

WORLD BOOK DAY SELECTION

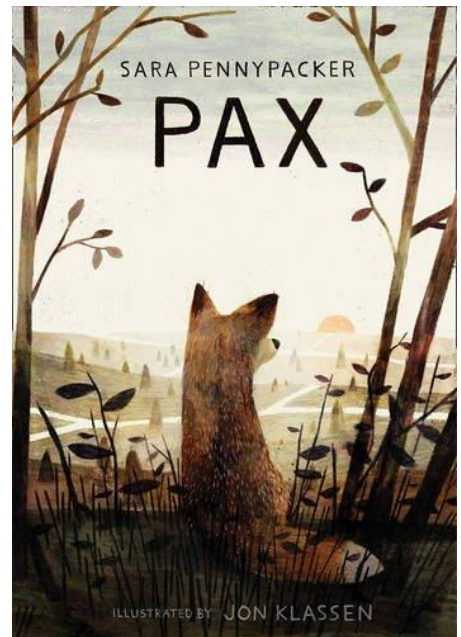
Because it is World Book Day this week, we are going to look at the opening of a different novel each day. This will give you a little taster of each book. If you think you'd like to read the rest of any of these books please let me know and I will find you a copy.

*Happy reading!
Mrs Hulin*

Today's choice is Pax by Sara Pennypacker. It is a powerful story about the unbreakable bond between a boy and his fox. Some chapters are told from the fox's point of view while others are told from the boy's.

PAX

By Sara Pennypacker



The fox felt the car slow before the boy did, as he felt everything first. Through the pads of his paws, along his spine, in the sensitive whiskers at his wrists. By the vibrations, he learned also that the road had grown coarser. He stretched up from his boy's lap and sniffed at threads of scent leaking through the window, which told him they were now travelling into woodlands. The sharp odours of pine - wood, bark, cones, and needles -slivered through the air like blades, but beneath that, the fox recognised softer clover and wild garlic and ferns, and

also a hundred things he had never encountered before but that smelled green and urgent. The boy sensed something now, too. He pulled his pet back to him and gripped his baseball glove more tightly.

The boy's anxiety surprised the fox. The few times they had travelled in the car before, the boy had been calm or even excited. The fox nudged his muzzle into the glove's webbing, although he hated the leather smell. His boy always laughed when he did this. He would close the glove around his pet's head, play wrestling, and in this way, the fox would distract him.

But today the boy lifted his pet and buried his face in the fox's white ruff, pressing hard.

It was then that the fox realised his boy was crying. He twisted round to study his face to be sure. Yes, crying - although without a sound, something the fox had never known him to do. The boy hadn't shed tears for a very long time, but the fox remembered; always before he had cried out, as if to demand that attention be paid to the curious occurrence of salty water streaming from his eyes. The fox licked at the tears and then grew more confused. There was no scent of blood. He squirmed out of the boy's arms to inspect his human more carefully, alarmed that he could have failed to notice an injury, although his sense of smell was never wrong. No, no blood; not even the under-skin pooling of

a bruise or the marrow leak of a cracked bone, which had happened once.

The car pulled to the right, and the suitcase beside them shifted. By its scent, the fox knew it held the boy's clothing and the things from his room he handled the most often: the photo he kept on top of his bureau and the items he hid in his bottom drawer. He pawed at a corner, hoping to pry the suitcase open enough for the boy's weak nose to smell these favoured things and be comforted. But just then, the car slowed again, this time to a rumbling crawl. The boy slumped forward, his head in his hands. The fox's heartbeat climbed and the brushy hairs of his tail lifted. The charred metal scent of the father's new clothing was burning his throat. He leaped into the window and scratched at it. Sometimes at home, his boy would raise a similar glass wall if he did this. He always felt better when the glass was lifted.

Instead, the boy pulled him down on to his lap again and spoke to his father in his begging tone. The fox had learned the meaning of many human words, and he heard him use one of them now: "NO." Often the "no" word was linked to one of the two names he knew: his own and his boy's. He listened carefully, but today it was just the "NO, pleaded to the father over and over. The car juddered to a full stop and tilted off to the right, a cloud of dust rising beyond the window. The

father reached over the seat again, and after saying something to his son in a soft voice that didn't match his heard lie-scent, he grasped the fox by the scruff of the neck.

- 1.** From whose point of view is this first chapter told?
- 2.** Write down all the characters that are introduced in this first part of the book and write down everything you know about them.
- 3.** Find the following words in the text and write down their meanings.

muzzle	coarser	scent	charred
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- 4.** How did the fox know that the car was taking them into woodland?
- 5.** What details suggest to us that the boy is upset about something?
- 6.** What was in the suitcase?
- 7.** What details suggest to us that the fox is starting to feel anxious?
- 8.** Why do you think the boy is pleading 'no' to his father. Remember to back up your answer with reference to the text.
- 9.** Why do you think the father 'grasped the fox by the scruff of the neck'?

