



Keeping Secrets

Maggie Dana

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A valuable show jumper is dead, and it's all her fault, which is why 14-year-old Kate McGregor has put horses and riding out of her life. Forever!

But her new summer job as a companion to Holly Chapman, a former riding star who's now confined to a wheelchair, takes Kate back to the barn — the last place she wants to be.

Can Kate keep her terrible secret from Holly, who is fast becoming her best friend? More important, can she keep it from Angela Dean who lives for only two things — winning ribbons and causing trouble?

Kate manages to hide her secret until a riding accident forces it into the open . . . and it's just the moment Angela has been waiting for.

Keeping Secrets Details

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Author : Maggie Dana

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From Reader Review Keeping Secrets for online ebook

Erin Lindsay McCabe says

This is an entertaining novel perfect for younger kids, especially horse crazy girls. I love the positive friendship that is portrayed between protagonist Kate and Holly, the wheelchair-bound girl for whom Kate works as a companion. Especially noteworthy is Holly's positive attitude, despite the fact that she has every reason to be negative and the Nigel's take on the importance of honesty and integrity.

You can read my full review for HorseNation.com here: <http://www.horsenation.com/2013/12/04...>

I received a free copy of this novel in exchange for my honest review

Donna says

My feelings on the book can be accurately described by the phrase: "it's not you, it's me." This book is just so clichéd, and I've become far too critical for books like this. There's no doubt that it's well written and it's definitely a decent book for anyone who loves horses, but I did have quite a few problems with this book.

Kate McGregor used to love horses and riding, but after a tragic accident that she was blamed for, she makes the decision to give up horses forever. She takes a summer job as a companion to Holly, a girl confined to a wheelchair. Problem is, Holly's mother is a riding instructor and Holly loves horses. Kate's secret is forced out into the open, and Angela Dean—the barn's resident mean girl—has it out for her.

sigh. Does that synopsis sound like anything you've read before? That's because the book is like almost every other horse book.

Let me summarise:

There's a girl who either has no money or promises to never ride again.

She meets an awesome horse.

Something causes the girl to start riding again.

The girl is a really awesome rider and everyone's all like "OMG, you're soooo amazing!" :D

There's a mean rich girl who's totally jealous and tries to make the nice girl lose.

Well, you get the picture...

This book was so predictable. Angela Dean does everything in her power to win first place in a very important horse show and everyone hates on her all the time. Kate is the best rider ever, and has no problems with her riding whatsoever. Everyone works really hard for the horse show and the book goes on...

The characters were very underdeveloped. With the exception of Kate and Angela, all the other girls were completely boring and plain. Holly is very uninteresting, and we never get to know the other riders on the team at all.

One of my biggest problems with this book is the central plot. While you would think that the book would focus on riding and preparing for the show, it doesn't. In fact, the book is so focused on the conflict between Angela and Kate that it's almost sickening. I'm just so sick of the whole rich-girl poor-girl type conflicts in horse books. The conflict is shallow, and as usual, the rich girl is completely bitchy and unrealistic, because winning a ribbon in a horse show is like, the most important thing, EVA!! (sorry. I couldn't resist being sarcastic for a moment.)

There should have been more focus on the horses within the book. We hear Holly say that no one else except for one girl is good enough to ride her horse. Yet, when Kate gets on, Black Magic behaves perfectly and suddenly turns into a push-button horse.

... what?

Seriously. This book has huge potential for a bigger, better storyline, but instead, it focuses on a very petty, unrealistic feud between two characters I couldn't care less about.

A very typical middle-grade horse book, I can actually see this appealing to many people. It's actually perfect for younger horse lovers. If you're getting sick of clichéd books, stay away from this.

Mehsi says

I am almost done with the Chestnut Hill series (horses + boarding school) so I was looking around for some new horse books to enjoy. I found 3 new series, and I am going to slowly try them all out.

So this was my first one to try out and I have to say I really enjoyed this one. Though I have one thing I need to get off my chest. Why? Why, do all these Horse books have a mean girl (or a mean girl and a posse) in it? I get the whole rival stuff, but this is just ridiculous. Various Dutch books about horses > mean girl.

Canterwood Crest > Mean Girl. Chestnut Hill > Mean Girl. Do I need to go on? I just don't get why it needs to be added. Sure it adds some fun drama to the mix, but it is also frustrating and I am annoyed at why no one (but the kids themselves) notice. How come the adults never do anything about it? There are hints and

also enough clear stuff happening that anyone with a brain would notice, but oh no. :|

In this book we also have a girl, and once again (just like all the other books), she is rich, wants to please her parents, and is a bitch in general to anyone and everyone. Bah. I get that she is probably pressured by her mother to do right, to get medals, but does she need to be like this so much? Bah.

Phew, that is out of my system. Now to all the good points, and there are a lot of them!

I loved our main character, and I also loved her backstory. It was sad, but it made her character even better and likeable. You can just see her struggle, you can see her try to cope. She is determined, but also sweet, responsible and much more. I loved that instead of spending a summer doing nothing at all she decided to take a job at the Timber Ridge part, and help out a girl her age. Not many girls of her age would do that, so I was just squeeing in happiness.

I also loved her when she was riding (and caring for) horses. She is amazing, and I am sure she can get really far if she follows more lessons.

I have to applaud for her as well for her determination and the fact that she didn't let Angela take over. That she just stuck her ground, that she didn't let go of any of her ideals. That requires guts, many girls would just have complied to Angela, but not this girl.

Her secret, and how that was handled? On the one hand I liked how it was handled, and how it was solved, but on the other time I felt it was rushed. Like that part needed to be quickly done and gone with so the story could move to the right parts.

Holly. Even though she is in a wheelchair she is an amazing character with a strong will and even stronger determination. Nothing stops her from trying things. She never stops hoping she will ride again, she never left her horse, she just kept on going. And sure life wasn't easy, but this girl wasn't easily beaten. It is amazing.

So we got 2 strong characters who are so sweet and nice together, and then we also have an amazing fun, drama-filled story that will grab you and will not let you go until the end.

I will be sure to read this series further. I am not sure when, but I hope to get the second book soon. :)

I would also recommend this book to everyone. Yes, it has some tropes that are best to be erased, but it also has great characters and a fun story. Also lots of horses, riding and more!

Review first posted at <http://twirlingbookprincess.com/>

Claire (Cem) says

Very exciting, albeit shortish, teen horse book. 14 year old Kate is struggling with the loss of her favourite horse, Black Magic, but finds herself about to spend the summer helping paralyzed Holly, around the barn her mom runs. Hard not to quickly fall in love with the characters or the story. I'm in my mid 20's and I love it. It's fun, fast, but with an emotional edge that stops it being silly. I really felt for Kate and her situation. And I felt that while the actions of one girl were on the over dramatic side, I could understand exactly why Kate and Holly were keeping the secrets they were.

Any horsey girls 8+ are bound to fall in love with this book. I really enjoy the realistic nature of the horse care involved in the book, something that is vital. Without it, I'd have quickly lost interest. I'm too serious a horse person to not. Even if some of the riding stunts are a little out there! A very enjoyable read, even if it

only took a couple hours. Looking forward to reading more of this series.

Kim says

The plot was very good. But it was lacking something..... I'm still not sure what that something is but I am excited about reading the second book soon. I loved the three day eventing featured in the book. But it lacked that competitive feel. Yeah Angela was a b-word but it's usually between barns.

Laurence R. says

The perfect book for horse lovers!

If you've ever read or watched The Saddle Club, this is the next book you should pick up. There's a lot of descriptions of horses that make riders very happy, because they're all accurate. There's also the "horrible girl" thing we've seen in The Saddle Club, except with a different twist, because although both are similar, it'd be no fun if they were identical (and it would be plagiarism, which we obviously don't want). There's drama, horse and boy related, and young teens will love it.

I personally loved the competition, because it felt like a real one and the descriptions really got me into the story. I don't know if I would have enjoyed them if I hadn't been a rider myself, because I don't know if I would have understood them, but since I am, I absolutely loved them. The way Kate acts around horses is very similar to the way I act, which made me remember old memories around a special horse. It's touching and I felt really bad for her when she felt guilty about everything that happened before she started working for Liz.

Definitely, I would recommend it to all young and old horse lovers. It's short and sweet and full of horses!

(Thank you NetGalley for providing me with a digital copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.)

Misty Baker says

When I first had my son I had a barrage of people imparting their motherly wisdom on me. As do most new mothers.

“He must learn how to self sooth, let him cry.”

“If you don’t put shoes on him right away, he will have weak ankles.”

“You must throw everything you have at him for the first five years...that’s when they learn the most!”

If I’m being totally honest, the first two I completely ignored, but the bit about “learning” I paid attention to. I didn’t want my kid to grow up behind the pack, struggling in school all because I failed to spend my free time drilling him with vocabulary flashcards. (I was relentless...for about a week.)

Now that I'm older (and have a 4-year-old daughter that joined the ranks) my take on "formidable years" has changed.

Yes, I think it's wise to teach your kids as much as you can while they are young, education is important and when they are little they are like sponges. But I've realized that the ages between 9-12 are much more vital. Why? Because these are the "impressionable years." The years that can make or break your child's "character."

This is the age that your child starts to venture off on their own; make friends that you have never met, learn the words "peer pressure." These are the years when your child needs a good foundation.

I have ALWAYS been an activist for lessons in literature. If you have been following my reviews for a while now you probably know this. (Because I point them out.) So when I find (or an author sends me – which is the case this time) a middle grade series that not only has an interesting story, but teaches a valuable lesson, I can't help but spread the good news.

"A valuable show jumper is dead, and it's all her fault . . . which is why 14-year-old Kate McGregor has put horses and riding out of her life. Forever!

But her new summer job as a companion to Holly Chapman, a former riding star who's now confined to a wheelchair, takes Kate back to the barn—the last place she wants to be. Can Kate keep her terrible secret from Holly, who is fast becoming her best friend? More important, can she keep her secret from Angela Dean who lives for only two things—winning ribbons and causing trouble?

Then a riding accident forces Kate's secret into the open . . . and it's just the moment Angela has been waiting for."

Middle Grade Literature is not a dead genre, but it is one that has a few holes. 9-12 year olds LOVE adventure so the majority of MG lit is based on fantasy or sci-fi. Which is great! Feed the imagination, I can get behind that. BUT...what about real life? AKA contemporary? These are the novels that introduce young audiences to "real" situations. Throw around the "whys" "ifs" and "whats." Teach important lessons like: truth, consequence, accountability. All things that need to be ingrained at a young age.

Am I saying a fantasy book can't do that? No, of course not...but, it's much easier for a young child to relate to a situation that CAN happen.

Maggie Dana, author of "Keeping Secrets" did an EXCELLENT job of combining the thrill of a good story while at the same time explaining repercussions of one's actions.

This book was NOT about how to get the guy, or which paranormal power can trump your nemesis'. (Which are huge plot points in YA lit) It was about a girl who had to learn to believe in herself. Believe in others. Recognize guilt and fully understand the effects of lying. It was about never giving up and trusting instincts. Everything that an impressionable child should learn.

The writing was fluid and well paced. Perfect for younger audiences (aka easy to read.) Average length. (only 178 pages – long enough to tell a good story, but short enough to keep a child interested.) And the characters were developed beautifully. (Even the horses, which each had their own personality.)

My overall thought...a fantastic start to a contemporary M/G series.

If you have a horse lover in the house, or a daughter just moments away from her teen years, the “Timber Ridge” girls are a just what the doctor ordered.

Happy Reading my fellow Kindle-ites and remember: “Children are the living messages we send to a time we will not see.” ~Neil Postman,

C.P. Cabaniss says

I received a copy of this novel through Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

I really enjoyed this story. It reminded me of all of the horse reading I did when I was younger. Being an equestrian myself, I always enjoy a well written horse related read. This one fit both of those requirements nicely.

The story is rather predictable for anyone who's read a lot of these types of novels, so it may not appeal to all readers. Personally I don't find that to be a negative aspect. If the story is well written and enjoyable, I will like it predictable or not. This is kind of a coming of age story. Kate has to accept things in her past that she wishes she could forget, all while dealing with her new job and snobby girls who want everything handed to them.

The characters here were likable. Kate and Holly are the main characters we get to see and they become friends immediately. Angela, the brat whose mother tries to run the stable, is both easy to dislike and easy to feel bad for. When you see her with her mother it's easy to understand why she might be the way she is. At fourteen I would hope she might be able to outgrow some of that, but it's not the easiest age to overcome such things.

The main thing that I found too extreme here, was the fact that everyone from Kate's old barn automatically blamed her for Magic's death. While it was a terrible occurrence, accidents do happen and treating a child so cruelly was taking things too far for me.

The horse event was nicely described. A little over the top at points, but that just makes it more exciting for young readers. It was nice to see some development with the characters and where they were headed next. Overall it was an enjoyable read and I would recommend it to those who enjoy easy to read horse related stories.

Kelsi says

Uuuuuuuggggggghhh. It's the Canterwood Crest Series all over again. Pretty brat is jealous of MC, sabotages her, MC is really good, better than the brat, the boy likes her instead of the brat, brat is pressured by parents to succeed, it's all Canterwood Crest.

Oh course they win the trophy, of course MC gives the award to brat even though she deserves it, I've seen this so many times. I mean, don't get me wrong, I enjoyed it, I've just seen it so many times that I probably won't be getting the next book soon.

Emma Rose Ribbons says

This is an okay book. It lacks depth and my main concern with it was the shallow and stereotypical characterization. Besides, there wasn't enough horse content to keep me interested - by the end, I barely knew anything of the horse Kate was riding and I like a lot more horse/rider contact in my fiction. From what I can read of the next books, they follow the exact same pattern so I won't be purchasing the other titles. It's a shame, really, for I was excited to begin a series in which one of the main characters is disabled (this doesn't last, though, as you can probably imagine).

Julia Nashif says

Despite saying in my review of *Turning on a Dime* that I probably wouldn't read more books by Maggie Dana, the premise in this one lured me in anyway.

Thank you, NetGalley and Pageworks Press, for this free book to review!

What I liked:

1. It was an easy read. Maybe *too* easy.
2. Liz, Holly's mom. Poor thing, she has to put up with so much.

What I didn't like:

1. Aren't horses supposed to have some kind of personalities? These ones sure didn't.
2. For the matter, the girls didn't either. We hear Kate's dad has practically abandoned her, but it doesn't seem to have much of an effect.
3. The plot twists felt so dang convenient. Something bad would happen and then be resolved on the next page.

I would recommend this book to horse lovers, but especially younger ones. I know one who I might buy it for, actually. ;)

Katarina says

I'm a horse lover. I was one of those crazy kids/teens, who spent every free minute at the stable. My bedroom was wallpapered in horse pics. I only read books like these.....when I was 13 or 14.

So now that i'm just a few years (decades) older, I am still a sucker for a good horsey book. I'll even read a few bad ones to take me back to my time in the barn. *Keeping Secrets* is one I really enjoyed. It's pretty short, but I liked the story and the girls. It was different than the usual horse books, had a little bit more of a

story and better developed characters. I'm really glad I read this, and I'm going to read the rest of the series for sure.

Caitlin Brast says

I do like this book. And if I had read it, like, 7-8 years ago, I probably would have adored it. It's very much of "The Saddle Club" mode- best friends, great horses, catty mean girls, cute boys. I ate Keeping Secrets up, as in, I got it, I sat down, and about an hour later, I was done. I really enjoyed the dynamic between Kate and Holly, and they did actually seem their age, which I find is harder and harder to see in books these days. All of the minor issues I have with this book are just that: minor. Angela was mean to the point of ridiculousness; even in The Saddle Club, Veronica had *some* characterization outside of being the mean brat. In addition, I wish the horses had a bit more character, but that's totally just the horse geek in me.

All in all, this is a great book, and even as a 20 year old who read every single horse book imaginable when I was 12, I still enjoyed. Yeah, it's a little cliché, but it just slips you back into that mode of being 12 again, and dreaming of having these adventures alongside the characters.

Linda says

A perfect middle-grade read. I was originally attracted to this book by the great cover, and the inside did not disappoint. Maggie Dana's engaging story-telling skills pull you immediately into the action, and introduce us to two very distinct but likeable characters: Kate - who is hiding a dark secret that keeps her from her one true passion - horses, and Holly, a fiesty new friend who has lost the use of her legs and is wheelchair bound, but whose spirit knows no boundaries.

Add a bit of mystery about a valuable dead horse, a barn filled with jumping and dressage mounts, a team mate who'll stop at nothing to win, and the thrill of competition and you get a story that horse-loving girls are going to be crazy about. Highly recommended.

Cathy Geha says

Keeping Secrets by Maggie Dana
Timber Ridge Riders #1

Thank you to the author for the copy of this book in exchange for my honest review.

Reading this as an adult is probably different than if I had read it at the age of say 10 or 12 and that is the audience I believe would probably enjoy this book. It is a series so there are a number of books for a younger reader who likes horses and is not quite in her teens.

Kate is pretty much on her own at 14 with a deceased mother and a loving if distant father who is focused on other things. She finds a summer job working with Holly who is in a wheelchair. Both used to ride but have

stopped for reasons that unfold in the book. There is mean-girl Angela and her sidekick Denise stirring up trouble for Kate and Holly. Holly's mother is on her own and trains the Timber Ridge Riders' Riding Club. There are encounters and a competition and ups and downs with an ending that is fine if not exactly what the reader might have been hoping for. There is a bit of interest in a boy that is about par for that age group to read about without even a kiss...just some interest and conversation.

Trying to remember how I might rate this book if I were young again I looked back at the book "Cammie's Choice" by Jane McIlvaine- a book that I have never forgotten the title of and remember reading a bit over fifty years ago. Reading the blurb about it now I found that it sounds much like Keeping Secrets so am pretty sure my 12 year old self would have loved reading "Keeping Secrets" and then wanted to read the rest of the series.

5 Stars - Based on memories of my preteen self and the books she loved to read.
