



The One and Only: A Maryellen Classic

Valerie Tripp , Juliana Kolesova (Illustrator)

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Maryellen Larkin is nine years old and longs to stand out, but in a family with five brothers and sisters it's easy to get lost in the shuffle! A painting mishap gains her some attention, but not the kind she's been longing for. Being invited to stay in at recess and practice her handwriting earns Maryellen a new friend, but what does that mean for her old friendships? Then, Maryellen is wishing for a white Christmas like the ones in the movies (not very likely in Florida!). Will she find a way to make her dream come true?

The One and Only: A Maryellen Classic Details

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Author : Valerie Tripp , Juliana Kolesova (Illustrator)

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From Reader Review The One and Only: A Maryellen Classic for online ebook

Susan says

Another fun family book club selection - -
I remember that time period..... enjoyed Maryellen's version of it!
Married out of high school sounds like a bad idea tho.

Kimberly Brown says

These new 2 volume AG books stink compared to the old illustrated 6 volumes. The multi-page history retrospective is reduced to a page in tiny print. No pictures at all. I teach an AG-based history class and have read all of the AG books. Hoping the format reverts with future characters.

Cristi Schwamb says

Lauren got this book when Santa brought a Maryellen doll, and she asked me to read it to her. The American Girl books do an excellent job of describing the time period the girls live in -- the 1950s in this case. I loved the description of Maryellen's Florida home and the trouble Maryellen got into when she wanted to do something "extraordinary." Later, we could relate to her desire to have a perfect Christmas-card Christmas with snow falling and a frozen pond to skate on. This book would be a perfect read-aloud to enjoy before Christmas next year.

Denise Spicer says

Another A. G. book by Valerie Tripp and this one is really sweet. Mary Ellen Larkin, a middle child in a big family, is always trying to stand out as someone special, like in TV or the movies. To be the "one-and-only". The author captures the peaceful, prosperous 1950's beautifully and sends Mary Ellen on a trip searching for the perfect Christmas. Ellie learns some lessons about herself, others, and what really makes Christmas special. A quick, fun read.

Jessa says

I enjoyed this way more than I had expected. Maryellen is endearing and well-intentioned. I guess it says something when you start identifying more with the mom in the stories...

Maureen says

This rating is part protest.

I am dismayed by the change in format from the previous Historical American Girl books. I find it difficult to rate the story because of it. The story is perhaps 3-stars worthy, but after re-reading some American Girl books in the old format, the new Be Forever format seems so...drab, lifeless. The old books feel special with their beautiful artwork. The full-page images were almost always beautifully done and—along with the various small illustrations throughout the text and the opening family and friends portraits—they helped to bring the historical world to life. Particularly when the thing illustrated is a thing modern children are unfamiliar with. Now kids will be expected to run to wikipedia I guess. Even the Looking Back history section lacks visuals. There are no historical images. No photographs or illustrations. Nothing but text aside from the cover which I also didn't like as much as the old covers. The Be Forever font makes it look cheap.

I think the changes take away a lot from the experience of reading these books and I hope the change is not permanent because I loved the American Girl books so much as a child. They helped foster my life-long interest in history. I hate that girls of today might miss out on that.

Peggy says

This is the American Girl doll book that goes with the doll Maryellen. Bob and I have given American Girl dolls to each granddaughter for her 8th birthday. In January, we gave our youngest granddaughter her doll. I was surprised when I received my own doll, Maryellen, with her book. I was pleased at how much I enjoyed the book. This doll and her book are from the early 50's--my generation--and it was fun to reminisce as I read about poodle skirts and all the things that were part of that time. Like Maryellen, I had a poodle skirt, a dachshund, and polio, so I could relate to a lot of her story. Maryellen was the middle child, as I was, and I could empathize with some of her feelings, too. Each American Girl doll book focuses on a girl from a specific time period/culture and develops the story around the girl of that time. I enjoyed reading how Maryellen learned that her family was more important to her than things, and I like how these books teach good values to young girls.

Becky says

Very cute, and I'm a sucker for anything set in the 1950s. Handled topics like the Cold War, post-WWII prejudice, suburbia, and marriage in ways a 9 or 10 year old could understand without being preachy or revisionist.

Tomi Jarrell says

Her first American Girl doll and a fun story to go with her!

Marya says

I wasn't particularly thrilled with the new format of the American Girls series; two books that are really meant to replace books 1-3 and 4-6. Sure, the older books really did comprise one story arc, but that was one story arc through all *six* books. Chopping that up into two books makes it seem even more disjointed. All the familiar beats are there, but it lacks a sense of slow development that the individual 6 books had. Adults may be thrilled not to reread the "previously on this American Girl" sections, but the kids love that part. It provides continuity and lets them review what they already know about the character. Isn't that the point of series books for younger readers anyway? Being able to figure out the basic plot structure, characters, settings (which is a BIG deal in these historical books), and themes let the kids get practice at holding together different threads as they are woven into more complex stories. Without those clear distinctions, this book felt rushed.

Liz says

As a young girl I read the other books in the American Girls series. I chose to try this one to see what one of the new "girls" was like. I think the character of Maryellen fits well with the history of the past "girls" and seems to fill a spot left empty by Molly (set in 1944, and my personal favorite) whose character was "retired" by the American Girl company.

What was new to me, and somewhat off putting is the condensing of three books into just the one. The older girls to the series and the older format of the series is that there would be six books total, The three starting books would typically have titles that fit the following: "Meet ____"; "____ Learns a Lesson"; "____'s Surprise." [Or, to state a different an introductory book, a story set in the school year and the third being set during the holiday season.]

Another missing component for me was the occasional illustrations in the book where there would be a beautiful picture depicting a pivotal scene in the that chapter's plot.

For me, these changes didn't kill the basic enjoyment of the book, just killed the nostalgia factor for this book series and company. If you an "American Girls" reader in the 1990's the set-up and look of these books will be different than what you would know and likely love..

Panda Incognito says

In addition to keeping track of books on Goodreads, I also write a notebook list. When I recorded this book and its sequel, I wrote heavy quotation marks around "classic." I don't care if this is an addition to the classic American Girl line and gets the same cover/title treatment as their revamp: a book is not a classic at the moment of its printing!

The way the American Girl series has gotten redone annoys me immensely. The old books are repackaged with three in one novel and three in another, which is completely unnecessary and makes it less accessible to younger readers, who are more likely to pick up a super-thin book. In addition to this, all the beautiful illustrations are discarded for mediocre covers and no pictures inside. Why is this necessary? How is this a helpful marketing move? They have retired some dolls, and one of them is Molly, my favorite since

childhood. I'm torn between indignation and a sense of relief that they left my childhood favorite character out of this revamped line.

However, the author who wrote the Molly series (and others) wrote the stories for this new character, and even though whoever is behind the aesthetic changes is not in my good graces, Valerie Tripp will always have a special place in my heart for bringing Molly to life and making me want to write. Because she wrote this new series, I got the books from the library immediately, and despite my frustration over the route the American Girl company has gone in the past several years, I enjoyed them. They are very much like the actual classics.

Maryellen is one of many children in a large 1950s family. The characters were distinguishable and amusing, the historical setting was robust and full of detail and consistency, and the story concerns were suited to the time period, such as making friends with an Italian and being regarded with suspicion and anger by others who resented Italians for the country's role in World War II. Because this book was set in a peaceful, ordinary time in American history, it does not have the same oomph as other American Girl series where their daily and childish concerns are set against a backdrop of greater conflict, but the story was still compelling, historical, and well-written. I recommend this book and its sequel both to children and to people like me who are suspicious of new American Girl books but loved the ones from their childhood. This is entirely worth it.

Ms. Yingling says

ARC from Baker and Taylor

Set in the 1950s Florida, this tells the story of a girl growing up in a typical white, middle class family experiencing the typical problems of large family life at this time. Maryellen doesn't want to wear hand-me-downs from her older sisters; she wants a brand new felt poodle skirt. She wants to be known for some good quality, but it's hard given the homogenization of experience at the time.

Strengths: Very good details about everyday life at the time; clothes, family life, home. I also liked that Maryellen was depicted as having a weak leg due to a bout of polio, and adored how she was sent to the beach to get out of her mother's hair... with her six and four year old brothers in tow. Can totally see this happening! And now, we are appalled.

Weaknesses: Not a lot of plot or character development. And I went into this thinking there was time travel involved... BEFOREver instead of BEforever. Confused by this new series title for all the books put out by American Girl.

What I really think: Would have bought this, but it's only in paperback. Drat. The one set in 1914 looked interesting as well. Maybe a prebind?

Carolynne says

I miss the historical notes and photos at the end of the book as they appeared in the earlier American Girl books. They added depth and background and made the books useful for teaching a historical period.

Emily says

This book crammed what would've been Mary Ellen's meet book, her school book and her Christmas book into one with just a bunch of chapters and no dividers between where the different stories would be. So I felt like each storyline didn't really get the depth it would've gotten if the books were still written the way they used to be. I was also disappointed in the lack of pictures of Period scenery and clothes. I would've liked to have imagined all of Maryellen's family dressed and looking like 50s people but instead I imagined everyone as if it was modern day. The looking back section basically reiterated everything we'd already learned about the era in the stories. Had no pictures and didn't really teach me anything new which is disappointing because the looking back sections are always my favorite! Even the American girl short stories looking back sections taught me more than this new format does. But aside from that disappointment I really did like Mary Ellen as a character by the time we got to the school story and I enjoyed the Christmas story the best. But I'm just still so sad about the new disappointing format that I'm not looking forward to finishing her series as much as I would've been otherwise :/
