



The Broken Blade

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In 1800, 13-year-old Pierre La Page never imagined he'd be leaving Montreal to paddle 2,400 miles. It was something older men, like his father, did. But when Pierre's father has an accident, Pierre quits school to become a voyageur for the North West Company, so his family can survive the winter. It's hard for Pierre as the youngest in the brigade. From the treacherous waters and cruel teasing to his aching and bloodied hands, Pierre is miserable. Still he has no choice but to endure the trip to Grand Portage and back.

The Broken Blade Details

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Author : William Durbin

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From Reader Review The Broken Blade for online ebook

Miss Amanda says

gr 5-8 163 pgs

1800 Montreal to Lake Superior Canada. 13 year old Pierre La Page must quit school when his father's injury prevents him from working as a voyageur with the fur trade. Having grown up listening his father's stories of his voyages, Pierre is eager to become a voyageur. On the 2400 mile journey, Pierre must overcome many challenges and dangers.

I would recommend this book, and its sequel "Wintering" to readers who enjoyed Gary Paulsen's Hatchet books and who liked Durbin's "Blackwater Ben".

Anna Rossokhina says

The Broken Blade - a historical book which tells people the long adventure story of thirteen years old boy. His name is Pierre La Page and his father was a voyager for the Northwest Trading Company. For me it seems really interesting because you can learn a lot of new things about this period of time, about river trade, about how was life difficult for those people. William Durbin created a useful story. When you read this story you probably will admire of little Pierre because he saves his family from poorness. I think this story will be interesting for children and teenagers who is interested in historical facts.

Gillian says

In the beginning, I thought, "This is going to be just like most of my other history books." In other words, I thought it was going to be boring. But I was wrong! I read a week ahead and finished this book in about 3 hours.

I really prepared myself for a dumb book in the beginning. When a book starts off with a young boy waking up to the sound of his father cutting wood, it really doesn't encourage further reading. But, on I went. Things started getting good (more interesting) when Pierre gets his engagement papers for the company. I think it was so good of him to do that! And of course, I was a sucker for the scene with Celeste. This book also made me care about Pierre La Page, because of all he went through, and how unfairly he was treated at first. And you start to admire him when he hauls the musket balls down the hill without knowing it, too.

The only complaints I have about this book is that I wish it had lasted longer, maybe including the happy reunion with Pierre's entire family, and not just his father. Also, Pierre obviously likes Celeste in the beginning, but at the end, he likes the indian girl, and it's really obvious then that he likes her, thinks she's pretty, and all this other stuff. I'm thinking to myself, "but I thought he liked Celeste!" Then, when he goes back home, he likes her again. Go figure. But, over all, a very good book that surprised me a lot.

Grazyna Nawrocka says

This book is a winner of the Great Lakes Book Award. "The Broken Blade" by William Durbin is a compelling read for juvenile audience. It is a tale of 13-years-old Pierre enlisting to work as a voyageur to support his family. This book is filled with factual detail and brilliant humour. The style is so great, one feels like being inside the canoe and seeing the landscape with own eyes. After reading this novel, I became intimately familiar with the Great Lakes and route taken to deliver furs to/from Grand Portage.

Naomi Musch says

An engaging YA novel I would have enjoyed reading aloud to my boys when they were growing up. (We did a lot of historical read-alouds together in our home school.) I read it because I wanted to see how the author handled some of the era's historical detail, as my WIP follows the same route of the voyageurs from Montreal to Fort William. It was a good coming of age story fraught with adventure and some tragedy of the sort that was common among the voyageurs. I would really recommend adding this to your book list if you're a teacher or homeschooler wishing to share some of the fur-trade era history with your students.

Heidi says

A good book. We read it for family book club as a follow up to Calico Captive. We learned a lot about geography and history. I did not think it was a literary masterpiece. But I did find it to be enjoyable and interesting.

Noah Smith says

Coming of age stories tend to all blend together in my head and I feel like I'm reading the same thing over and over. Someone has a neglectful parent and then goes on an emotional journey with the help of an odd assortment of characters and they are never the same again. Well this is kind of like the Broken Blade...except it's during the 1800's, the father is a French-American river courier who accidentally chopped his own thumb off in a logging accident just before he's about to leave for a shipping run, and the main character, Pierre, decides to take his place in order to secure money for his family. This novel illustrates a story about a young boy taking the reins of his own life and moving forward into his own future. He meets new people, has new experiences, and even finds love. This story illustrates the growth of a boy who has lived an otherwise sheltered life. He develops from a timid and skinny boy to a tough young man. Most of the minor characters help with this development and mold him into the character he is. The only gripe I have about this book is that it's basically one big travel scene and that it's all about Pierre sailing down river in a canoe and at times it can be kind of boring. There are some parts, however, that action or humor is illustrated greatly in a scene. So if you want a coming of age story that isn't told in modern times and isn't about finding yourself with the help of a guitar or a magical summer of working at a water park, then this is the book for you.

Gerri says

This one is a fun one to read if you like adventure and history. My kids and I read it together when they were about 9 and 10. We also were going up to the great lakes and the area where these stories took place. It is a fairly easy read and fun with the kids.

Jeremiah says

Entry 1-

The main character is Pierre, who has to become a voyageur in canoeing because his dad, who usually did that job, chopped off his thumb. Pierre and his supporters are protagonists. Beloit, a fellow crewman of Pierre's, and his supporters are the antagonists.

Entry 2-

The setting is mainly on the river canoeing and is important because that is what Pierre has to do to get money for his family. The point of view is from Pierre.

Entry 3-

Pierre does the voyage and has to suffer much to earn his place in the crew, but he endures to the end and becomes an asset for the crew and returns home safely.

Sue says

Despite the known hardships, I would like to experience being a voyageur as a man. Since luck has not been with agreement with me, I will read about it instead.

Durbin writes fantastic historical fiction with just the right amount of detail. Each chapter is headed with a map showing the progress the voyageur's made. If you have any interest in Great Lakes history, check this book out!

Alyssa says

I read this book for Social Studies. We are on the unit for the Fur Trade. This book is about a 13-14 year old boy that signs up for the NW Trading Company so he can support his family after his father had an accident. Then he has to leave his family, and head to the go to the Grand Portage to trade. I am surprised that I like this book as much as I did. It was actually a very well written book! There is a sequel that seems very interesting as well. I may read that in the future.

rebecca says

Short, sweet, sentimental, sad, superior! (heh see what I did there)

The other John says

The setting is Montréal in 1800. Pierre La Page is a thirteen-year-old schoolboy, who's doing rather well. His father is a *voyageur*, one of the men who paddle cargo canoes from Montréal to Grand Portage, all the way on the northwest shore of Lake Superior. Well, Dad has an accident that will keep him from shipping out on the next cargo run. Motivated in part by guilt, Pierre skips class, heads down to the North West Company office and signs on as a *voyageur* to make the money that his father cannot. What follows is a coming-of-age tale as Pierre tries to follow in his father's footsteps. As adventures go, this one is relatively tame. In fact, I would have a hard time pinpointing what made me glad I checked this out. Maybe I just connected with Pierre, subconsciously recalling the times when I was a rookie starting a new job. Or maybe Mr. Durbin just did a good job of drawing me into the tale, so that I felt I was paddling along with the crew. Whatever it was, it worked.

Kendra Horn says

In this book, Pierres dad has to goes on a canoe trip every year. Right before the trip Pierres dad severs his thumb with an ax. Because of this accident, Pierres dad can't go on the trip. Pierre offers to step up and take his dad's place. The lesson I learned from this is responsibility. You have to be ready to step up and know the right thing to do. I would recommend this book to anyone who loves to learn while reading. I enjoyed learning more about having to be tough while canoeing. I really enjoyed this book.

Thomas Townsend says

The broken Blade is a great book to read. It is full of information on how life was working for the Northwest Trading Company 200 years ago. This book is about a young boy, Pierre La Page, who goes to work for the Northwest Trading Company to provide for his family. Pierre finds himself paddling a canoe 2,400 miles to Grand Portage where they will trade their goods for fur pelts. While on the trip Pierre finds himself changing from a young boy into a man. Pierre is my favorite character because he starts off as a measly school boy and ends up a strong canoe man. The plot is full of suspense as Pierre travels down the dangerous rapids leading to Grand Portage from Montreal. I think the title is perfect for this book. When I first saw it I didn't really get it, but after you read the book you get why the William Durbin chose this title. I loved the ending of the book. It made me wish there was more. Luckily for me there is another book after this one called Wintering and I can't wait to read it.
