



It Happened on a Train

Mac Barnett, Adam Rex (Illustrator)

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Retired private detective and current seventh grader Steve Brixton has a new career: taking out the garbage on Wednesdays for five bucks a week. But it's hard to leave the old game behind, and on a train trip down the California coast, Steve finds himself pulled back into sleuthing. Soon he's in over his head in four feet and eleven inches of mystery involving a fleet of priceless automobiles, a deadly assassin (or maybe just a faulty lock on a sauna door), and a secret train car filled with intrigue. Plus there's a girl involved, which complicates everything. I mean she's just Steve's friend. And really, they barely even know each other. It's not like they're boyfriend or girlfriend or anything, okay?

It Happened on a Train Details

Date : Published October 4th 2011 by Simon Schuster Books for Young Readers

ISBN : 9781416978190

Author : Mac Barnett , Adam Rex (Illustrator)

Format : Hardcover 288 pages

Genre : Mystery, Humor, Adventure, Childrens, Middle Grade, Fiction

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From Reader Review It Happened on a Train for online ebook

Timothy M says

I recently finished It Happened on a Train by Mac Barnett and it is now my favorite book. When "retired" 12 year old detective Steve Brixton goes on a train trip for school he runs into Claire Marinner who leads him to a secret train car owned by the Vanderaak Family. They lead Steve on a crazy adventure. Meanwhile, someone's trying to kill Steve, a priceless car is stolen, and some people are acting suspiciously. Steve and his chum Dana Villalon must get to the bottom of things! This book is very fast paced. You have to pay attention to detail or you will miss a huge clue. I really like this book because I met the author and illustrator and they are cool guys, it uses terms like haymaking someone in the solar plexus, it is well written, it has many interesting characters, etc. I can relate to Dana, Steve's chum, because he is into reading and thinks that Steve is crazy at first but then realizes that it's going to be awesome. Like I said earlier, this is my favorite book of all time and I love every bit of it. I love it so much I read all 277 pages of it in less than two hours. The reason I started reading the Brixton Brothers series is because #1 was a Bluebonnet last year. I have been hooked on the series ever since. I am currently reading #4 Danger Goes Berserk. Overall, I would give this 100 out of 5 stars because it is such an awesome book. This is probably about the time I would wrap up the review, but I love the book so much I'm going to keep on going. When Steve decides to hide in the car trunk like they did in the Trojan Horse I was surprised because it was so risky and daring. I'm glad he did though because he wouldn't have caught the thief otherwise. Anyway, it was a supercalafragilisticexpoliudocious kind of book and I would highly recommend it to anyone.

BAYA Librarian says

Not many middle grade novels begin with a hero who is disillusioned, retired and taking out the trash. But that is how we meet Steve Brixton in the third installment of the Brixton Brothers Mysteries. This light-hearted spoof of old mystery books brings us a twelve year-old former detective who no longer wants to play the game. Of course, mysteries can't help but fall in his lap. This one involves car thieves, a train, a young lady (who is NOT his girlfriend!), kidnapping, questionable decision making by our hero, wildly convenient coincidences, lots of danger and occasional puns. If you have read the previous books in the series, you know what to expect. Amusing particularly to kids who have been immersed in the Hardy Boys lore. You will want to start at the beginning of the series as they make several references to previous cases, and the characters and relationships are already well-established. Fun and silly, reminiscent of M. T. Anderson's Whales on Stilts: M.T. Anderson's Thrilling Tales. I found myself laughing out loud a few times while reading this book. As the third in a series, your library should own and circulate the first two before you consider purchasing this one.

Marfita says

This is number three in the Brixton Brothers series - I've missed number two and the hints in this one are tantalizing. There is always the chance that after a brilliant beginning, a series may start to fade, but Barnett has done it again! If only he wrote some similar stuff for adults! Aw, who cares? I'll read these! The Brixton Brothers series is a must-read for anyone who enjoyed series such as The Hardy Boys, Nancy Drew, and/or the Boxcar Children when they were young. Those books don't stand up as you age, but

Barnett's books can be enjoyed by anyone capable of reading them. On its face, it is a mystery series for kids, but it's also a satire on the same. [Both a particle and a wave!] And they both work! This is a great series for an adult to share with a kid.

I was much taken by the illustration on the front of Steve Brixton on top of a moving train in a only a bathrobe (his shower cap having just flown off) being menaced by a hooded man with a lead pipe on one end and an approaching tunnel on the other. *How, I thought, how on earth are we going to get to this point??* Everything that leads up to it indicates that this would be entirely impossible - but it isn't. Steve, with his reluctant "chum" Dana, can logically embroil themselves in the most fantastical scrapes!

The general over-arching theme of this book seems to be love, which Barnett handles with the deftness of a buzzing Dremel. Dana has acquired a girlfriend and a new literary interest that is a thorn in Steve's twelve-year-old side. But Steve himself must eventually confront his own feelings and the complexities of relationships, those between friends and, ew! ick!, those Other Ones!

Barnett must be familiar with Chekov's exhortation, "One must not put a loaded rifle on the stage if no one is thinking of firing it." Be on the lookout! And enjoy, enjoy, enjoy! I retold this story over a couple of days to my husband who had to hold his head laughing. Run, don't walk, to a library to find this. Aww, heck! Buy them! They'll withstand many re-readings!

Heidi says

I confess I was one of those kids who devoured any mystery I could get my hands on, Nancy Drew, Hardy Boys, Bobbsey Twins, and Trixie Belden. I have lots of fun memories reading these books, often more than once. Maybe that's why I enjoy reading Barnett's Steve Brixton mystery series. These books are so clearly a spoof on those other formulaic books that I get a big kick out of reading them. What is so amazing is that Barnett manages to spoof the Hardy Boys without his stories being formulaic in any way. In fact, I would have to say that his mysteries are more unique than many others I've read. Even with all the humor contained in the story, Barnett still manages to create an intriguing mystery with plenty of twists and turns. Just when you think you've got the mystery solved, another twist comes your way. He even makes a kid crawling on top of a train in a bathrobe seem believable. The boy/girl interactions seem so typical of twelve-year-olds, both the mystery and confusion, take me back to my own middle school years. I highly recommend this series for students who are ready to move past Nancy Drew/Hardy Boys, but still want the fast moving plots and excitement of a good mystery.

Linda says

This is book #3 of the Brixton Brothers Mystery series. These books are so enjoyable for light reading and I love the innuendos and puns linking the series to the Hardy Boys series and also to important wealthy people in history.

Twelve year-old Steve (who has no siblings, by the way, but thought that it sounded way cooler to call his detective agency Brixton Brothers) has given up being a detective after his disappointment in his last case. But trouble just seems to follow him. On a trip to San Diego by train to meet with a school group doing a mock-up UN delegation, and accompanied by his chum Dana and his mother's annoying boyfriend, Rick, he gets caught up with a rich couple in their own private train car. The couple are hauling their newest rare vintage car and have a private detective with them to ensure that it is not stolen like their previous 6 cars have been. The detective has a niece, Claire, with him and Steve doesn't understand girls at all. Soon the kids

are on top of the train (per the cover illustration) chasing what Steve calls a "baddie". Much more danger occurs but of course, all ends well with the author, Mac Barnett, tying up loose ends, including something nearly forgotten that happened early in the story.

Betty-Ann says

I had picked up the first of this new mystery series last year for my school library. Mysteries are always a popular genre with all my students and I'm always trying to find a new series. I did not take the time to read that one, called The Case of the Case of the Mistaken Identity even though it features crime-fighting librarians! So when I was browsing the public library shelves, I picked up this newest title.

The hero is Steve Brixton, an amateur detective. He has read all 58 titles in the Bailey Brothers Detective mystery series and considers himself a private detective. But after the first two adventures, his mother has grounded him and he has been forced to retire. On the way to a school function, he stumbles upon a mystery on the train and is forced out of retirement to solve it.

I found the book to be a fun, entertaining read perfect for those boys who have read all the Encyclopedia Brown books and all the Hardy Boy mysteries. The author is clearly referring back to the Hardy Boy series with his references to the Bailey Brothers mysteries and the ease with which Joe and Frank Hardy solve mysteries. Steve is not always so lucky and funny, unexpected things always seem to happen during his solving of a case. However, the reader is always part of the solution and can help figure out the mystery along with Steve.

Garrett says

It was a good book but the end was complicated and hard to understand

Kaia says

My son and I enjoyed this book more than the second book in the series. This book has more humor, and the story was stronger.

EmilyChen says

It Happened On a Train by Mac Barnett was a good book. It was about a kid detective name Steve Brixton. He is traveling on a train with his mom's boyfriend Rick and his best friend Dana. Steve is not a big fan of Rick because Rick does not think that Steve is capable of solving mysteries. This is not true because Steve has solved many cases that has stumped the police. Steve no longer wants to be a sleuth because in his last case, he found out that his favorite author who taught him everything he knew about being a detective, turned out to be a criminal. On the train Steve meets a girl in the cafe car. When that girl leaves, Steve sees that she left her book. Steve looks all over the train for her but could not find her. this turns into a even bigger mystery and with the help of Dana, he finds a way to some how solve it.

I enjoyed this mystery because it had many twists and turns. At the beginning of the book, the evidence is

piling up on one person but by the end, the culprit is the person who you would not think was involved in the crime. I would recommend this book to anyone who likes mysteries. Although Steve is only a twelve year old boy, he can do many things. In this book, Steve is in a lot of danger and the chase takes him all the way to Mexico. This book will leave you asking for more and the truth behind the entire case was triggered by the simplest things. I enjoyed this book a lot and you probably will too.

meg says

mac barnett sure knows how to bring the lolz right outta me. at this rate i'll never get tired of the brixton brothers.

Rebecca says

7th grader Steve Brixton, retired detective, takes on a new case for the sake of a girl when he and his best friend Dana find themselves on a 7 hour train journey. A local multi-millionaire has hitched his custom-designed classic train car (just like those in the Bailey Brothers mystery books, Steve's favorites) to the modern train just to transport his newest antique car back home. He's had six other antique cars stolen, and he's determined this one will make it. He hired a detective to guard it, and the detective's niece is part of the bargain--and Steve's reason for offering his services. Of course, nothing goes as planned, since life, as Steve has amazingly not yet discovered, does not work like a Bailey Brothers book.

I really want to like this series. I love mysteries, and the author was a huge hit when he visited our school--the kids adored him. However, I just can't stand Steve. He reminds me of Greg Heffley in the Wimpy Kid books--totally self-centered and self-absorbed, puzzled that anyone could have any interests different than his own, or any concerns in their lives more important than doing whatever Steve tells them to do. It's age-appropriate, but unpleasant. I think the books would work far better from the long-suffering Dana's point of view, and be much funnier. Dana has to rescue Steve a lot, and could offer some perspective on how ridiculous Steve is. Though I'm puzzled as to why Dana remains friends with someone who can't acknowledge that his friends have any (right to) existence outside of being his sidekick.

Kate Willis says

[get the one guy to prove he owns the car. Nice foreshadowing for later! (hide spoiler)]

Cameron G. says

December 14, 2012

I recently finished the book *It Happened on a Train* by Mac Barnett. When the Vandaark's prize collection of cars goes missing they hire a private detective to protect a car that they are transporting on a train. Steve Brixton just happens to be on this same train when he notices strange goings-on such as disappearing girls, a windowless, sealed off train car, and more. He ends up making new friends to help solve the case and finds

out what happened on a train. I like this book because it's full of suspense and adventure. I can relate to Steve because he always thinks logically and figures out the answer to a mystery.

Barbara says

He may be in the seventh grade, but Steve Brixton is one smart boy. Having been disappointed at what he has learned about the author of his favorite detective series, *The Bailey Brothers*, and having been grounded by his mother for his stretching of the truth in an earlier book, Steve has retired from detective work. [This is the third title in the series.] But like anyone who is good at something, Steve just can't help himself and is pulled into doing detective work once again when he is on a school trip. Aboard a train to San Diego, he can't help but get involved in solving the mystery behind the disappearance of several expensive sports cars owned by J. Vanderdraak who is traveling in a private rail car with his wife. There's plenty of action, chases through and on the top of the train, a tunnel, a life-threatening moment or two, and plenty of witty repartee. The fun is embellished by insider references to famous mystery moments in film and books as well as Steve's defensiveness about never having had a girlfriend. I also enjoyed the bits concerning his friend Dana whose girlfriend also is called Dana and has influenced him to read a different type of books than Steve's beloved detective stories--books about wizards. Steve's reliance on what he has learned from books about how to solve crimes is wonderfully naive and adds to his appeal. The digital illustrations capture many crucial moments in the story as well as the characters' personalities.

The silliness of the wealthy couple who could afford to waste their wealth annoyed me, but other than that and my curiosity to know more about Rick, Steve's mother's boyfriend, this was fun to read.

Jessica says

Not many middle grade novels begin with a hero who is disillusioned, retired and taking out the trash. But that is how we meet Steve Brixton in the third installment of the *Brixton Brothers Mysteries*. This light-hearted spoof of old mystery books brings us a twelve year-old former detective who no longer wants to play the game. Of course, mysteries can't help but fall in his lap. This one involves car thieves, a train, a young lady (who is NOT his girlfriend!), kidnapping, questionable decision making by our hero, wildly convenient coincidences, lots of danger and occasional puns. If you have read the previous books in the series, you know what to expect. Amusing particularly to kids who have been immersed in the *Hardy Boys* lore. You will want to start at the beginning of the series as they make several references to previous cases, and the characters and relationships are already well-established. Fun and silly, reminiscent of M. T. Anderson's *Whales on Stilts*: M.T. Anderson's *Thrilling Tales*. I found myself laughing out loud a few times while reading this book.
