



# The Rifle

By Gary Paulsen

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## The Rifle By Gary Paulsen

This tough, thought-provoking novel for young adults takes deadly aim at the oft-quoted notion: “Guns don’t kill people, people kill people.” With subtle mastery and precision, Paulsen’s novel challenges the idea that firearms don’t become instruments of destruction and murder until they are placed in human hands--*The Rifle* makes it clear that guns *do* kill people. “For readers willing to think about this issue, for those looking for ways to introduce the debate, there is no better vehicle than this short, engagingly written story of one rifle and its fatal impact on one modern boy.”--*School Library Journal*

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## The Rifle By Gary Paulsen Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 5 Up?This novella focuses on a specific weapon crafted during the Revolutionary War. At the book's conclusion, set in 1994, this rifle still functions and performs as it was designed to do. Paulsen, who can create vivid portraits of individuals in relation to specific places, takes the focus off the people here, although they remain distinct characters, and puts this object?a rifle?at the core of the story. Although he seems to be saying that people don't kill people, guns do, this message is not sustained. The circumstances seem so unique and the love of weaponry so strong that the anti-gun theme is fatally weakened. For anyone whose mind is made up on this issue, this book will probably not change it. However, it could lead to intense discussion and exploration of how our society has evolved into its present gun-loving culture and into the intense anguish and human cost we collectively ignore as we continue our love affair with weaponry. For readers willing to think about this issue, for those looking for ways to introduce the debate, there is no better vehicle than this short, engagingly written story of one rifle and its fatal impact on one modern boy.?Carol A. Edwards, Minneapolis Public Library

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From [Booklist](#)

Gr. 7<sup>^</sup>-9. In his latest novel, Paulsen explores the history of a flintlock rifle, meticulously describing the skill and artistry of gunsmith Cornish McManus as he spends months creating a gun both beautiful and "sweet" (meaning accurate). Using his usual spare style, Paulsen describes the rifle's use in the Revolutionary War and follows its story into the twentieth century, when it is exchanged by a scathingly depicted gun fanatic for an Elvis-on-velvet painting, and ultimately ends up killing a teenager, Richard, in a freak accident that occurs without human intervention. The omniscient narrator, who speaks in an ironic tone reminiscent of Kurt Vonnegut, details the events small and large (943 baseball games; finding a genetic cure for heart disease) that Richard missed by dying prematurely. Paulsen's message is clear and cutting: a machine made for killing, no matter how lovingly crafted and benignly kept, remains a machine made for killing. *Susan Dove Lempke*

Review

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**Waldo Gates:**

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