



## The Secret of the Mansion

*Julie Campbell , Kathryn Kenny , Michael Koelsch (Illustrator) , Mary Stevens (Illustrator)*

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Trixie's summer is going to be sooo boring with her two older brothers away at camp. But then a millionaire's daughter moves into the next-door mansion, an old miser hides a fortune in his decrepit house, and a runaway kid starts hiding out in Sleepyside!

## The Secret of the Mansion Details

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Author : Julie Campbell , Kathryn Kenny , Michael Koelsch (Illustrator) , Mary Stevens (Illustrator)

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# From Reader Review The Secret of the Mansion for online ebook

## Frances says

I am reviewing the first fifteen books. I am 60 years old and I can still remember how much I loved these books. Trixie and Honey were my best friends. I would buy them at k-mart for 89 cents. The only problem was finding all of them. (I later completed my set through e-bay. I had the hardbacks with the portraits of Trixie and Honey on the inside cover. They had the full color illustrations that I just loved. I trace my penchant for twin sweater sets from #8 in which Trixie, Honey and Di wore them in different colors. On the back cover it asked "Would you like to ride horses, belong to a secret club, have great friends and solve mysteries?" You bet I did. When I see what kids read today it seems so sad and depressing. The joy seems to be missing. I still have my set of books that I read many many times.

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## Mark Baker says

Meet Trixie, Honey, and Jim as the trio form a friendship and hunt for the treasure that is supposed to be in Jim's great uncle's old house.

This is a very favorite series from childhood on, and I just love meeting the characters again for the first time. They aren't quite themselves yet, and can be annoying as a result. Just know they grow stronger from their friendships by the next in the series.

Read my full review at Carstairs Considers.

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## Melody says

I know many wonderful people who love, love, love Trixie. My earliest memories of this series center around a supermarket in Coldwater Michigan which sold cheap Whitman hardcovers for 69 cents. Every so often, if I'd completely run out of REAL books (which is to say, books about HORSES), my mom would buy me a Whitman book. It's where I first learned about abridged books, to my everlasting shock and chagrin. I remember the odd Trixie Belden, but didn't retain anything more concrete than a dismissive sort of feeling.

At the urging of some people whose taste in kidlit I respect, I revisited the first of the series. My recall was accurate. I'm not a Trixie fan. From the smarminess of calling one's maternal parent "Moms" to the inaccuracy about snakebite (garter snakes don't leave puncture wounds!) and the loathsome whiny Honey, I was left unmoved. And if Trixie said "yummy-yum" one more time, I was going to dive into the pages of the book and box her ears.

It got better toward the end, and I confess to a certain degree of curiosity about where they will find Jim. Tell me, Bob-Whites, do they improve as one continues?

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## **Sarah Booth says**

### **Memories of childhood**

I read these as a kid and loved them. It's childhood from a simpler time when kids went off exploring and everything wasn't brand placement, advertising and electronics. Kids did chores and rode horses and had manners and I hadn't turned into my grandmother yet. Forty years later I am reading these again. It makes me miss living with a yard and garden and being an indestructible kid again. These are great stories for young girls and even boys if they like reading about girl characters who help solve mysteries. They were originally written in the late 40s but didn't show their age when I was a kid since no one had cellphones when I was young thank goodness! Technology is wonderful, I am reading these books digitally after all, but I do miss the time when our lives weren't ruled by all our gadgets and people actually spent time outside and doing things. I hear my grandmother laughing at me from the great beyond at how I have become the old fart talking about the "olden days". Touché grandma, touché.

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## **Erin says**

Trixie Belden was not perfect. She got into trouble, she got dirty, she argued and lost, and she got kidnapped! Truly, if you cut her, did she not bleed?! yes!

My Mom bought me two Trixie Belden books to take on a family vacation to Florida the summer after 2nd grade. I think I had finished them before we hit the Florida state line much to my mom's dismay. I immediately re-read them. I spent the next two years buying them as fast as my allowance would allow. Until 1986 when they went out of print. Aigh! Then I spent the next few years buying the remaining new ones off of bookshelves, scouring garage sales and flea markets, and crawling through the stacks of used book shelves. Can you guess how much I loved the advent of internet shopping?

I now have multiple copies of most of the books in the different editions and covers. I do actually have a complete set, but I have never read #39. I refuse to read #39, because if I read it then it will be over. If I read the last Trixie Belden book, there will never be another Bob-White adventure. I prefer to go on knowing that there is one more out there waiting to be read.

Read Trixie Belden. She rocks.

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## **Annie says**

I adored the Trixie Belden series and read all of them for years. I truly credit this series, along with a few others, with fostering my voracious love of reading, and also with sowing the seeds of love of the Adventure/Quest novel. Trixie is a spunky, smart heroine, and I really wanted to be her when I was a girl. Can't wait to share with my daughter one day.

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## Juli says

I first discovered this series when I was about 12 years old or so. If I remember correctly, my sister gave me the first two books for my birthday, and from there my Trixie Belden collection grew to fill my small bookcase. I absolutely loved this series! I think I identified with Trixie a bit....but the sometimes pesky, cute kid I had to deal with was my nephew and not my little brother. :) I remember wishing I could have picnics in the woods, ride horses and have adventures like Trixie, her brothers and friends.

Flash forward about 3 decades (lol) and I hadn't thought of Trixie and Sleepyside, NY for a very long time. I found an old copy of a Nancy Drew book at the thriftstore...and that got me thinking about all those Trixie adventures I read as a kid. I did a little searching and found the first 3 books in digital format on the NC Digital Library (big thanks to my small local library for expanding their offerings with this awesome site!). At first I was a bit afraid to start re-reading them. Would the books be too dated or too simple for me to enjoy them again as an adult? I didn't want to ruin my fond memories of Trixie, Honey, Brian, & the rest of the gang.

Finally, I worked up the courage to load book 1 on my kindle and start reading.

Immediately, I was in heaven.

Yes, the story is simple. And, yes, the verbage is a bit dated (who says dungarees anymore?), but I didn't care! My old friends were right there on the pages.....for 30+ years they had been waiting for me to return and enjoy their stories again!

Book one is actually the start of a 2-part story (The tale starts in book 1, and finishes in book 2, The Red Trailer Mystery.) It's a great introduction to Trixie, her family and friends. The basics: Trixie discovers that a new family has bought the large manor house located near their farm. She meets the girl who lives there, Honey Wheeler. It's summer and the girls quickly become great friends. The Beldens other neighbor, Mr. Frayne, is a grumpy old man, who lives in a crumbling mansion overgrown with weeds. The kids learn Mr. Frayne is ill and in the hospital. He isn't expected to survive. As kids will, they go poking around Frayne's house, wanting to get a look inside just once when the unfriendly old man isn't around to chase them off. They discover a boy hiding there. Jim, Mr. Frayne's nephew, is hiding at the house, having ran away from his stepfather. The kids start searching for the stash of money Mr. Frayne is rumored to have hidden on his estate somewhere. Jim is Frayne's heir, but he's hiding from his mean stepfather. He hopes to find the money and use it to attend college and be free of his stepfather for good. The kids have many adventures together while searching for the money and exploring the woods.

I had just as much fun reading the first book again as I did all those years ago! I'm definitely going to re-read the series, or at least the first 3 books (which is all the local library has available right now). As they add more of the series in digital format, I will read more of their adventures. It's nice to see the updated covers!

I like the updated art better. It's more colorful and shows both girls. Very nice! But I still have my memories of an entire bookcase filled with matching beige books....all the 80's style covers. When I was leaving for college, I sold my entire set of books at a garage sale to a girl who was so excited to get to read them! I hope she enjoyed them and then passed them on to another girl! I got many, many hours of joyful reading from them!

The first six Trixie Belden books were written by Julie Campbell (Tatham). She then passed the series off to

a series of authors, although they were all published under the penname Kathryn Kenny. The series was published from 1948 - 1986. It remained out of print until 2003, when the early books in the series were reprinted by Random House Publishers. It looks like they reprinted up to book 15, so quite a few books in the 39 book set remain out of print. Looks like I'm going to be hunting up a lot of used books to read the whole series! It will be worth it -- these are great books! The stories are simple (similar to Nancy Drew) but enjoyable. Sometimes it's nice to just relax and read an interesting, but uncomplicated, story. :)

On to book 2!! :)

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## Lisa says

When I was in elementary school, there were several girls' book series that I avoided because I thought they sounded so . . . insipid. For example, the *Betsy-Tacy* books. What kind of a dumb name was Betsy-Tacy? Another series that I gave the stink-eye to when I saw it on the shelves was Trixie Belden. What kind of a name was *Trixie*?! Trixie sounded like the sugar cereal with the rabbit mascot that I knew from TV commercials, not like the name of a girl who solved mysteries.

Two years ago I finally read a *Betsy-Tacy* book and felt like a big dope when I discovered how sweet and adorable it was and realized how much I would have loved it as a kid. Last week, while impatiently waiting for the next *Sammy Keyes* book to come out, I decided maybe I should give Trixie Belden a chance too.

When I opened the first Trixie Belden book, *The Secret of the Mansion*, to the first page and read the first sentence, I felt very smug. All my suspicions were confirmed.

*Oh, Moms," Trixie moaned, running her hands through her short, sandy curls. "I 'll just die if I don't have a horse."*

Ha ha! I knew it! Trixie Belden was an idiot! All my revulsion had been legitimate! But then I kept reading, and I discovered that Trixie Belden was a little more complicated than she first appeared. For example, Trixie's dad comes home a few pages later and informs Trixie and her mother that he found their elderly neighbor collapsed in his driveway and drove him to the hospital, where the doctors predicted that he would have little chance of survival. Trixie's response?

*"Serves him right," Trixie said, wiping her grimy hands on her rolled-up blue jeans. "The mean old miser. You should have left him lying in the driveway, Dad."*

HA HA HA!!! I never expected a girl's mystery hero from the late 1940s to say something like that. *"Should have left him lying in the driveway."* Hee hee hee! Also, did you notice that her hands were grimy? And that she's wearing blue jeans? As it turns out, Trixie's a pretty badass tomboy. She's impulsive, determined, a little selfish, and not afraid to get dirty or explore creepy places. I HAD NO IDEA!

That said, the book's tone is reflective of what was considered acceptable fare for minors in its time: The plot

works out in the same magical, unrealistic way a Nancy Drew plot works out. The good guys are good and the bad guys are bad. Trixie and her friend Honey appear to be unaware of sex--for example, they continually daydream about their parents adopting the hot teenage boy down the road so he can be their brother because they like him so much--what?! And it's hard *not* to hear Haley Mills's voice from *The Parent Trap* film coming out of Trixie and Honey's mouths when they speak ("*Gosh,*" *Honey breathed. "Golly! Golly! Golly!"*).

It's interesting how 1950s-and-60s-children's-book wholesomeness meshes and jars with Trixie being an intensely strong-willed character. Trixie is a little too complicated, a little too independent for the world she lives in, but at the same time she doesn't have the experience necessary to always make good decisions. And isn't that the same tension that lies at the very heart of the complexity of being a teen?

Long story short: the first Trixie Belden book is a fun read featuring a reasonably strong female character. And since the first book ends on a bit of a cliff-hanger, I guess I'll just have to read the next one.

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### **Denise says**

I was wondering if I would like Trixie as well at 58 as I did at 11 or 12 (or whenever I read it as a child). The answer was yes. I have a different perspective of Trixie than I did when I was a child. (Of course.) Trixie tends to do something before she thinks and is constantly having mishaps because of that. She is also rather careless. I'm sure as a child I was awed by her daring.

I don't remember the story line at all in this book and I'm not sure as a child if I read all of the books or even what order I would have read them. I'm wondering if I will remember them as we get further into the series.

One nice thing about reading a "kids" mystery is that you don't have dead bodies to contend with so someone that would like a cozy with no murder should consider reading some of the YA books like this.

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### **Lisa C says**

Even though the Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew TV show was a big hit at the time, like much of my generation, I was hooked on Trixie Belden. These were the first books that I bought on my own -- waiting until the newest were published, scrambling to find the older copies that were slightly cheaper, taking them to the counter all by myself. I'd get so excited when I figured out how it was going to end, that tears would stream from my eyes as I tried to finish the last chapters (not crying, just an odd leaking of salty water). Though upon reading again a few years ago, I discovered that the original author was far better and more authentic with the 50's mentality--since she was actually writing then, the whole series had me enthralled well into my tweens. My favorites will always be the first ones given to me, #1 and #3. Even after re-reading many times, I still think they are the best.

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### **Sheri says**

Trixie Belden enjoys a glorious summer exploring and hanging out with her friends. I can see why children enjoy this series. Trixie and friends experience lots of fun activities and their adventures bring back fond

memories of fearless summer escapades in my own youth.

I didn't read these as a child, but the characters are certainly very relatable and realistic; they are definitely in line with the type of childhood I had. Each one has a different personality and upbringing and their differences show one another that people are different yet still the same. The only aspect that didn't match my own childhood was that these kids knew everything -- from how to handle a snake bite to rigging up an outdoor shower. Neither I, nor my friends, had that kind of practical knowledge. Trixie and her friends were all resourceful, level-headed, and brave in distressing situations and helpful, caring young people in calm everyday matters.

This first book in the series was more adventure story than mystery and I am interested to see how the series develops.

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### **Bethany says**

A formulaic series, but what a formula!!! I read probably 95% of the Trixie Belden series growing up and can't wait for Amanda to get into them.

Trixie is a girl detective, much like Nancy Drew, only (I think) much better (and I did like Nancy).

To avoid diluting my goodreads list, I'll spare rating them individually, but know that I recommend them all whole-heartedly.

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### **Bonnie says**

June 13, 2013: Re-reading the first three in the series again. A summer tradition! :)

August 9, 2012: Just another summer re-read. Partly because I'm trying to get back on pace with my reading goal (I have three YA books on hold at the library to pick up this weekend) and partly because I just love this series and the first three are awesome books to read in the summer! :)

A great start to a wonderful series that is still making an impact in my life. Even the bad books are good because they're there (and I enjoy mocking them \*g\*). But this book gets everything off to a great start. How could I not have fallen in love with a series whose opening line is, "Oh, Moms, I'll just die if I don't have a horse!" Although I read and enjoyed Nancy Drew, it was so much easier to relate to Trixie, who loved horses, had annoying brothers, hated dusting, and didn't do well in math. But more than anything, the friendships in this series is what drew me to it, and has held me to it, 30-some years later.

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### **?Tonya? says**

When I was a kid, before my dad died, he used to take me to the bookstore when my mom was shopping. He

bought me any book I wanted and of course it was a Trixie Beldon book every time! This popped into my head driving home from work tonight. It was no Harry Potter but it was what we loved as kids.

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### **Kara says**

The book that started my lifetime obsession with serialized Girl detective books. I had already read Nancy Drew when I discovered Trixie. Trix was far more appealing to me as she was younger and more accessible than Nancy who was elusively glamorous, poised, wore smart suits and drove a car. Trixie was a farm girl in "dungarees" who ride a bike or her horse as her mode of transport.

Trixie, 13, exists in that fleeting period between childhood and teenagerdom, when girls and boys still co exist as friends and are not ready to be adults. Trixie is 100% a kid and a completely average in every way except for in her ability to solves mysteries. She's short and sturdy, clumsy, bright but a bad student, quick tempered, fiercely loyal, resourceful and happy. Trixie and her family which includes 3 brothers, live in a farmhouse called "Crabapple Farm", in a fictional town delightfully called "Sleepyside on the Hudson in upstate New York. She and her friends and brothers form a detective club called the "Bob Whites of the Glen". (One of her friends whom I particularly obsessed with is Di, the newly rich, Elizabeth Taylor-esque beauty with black hair and "flashing violet eyes").

I discovered Secret of the Mansion in an antique store when I was 11. The story is simple and perfectly formulated for pre teen readers. After unsuccessfully begging for a horse her own from "Moms", Trix spies a horse trailer outside a nearby empty mansion. The new tenants, the Wheeler are a rich and glamorous family from NYC with a pretty daughter Trixie's age. Trixie quickly labels Honey a priss for riding in fancy breeches but soon learns she has been sickly and sheltered, having been raised by her loyal governess Miss Trask. Honey and Trixie soon become best friends. Upon "exploring" (breaking into) an old miser's spooky mansion, the girls discover a teenage boy name Jim Frayne asleep on a mattress on the floor. It turns out Jim is the old man's grandnephew who had run away from his abusive stepfather. Local legend is Jim's miserly uncle hid a fortune in the mansion but it has never been found. The half a million dollars is eventually discovered to be stuffed in the old mattress that jim had been sleeping. Trite but satisfying.

I would recommend the Trixie Belden series to any young girl. Put down that Twilight book, read Trixie instead.

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### **Pili says**

This was such a fun sweet book! And it reminded me of one of my fave series as a child, The Happy Hollisters! Oh, how I devoured their adventures!

A perfect summer read and even if it'll be a bit of a different read for younger kids these days, given how old timey it can read at times, it was full of charm and reminded me a lot of both very loved books I read when I was Trixie's age and also of the summers of my childhood, that I also spent under very little supervision, safely roaming and playing around in a small village, far from the rest-of-the-year-life-in-the-city!

Trixie was both an endearing and irritating character at the same time, because she was sweet and enthusiastic but could also be a bit too quick to judge and rather prone to act first and think later! Often rash

and always determined she was also a very honest and open girl that was the best kind of influence for the very city girl and sheltered Honey (also, that name?).

They both form a team that keeps each other on balance and once they find a very unexpected friend that they want to help and a mysterious inheritance to find. I was expecting a lil bit more of the house mystery but I wasn't really disappointed because the book was full of summer goodness and the mystery was just another part of it!

3.5 stars to this one and I'm curious to give a try to more books in the series, if I can get my hands on them!

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### **Melissa McShane says**

I picked this up because Beth is re-reading the series and I needed something light. It's been years since I read the Trixie Belden books and I was surprised they held up at *all*. But I found this first one charming and way better written than Nancy Drew. (I read the Nancy Drew books when I was eight or nine and Trixie Belden at twelve, and I feel those are good ages for each even though Nancy is a few years older than Trixie.)

So, impressions:

1. My parents bought me the Whitman reprints, the first 16, that were published starting in 1970. I had *no idea* this book was written in 1948. Trixie is way older than I thought, and that explains a lot about some of the details. Like, in one of the later books, Moms (what is *up* with that name?) takes Trixie clothes shopping and insists on buying her a girdle even though Trixie is maybe 13. Anyway, the point is, despite the age of the book (happy 70th birthday, Trixie Belden!) it comes across as fairly timeless because...
2. The characters are really well fleshed-out. Though the series went the way of Nancy Drew after book 6, when the writing was taken over by a series of writers under the pseudonym Kathryn Kenny, the first six were written by one woman, and she didn't just toss these off. They aren't perfect; in some ways they're still very old-fashioned to modern readers. But Trixie comes off as a realistic, slightly tomboyish adolescent, her friend Honey is realistically timid based on her background, Jim is a great mix of tough and tender, and the adults are all a lot of fun. My favorite of the side characters was always Regan, the Wheelers' groom, but they really all do come across as interesting, if not the kind of realistic we expect in contemporary YA fiction.
3. The story is a fun mix of serious, lighthearted, and ridiculous. Serious, because Jim's story is fairly tragic; lighthearted, because Trixie and Honey get into some funny troubles; ridiculous, because there are aspects of the plot that simply couldn't happen even in 1948. My memory is that I did not read this one first, I read the sequel first, so I already knew the details of how the mystery worked out. (view spoiler) But I was still caught up in...
4. The friendship between Trixie and Honey and their friendship with Jim. I always identified more with Honey than with Trixie, mostly because Trixie is too bold for me, but I love seeing these very different girls develop a friendship that's based on their strengths making up for each other's weaknesses. Honey isn't as timid as she seems, and Trixie can be thoughtful. Jim is a lot less dismissive of them than I thought a boy of their era ought to be, which is refreshing, and I like how unflaggingly honest he is, even though the rogue in me thinks he could stand to learn how to tell a white lie or two.

5. Campbell strikes a great balance between the wish-fulfillment of Honey being a gazillionaire's daughter and Trixie being poor by comparison. Trixie doesn't instantly get to take advantage of her new friend's wealth, and Honey isn't a poor little rich girl--they both have things about their own lives they prefer and even envy the other for.

I read the first two back to back because the second springboards off the first. It was a fun trip down Memory Lane, and even now I'm remembering the ones that stood out and look forward to revisiting them.

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### **Moonlight Reader says**

I was first introduced to Trixie Belden in the 1970's. While I was a fan of Nancy Drew - and I'm sure I'll shelve her here down the road a bit - it was for Trixie and the Bob-Whites of the Glen that I reserved my most committed and unconditional adoration.

Trixie reminded me of me. Also a tom-boy, I skied and sledded and was involved in winter sports. My family mirrored hers, with a garden-crazy stay-at-home mom and a dad who worked outside the home (mine was a doctor, not a banker, but still . . . ). But Trixie had older brothers, something I lacked, but that I longed for, and her best friend, Honey, the poor-little-rich girl had a stable full of horses.

I spent years reading Trixie. I belonged to some kind of a mail-order book club, and one of them would arrive at my house every month. They were poorly made book club editions, with hideous covers, a school library edition of some kind, not a hard-back, but not a soft-cover either.

I read them into tatters. When I left home for college, I left them in a box and at some point they were water-damaged. When I returned home for the summer after my first year of law school, my personal life had completely self-destructed. I had performed well academically, but my marriage had fallen apart. I dug these out and read them, covers falling off, pages disintegrating in my hands, smelling of mildew. I credit Trixie, in a small way, with the survival of my sense of self after the failure that was my first marriage.

When the books were re-released for a new generation of readers, I bought them, ostensibly for my daughter. She has shown no interest, and is off to college, so that ship has likely sailed. I, on the other hand, will still reread them from time to time. I put them in a stack on the end table, and can read from the top of the stack to the bottom in a matter of hours. Reuniting with Trixie and Honey and Di, and Jim Frayne, my original book boyfriend, and Brian and the irritating Mart, is like becoming myself all over again.

Sometimes I think that people are the most *themselves* when they are around ten years old, before peer pressure weighs them down, and they start to question what they love, to edit themselves for an audience. When I was ten, I loved Trixie Belden. When I read Trixie Belden, I am ten. Again.

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### **Amanda NEVER MANDY says**

Forget Daphne and Velma, Trixie Belden is the real deal for any young amateur sleuth. Around about the late 80's after I had read through everything the library had to offer on *The Boxcar Children*, I found myself needing more. Nancy Drew was too old fashioned for my taste and the Hardy Boys could have went and sucked an egg for all I cared. What I finally did stumble upon was this read and it had so much to offer a

little girl looking for some mystery mixed with a whole lot of relatable main character. I mean seriously, with a name like Trixie who couldn't resist?

With my beginner's love of mysteries just getting its start with the previous series, I would say this was perfect for cementing it in. I can also credit these books for my devotion to following and sticking with a book series as well. It's funny, the more I think on certain books from the past the more I remember little flashes of how they could have affected the rest of my reading history. Like for example, this series would have led straight into my budding interest of the next phase of my life, being a teenager. The odds were good I crushed a little on one of Trixie's older brothers or another one of the boys that was represented in the series. I can also almost guarantee that after I completed this series that the next series of books I pulled off the shelf was *The Baby-Sitters Club*. (Stay tuned for that exciting review sometime in the near future...)

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**Emma Grace says**

3.5 stars

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