, vehicle, or amount of material suspected of carrying an infectious agent is kept in confinement or isolated in an effort to prevent disease from spreading. (p. 230, Pt. II, Ch. 4)

**inclination:** (ĭn′kĭ-lə-nā′shən) a particular disposition, esp a liking or preference; tendency (p. 250, Pt. II, Ch. 6)

**succumbed:** (sə-kŭm′) to submit to an overpowering force or yield to an overwhelming desire; give up or give in; to die, especially from a disease or injury (p. 273, Pt. II, Ch. 10)

**barrio:** (bar′jo) a Spanish word meaning neighborhood; division (p. 370, Pt. III, Ch. 1)

**bravado:** (bra-vă′dō) a show of bravery or defiance, often in order to make a false impression or to mislead someone; an ostentatious display of courage (p. 396, Pt. III, Ch. 3)

**braceros:** (bra-sär′ō) a Mexican laborer admitted legally into the U.S. for a short period to perform seasonal, usually for agricultural labor (p. 498, Pt. III, Ch. 16)