



The Secret Tree

Natalie Standiford

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A sweet story of a tree that's literally filled with secrets.

What is your secret?

Minty's neighborhood is full of mysteries. There's the Witch House, a spooky old farmhouse on the other side of woods from where Minty and her best friend, Paz, live. There's the Man Bat, a seven-foot-tall half man, half bat who is rumored to fly through the woods. And there are the Mean Boys, David and Troy, who torment Minty for no reason, and her boy-crazy older sister, Thea, who acts weirder and weirder.

One day Minty spots a flash in the woods, and when she chases after it, she discovers a new mystery--a Secret Tree, with a hollow trunk that holds the secrets of everyone in the neighborhood. Secrets like:

I put a curse on my enemy. And it's working.

I'm betraying my best friend in a terrible way.

No one loves me except my goldfish.

The Secret Tree Details

Date : Published May 1st 2012 by Scholastic Press

ISBN : 9780545334792

Author : Natalie Standiford

Format : Hardcover 256 pages

Genre : Childrens, Middle Grade, Mystery, Realistic Fiction, Fiction, Fantasy

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From Reader Review The Secret Tree for online ebook

Emilia Stirling says

The Secret Tree, written by Natalie Standiford was a very interesting book. It was about mystery friendship and betrayal.

Minty is an average soon to be 6th grader who lives in Catonsville Maryland. Minty, Thea, Paz, Lennie and Melina all live in the same neighborhood, Paz is Minty's best friend, she has two sisters, Melina and Lennie. Thea is Minty's sister who always complains about Minty to Melina.

On Halloween Paz and Minty got dared to ding-dong-ditch a creepy old which house by these two mean boys named Troy and David. That year Minty was a roller derby star (her name was Minty Fresh) and Paz was a which, she used her little sister Lennie's favorite toy cat. That night the which lady stole the toy cat .Lennie would never forgive Paz.

One day when Minty was sitting on her porch when she saw a flash in the woods, she tried to chase the person who made the flash but she was too slow. When she leaned against a tree it felt like it was humming or saying Mintyyyy..... Mintyyyy, she reached inside the whole in the tree to see if anything was in there and she found a piece of paper that said "no one loves me except my goldfish".

Paz has had a bunch of bad luck lately and she doesn't know why, she went to a pool party without Minty! She found a model home near the creepy old house and a boy lived in it. And a prowler was caught stealing from the neighbors.

The Secret Tree was probably the best book I have ever read and I would recommend it for any one from 5th to 8th grade.

Diana says

Minty lives in a small town where everyone knows everyone else. At least, they think they do. Then Minty discovers the Secret Tree, a hollow tree where people leave slips of paper with their secrets written on them. Along with a mysterious boy she meets in the woods, she tries to uncover who each of the secrets belong to. And she learns that there is much more to her neighbor's lives than she thought.

Great novel of friendship, summer and growing up. I loved it, and would recommend to students looking for books about friendship. Would work for upper elementary or middle school.

Melissa says

Sweet story, about the power of friendship, the love and "hate" between siblings and the hope of a secret carried on the wings of the wind (or found within the hallow trunk of "the secret tree"). The transition between elementary and middle school is a hard one to navigate for a lot of tweens, especially when it comes to trying to figure out how you fit in when everyone around you seems to be changing. This story starts off with a mystery, a flash that appears from the other edge of the woods, ID pictures getting stolen and a missing harmonica. This adventure plays out as secrets are revealed, new friends spy in a tree house, picnic lunches in a model home and most of the mysteries solved. Characters are strong and leave their shadow behind as you turn the pages to discover not all secrets can be kept.

Jazzy says

Dear Natalie Standiford,

I let my mind soak in the magic of a private bit of knowledge, as I traveled through the chapters of *The Secret Tree*.

In the winter of 2011, I lost my grandfather to Parkinson's Disease. The only remembrance of him that I have, is a vision of him in his hospital bed, with medical instruments all around him. I see him struggling, trying to say his last goodbyes.

When I walked outside the hospital the world was completely blocked out, all I could hear was my heart beating. Even though I am young I still know that tomorrow I will only have one grandpa. I remember shedding silent tears in the car ride home.

Every day, before I go to bed, I look at my broken snow globe, the last present he gave me. The day my sister dropped the snow globe his spirit rose into the room. Somehow I could sense he was in the room. I know he's with me-he's always with me.

I have never told anybody that I see these visual pictures, but I'll never forget them. This is the secret, that I have given *The Secret Tree*.

Your story made me realize that you can't let your secrets destroy you and have to release them into the world.

As Minty found out who owned each secret, each one touched me in a different way. Though, there was one especially that touched me, "No one loves me except my goldfish." That secret makes me realize that even though you think people dislike you, eres verdaderamente especial, you are truly special.

As I read your book, a chill went down my spine as if my grandpa was right there with me. I started reading out loud as if he was listening. And he was.

Thank you,

Jasmine Clark

Kelly Hager says

Minty (short for Araminta) has a simple life. She loves roller derby, spending time with her best friend Paz and annoying her older sister, Thea. But lately things are getting complicated. Paz is starting to spend more time with these other girls and leaving Minty out. Plus, there are all these weird things happening in the neighborhood---things are disappearing and there's this weird boy taking pictures of people. And then Minty finds the tree.

It's this old tree with a hole in it---you know the type. And if you look in the hole, most of the time, there's a piece of paper inside. On the paper? Someone's secret.

Natalie Standiford is one of my absolute favorite authors and so I knew that I wanted to read this as soon as possible. And while yes, there are some mysteries involved, this is really a story about growing up and how hard that is.

I know that people will tell you that childhood is the best time of your life, but that's a complete lie. I mean, yes, you don't have as much responsibilities, but that's not the same thing. You also have no freedom and you're constantly being told what to do. AND you're trying to figure out who you are while all your friends are doing the same thing. I said all that to say this: Minty has a pretty firm grasp of who she is, but in a way that makes it harder. She's feeling her best friend slip away and she's completely powerless to stop it.

So when she meets Raymond (who is the boy taking pictures) and they become friends, they decide that they're going to read the secrets, figure out who wrote each one and fix the problem (if possible). It's a sweet idea, but it's also pretty obviously a way for Minty to not miss Paz so much. (And incidentally, Raymond is this awesome kid, especially considering the fact that he spends so much time on his own.)

This reminds me of the Judy Blume novels I read when I was a kid; I'm pretty sure Margaret and Minty would get along incredibly well.

Highly recommended.

Ms. Yingling says

Minty and her friend Paz are wild about the roller derby, and are busy practicing their routine for the local Fourth of July parade. Summer is filled with all sorts of other activities, too-- staying away from the Mean Boys who give them a hard time, getting away from Paz's annoying little sister Lennie, and figuring out the mysteries of the Witch House and the Man-Bat, as well as the mystery of who put a curse on Paz. Minty gets some clues when she finds a tree in the woods where people in the neighborhood put slips of paper with their secrets on them. With the help of Raymond, Minty tries to figure out which person in the neighborhood belongs to which secret. Paz starts to hang out with other girls and be less interested in roller derby, so Minty welcomes this job, even though more often than not, the secrets are about uncomfortable realities, and Raymond has secrets of his own.

Strengths: This book had some great characters, very realistic friend drama, and a strong sense of neighborhood.

Weaknesses: I found it hard to believe that people would be putting secrets into a tree. Why? Some local legend or custom?

Kyky More says

The Secret Tree

The Secret Tee is an imaginative and touching story about a girl whose neighborhood is filled from top to bottom with superstitions. From Manbat, an 8ft tall believed to haunt the forests nearby, to the witch's house, across the street.

One day, she is playing with her Filipino friend when she sees a light in the woods. When no one else saw it,

she decides she had been imagining things and went back to her game.

But when she sees the flash for the second time, she goes off to find the flash. On the way, she finds a tree with a hollow stump. Inside there is a churning blackness, where one can put a secret and it wouldn't be disturbed. She continues on her search, and when she found the source of the flash, she unlocks a whole world of secrets that weren't meant to be found.

I recommend this book to 4th – 6th graders though adults will find it just as touching. This book contains extensive vocabulary along with hard to grasp ideas. These combine to create a great realistic fiction story.

Ashlyn Curry says

The book that I read is called the Secret Tree. This book about two kids, Minty and Raymond. Minty lives in a very mysterious neighborhood. There are many things in her neighborhood such as a witch house, a man-bat, and a secret tree. Raymond is a new kid that is fascinated by the "secret tree" just like Minty. The secret tree is a tree with a hollow tree that has pieces of paper in it with secrets on it. MY favorite part of the book was when the put a gold star next to everyone's name in the book, including their own, and returned the book of secrets and pictures back to the Secret Tree. I would give this book a 9/10. The reason I wouldn't give it a 10 is because there are some parts that drag on and noting is really happening. I would recommend this to anyone who wants a good read. Overall, this was a very good book.

Steffi says

Das Buch war unterhaltsam, aber irgendwie hatte ich etwas anderes und magischeres erwartet. Magie spielt aber wenn überhaupt ein eher untergeordnetete Rolle.

Die Geschichte geht eher um Freundschaft und den Zusammenhalt unter Freunden. Ehrlich gesagt fand ich die Art und Weise wie es hier demonstriert wurde nicht immer allzu gut. Die Geheimnisse der Kinder spielen eine große Rolle in der Geschichte und Minty, die Heldin der Geschichte, muss herausfinden wem welches gehört. Dies fand ich stellenweise nicht gut, denn Geheimnisse erzählt man aus einem guten Grund nicht weiter.

Dennoch war das Buch stellenweise unterhaltsam und durch einen angenehmen Schreibstil sehr schnell zu lesen.

Mark says

"They all have their secrets, I thought. Each person's real life is a mystery.

The fireworks exploded, commemorating a war for independence, while all around me people fought their private battles. Even the Mean Boys. Sister versus brother, friend versus friend, son versus father ... they all had private battles that no one understood except for them.

I wanted to understand. But the more I spied, the more mystery I uncovered. I'd never know the whole story. There was so much I couldn't guess."

It's summer vacation, and Minty and her best friend Paz want to have as much fun as they can. They'll be entering middle school next year, and Minty is afraid that with that, everything may change. Their dream has always been to join a roller derby team, but as Paz starts hanging out with some older girls, she begins to act differently around Minty. In addition, strange things are happening around the neighborhood. When Minty catches someone spying on her from the nearby woods, she gives chase, and comes face to face with Raymond, a boy her age, who claims to live in a still-under-construction home on the other side of the woods. Minty and Raymond also find the tree in the woods: the Secret Tree, one with a ghost inside it, who can make all the secrets placed in the tree disappear. Minty and Raymond begin to find the secrets piling up inside the tree, and take it upon themselves to uncover who they belong to. As they spy on neighbors and family members, they not only discover the secrets' owners, but they learn other things they never anticipated.

I've loved Natalie Standiford's books for older readers, and was interested to see what she would do with a MG book. This is an incredibly sweet, touching look at childhood, and how changes, both immediate and gradual, can affect friendships. Minty's voice has an innocence and earnestness, and doesn't want to rush into growing up too quickly. The way she and Raymond use the secrets isn't malicious at all - they honestly want to help the people around them. Standiford uses humor well throughout the book, balancing out some of the more serious themes. An excellent story about how complicated childhood can be; I'm looking forward to passing it along to my daughter.

Caren says

This book feels very true, very real-to-life. It is a perfect description of all of the little battles of growing up. Araminta (Minty) will be eleven at the end of the summer, and will begin middle school in the fall. In the meantime, however, she has to work through maturing at a different rate than her childhood best friend, making a new trusted friend, trying to solve neighborhood mysteries, and life with an irritable older sister. She becomes a sort of neighborhood spy, using secrets written on slips of paper which she has found in the "secret tree". This old tree has a convenient hole where secrets are stashed and fed upon by the ghost, Crazy Ike, who then releases them to the wind. Minty begins taking the slips of paper, and arranging spying missions based on their content, with Raymond, the mysterious boy who lives alone in a model home in an unfinished new development. Here is how she describes herself: "...Nosy. I was curious about how other people lived. What was it like to be other older than me, to be a teenager or an adult? It was like peeking into my own future." (pg. 94)Minty has turned to Raymond when her BFF, Paz, begins hanging out with the cool girls and excluding her. Raymond, however, has serious problems of his own. Really, all of the pain and wonder and joy of this age will flood right back to you. This is a very well-written novel for middle grade readers.

Leah says

This wasn't my kind of story. I was disappointed by the story and the ending. The characters were okay, but no one stood out. The use of voodoo was a turn off, especially since a young girl was the one doing it.

Julie Graves says

Minty and her best friend Paz are keeping themselves busy during summer vacation. Changes are about to occur. They will be entering middle school when summer is over. But even before that their friendship is tested by change.

Minty has always desired to be in the Roller Derby. She imagines her name to be Minty Fresh with Paz being named Pax A. Punch. But Paz begins hanging out with another group of girls and is no longer interested in Minty's Roller Derby dream.

Minty catches a strange boy hiding and taking pictures of the neighborhood. She soon becomes friends with Raymond. They find a tree in the woods that seems to call to them. The legend is that if you put your secrets in the hole of the tree they will disappear. Minty and Raymond decide to match the secrets with the neighbors around them.

Who's secret is "I put a curse on my enemy. And it's working" and who's secret is "I'm betraying my best friend in a terrible way." Minty and Raymond set out to spy on their neighbors to find out their secrets.

The Secret Tree is a sweet story that I enjoyed very much. I liked the way that Minty and Raymond didn't want to use the secrets to bribe people or hold against people, but actually wanted to help the people in the neighborhood. The secrets helped them to understand the behavior of the people around them. It was funny to read about Minty and Paz trying to bring their older sisters back together after they get in a fight over a boy. Minty and Paz decide to bring them together by being "pesky younger sisters" they figure that is the best way to get the sisters talking by being able to commiserate with each other about their pesky younger sisters. A cute-heart-warming read.

Tracie says

While visiting with her friend Paz one evening, Minty sees a flash in the woods and decides to investigate. Although she doesn't find anyone that night, she does find a secret tree where neighbors write down their secrets and put them inside a hole in the trunk. This is the beginning of an eventful summer for Minty and her neighborhood. They will question old friendships and forge new ones, find love and discover that we all have secrets. Recommended for those that loved the Fox Street books.

Cathy says

In the book, The Secret Tree by Natalie Standiford it's the summer before sixth grade for Minty and she is curious about all the mysteries in her neighborhood, the Witch House, the Man-Bat, and Crazy Ike's story to name a few. Why is her older sister, Thea, acting crazy, why is her best friend in all the world, Paz, hanging out with new friends, what makes the mean boys so mean, and who is the strange new boy who is hanging around in the woods taking pictures. When Mindy discovers a big, old tree with a hollow space where her family, friends, and neighbors are hiding their anonymous secrets, she joins with the photo bug to discover what's happening and to step in and help where possible. I enjoyed reading this story and pondering the clues that helped add up to who belonged to the different secrets. It was fun being a step ahead of Minty

occasionally and I enjoyed all the surprises and twists. But this wasn't all light hearted, there were serious issues, friends betraying trust, a child with a learning disability, mothers who had abandoned their families and the repercussions. Because of the age of the protagonist I'm not sure if this book would be popular at middle school, but I know I will find a few readers who will like it. It is probably more appropriate for fourth and fifth grade girls. I think fifth grade teachers could have wonderful discussions if this book was used as a class novel.
