



# The Case of the Case of Mistaken Identity

*Mac Barnett , Adam Rex (Illustrator)*

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Steve Brixton always wanted to be a detective...  
until he found out he already WAS one.

It all starts here: The thrilling story of Steve Brixton's first case. Our hero has a national treasure to recover, a criminal mastermind to unmask, and a social studies report due Monday -- all while on the run from cops, thugs, and secret-agent librarians.

Since when can librarians rappel from helicopters? Does Steve have any brothers or sisters? If not, then why is this series called The Brixton Brothers? You will solve all these mysteries and many more by the time you finish *The Case of the Case of Mistaken Identity*.

We think you'll agree: Steve Brixton's first adventure is his best adventure yet.

## The Case of the Case of Mistaken Identity Details

Date : Published October 6th 2009 by Simon Schuster Books for Young Readers (first published September 14th 2009)

ISBN : 9781416978152

Author : Mac Barnett , Adam Rex (Illustrator)

Format : Hardcover 208 pages

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

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## From Reader Review *The Case of the Case of Mistaken Identity* for online ebook

### Melissa K. says

Steve Brixton always wanted to be a detective, until he found out he was one. Just giving cereal box tops and \$1.95 for handling and shipping you get a detective liscence. One day, Steve was given a homework assignment on needlework, though he would have rather written about detectives whom his best chum, Dana got. When Steve goes to the library, he shows the librarian his "detective liscence" and wants to get the book on american needlework, things start to go wrong. The library thinks Steve works for Mr. E, an international criminal. Something got to be interesting with this book, Steve has been chased by librarians, police, a guy who works for Mr. E, and Rick (Steve's mother's boyfriend.) Steve must find a way to get out of this dilemma, otherwise he will be put under bars. Using his Bailey Brother's detective book, Steve manages to escape the librarians and police by hiding in the most unthinkable places, for example, a grandfather clock. Together, Dana and Steve uncover who Mr. E really is and where the quilt was. Want to know who Mr. E actually is? Want to know who stole the quilt? Read the book to find out!

I really liked how the author used a book inside of a book, for example, Mac Barnett put the detective book inside of the actual story. I never knew that librarians would ever become top-secret agents, even in stories because it doesn't make any sense. Why don't they just have the FBI instead of the librarians? I was surprised that Steve succeeded the mission because all he followed was a detective book. I also really liked how the author uses hilarious quotes, for example, "You see, Steven, Librarians are the most elite, best trained secret force in the United States of America. Probably in the world."

"No way."

"Yes way."

"What about the FBI?"

"Featherweights."

"The CIA?"

Mackintosh snorted. "Don't make me laugh. Those guys can't even dunk a basketball and read a book at the same time." I really recommend this book to you because it is funny and mysterious.

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### Betsy says

Kid walks into your library. Says he wants a mystery series. A new mystery series. You hand him Encyclopedia Brown. He withers you with a glance. You hand him Enola Holmes. His upper lip curls at the female protagonist (it happens). You hand him a recent Hardy Boys where they fight terrorists. He looks at you like he may be seriously doubting your sanity. You finally hand him *The Case of the Case of Mistaken Identity* by Mac Barnett, the first in The Brixton Brothers series. He sighs in relief and then asks for the other books in the series. You tell him there is only one out right now. He kicks you in the shins. And, ladies and gentlemen, this little drama is soon to play out your home town any minute now. Countless young hoodlums will instantly find their desire for mystery and snarky self-aware writing satiated by this Mr. Barnett, only to find themselves infuriated by the (as of this review) lack of subsequent novels in the series. Reports of the death of the boy detective novel have been greatly exaggerated. It lives on the only way it can in this day and age; with a wink and a nod.

If there's one thing Steve Brixton knows about it's detective work. And why wouldn't he? A fan of the great *Bailey Brothers* book series, Steve is pretty confident that in the event of a crime he'd definitely be the one to

solve it in the end. So all things considered, he's probably the perfect fellow to be mistaken for an evil spy. That's just what happens when Steve goes into his local library to check out a book on quilting for a school project. Next thing he knows, Steve's discovered that all librarians belong to a highly specialized force of undercover agents and he has, unwittingly, pitted himself against them. Now he has to clear his name and find out the true villains before the librarians get their hands on him once and for all.

It's funny. Funny is hard. I don't mean to say that there aren't plenty of books for kids out there that are funny. Sure there are. But to write a funny book is to write a story that sustains its humor and still manages a satisfying ending, which is no small potatoes. Fortunately Barnett, who has seemingly appeared out of the ether itself, has a style that amuses both kids and adults simultaneously, without talking down to either of them. His writing will undoubtedly catch you unawares. It's all in the details. For example, at one point we read, "Steve hated fish. He hated the way they tasted and the way they smelled, but more than anything he hated the way they looked. The problem was in the eyes. There was no difference between the eye of a dead fish and the eye of a live one." Beautiful. In the same vein the next chapter begins by describing a villain as "a nasty, brutish, and short man." That's for the adults.

Now in this book Steve spends much of his time attempting to imitate his beloved book-based heroes, only to find himself failing at almost every turn. Tightening your muscles when you're tied with ropes so they'll slip off when the villains leave? Doesn't really work. Throwing a punch? Not as easy as it sounds. Eventually we get the feeling that the author of these *Bailey Brothers* books must be a bit of a lazy lou since half the time the boys are rescued at the last minute by their day anyway. Barnett has managed to capture the feel of the old time boys' adventure novel but has done so without sacrificing our modern logic and sensibilities. It's sort of what M.T. Anderson keeps trying to do with his *Whales on Stilts* series without ever quite getting it right. Barnett walks the line and he walks it well.

When *Alcatraz Versus the Evil Librarians* came out I found it pandering. Which was an odd reaction because if there's anything that doesn't pander to librarians, it's calling them evil in the title of a book. Still, I wasn't buying it. Put the word "librarian" in a title and it's like my fellow brethren are instantaneously hypnotized into buying the book. "I don't know what it was about that story. I just had to get forty copies for my branch!" The best case example of this is *The Boy Who Was Raised by Librarians*. Shameless doesn't even begin to cover it. So I'm giving an extra 25 points to this book for not saying "library" or "librarian" anywhere in the title. Granted the cover image shows special ops rappelling into a reference section, but that's forgivable. And Barnett does lay it on pretty thick when he turns librarians to a covert operation that puts the CIA, the FBI, and M5 to shame. Clearly Mr. Barnett has never had the pleasure of watching a room full of MLIS degrees debate the relative merits of doing storytimes in the morning verses doing them in the afternoons of a given weekday. Trust me, we've bigger fish to fry than mere international intrigue. Anyway, Barnett protects himself from accusations of true pandering when he makes fun of READ posters. We'll give him credit there.

The book has the most obvious similarities to *The Hardy Boys*, of course. Steve's beloved *Bailey Brothers* are essentially Frank and Joe renamed Shawn and Kevin. But as for this book itself, I saw hints of other boy detective novels lurking in the corners. For example, early in the story Steve listens as his mother's new boyfriend, a cop, recounts a crime happening in town that has the police stumped. The chapter ends with Steve saying, "I'm not sure the thief is even a human." Now if that isn't *Encyclopedia Brown* all over, I don't know what is. You half expect to see at the bottom of the page the sentences, "Why was Steve so sure the thief wasn't a human being? Turn to the back of the book for the answer!" Instead, Steve gives his reasons and, as with the rest of the book, your expectations are upset. Instead of praising him for his ingenuity, Rick the cop just guffaws at what, ultimately, is the correct solution. Steve is simultaneously under and over estimated throughout this book. Usually you get only one or another when you read a

mystery novel for kids. Spices things up a bit when you get both (and a variety of different kinds of detective tales as well). Plus I love that rather than tiptoe around the issue of how unlikely it would be for adults to take a kid like this seriously, Barnett rams into the issue with gusto and devil take the consequences.

Pairing illustrator Adam Rex with Barnett seems obvious now and, let's face it, probably seemed obvious right from the start to everyone involved with this project. He's precisely the kind of man you want working on a book of this sort. Rex's pen-and-ink drawings can be cartoonish one moment and then drawing beautifully incomprehensible technical diagrams (knot-tying, anyone?) the next. The man has range and range is what you want when you hope to mix realism with outright goofiness. Plus Rex is funny in his own right without distracting from Barnett's humor. When you see that picture of Steve standing in the doorway of a rough bar in a ridiculous sailor costume, the outfit is funny but even funnier are the tough guys who have also stopped to stare at him. The captions on the photos, besides adding a nice retro feel, are the icing on the cake.

I'm immature enough that I was pleased with myself when I guessed the villain correctly, long before the end of the book. I am also thirty-one, so I probably shouldn't feel as good about that as I do. Still, if you're in the neighborhood for a great new mystery series with a tongue stuck so far into its cheek that it's practically coming out its ear, this is it. Modern to its core but still a good mystery and action adventure novel, this is one of the smartest little books I've seen in a long time. 21st century kids are gonna adore it. Guaranteed.

For ages 9-12.

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### **Hafsa Sabira says**

Even though the plot is quite ridiculous, I still enjoyed the novel. I love how it constantly uses references and information from *The Bailey Brothers* and points out how different novel version of detective work is from the real-life detective work. Only if the plot was a bit more realistic!

Another thing I didn't quite like is the confusing character portrayal of Steve Brixton, the young detective in this novel. He seemed extremely intelligent in some parts and a complete idiot in another. I was genuinely impressed at finding out the fingerprint part but annoyed at dressing up as a sailor a bit later.

I hope that the character will be stronger in the next books.

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### **Cameron G. says**

I recently finished the book, *The Brixton Brothers* by: Mac Barnett. It is about a young student named Steve Brixton who goes on an in expected adventure. One day, Steve was at the library to check out a quilting book for a school report. He thought that it was just a normal book, but it turns out that it holds all of the government's secrets. When he checked the book out his life changed for ever. Everything went black and he got kidnaped by a bunch of librarians who claimed that they were the nations top soldiers and that Steve was a private detective working for the evil Mr.E. Steve uses hints from the *Bailey Brothers Detective Handbook* (a book that teaches him all the tips and tricks a good deceive needs to know) and his sleuthing skills to gather clues and evedance to clear his name. He also ends up saving America from Mr.E! I don't think that I can really relate to Steve because he always thinks like a detective everywhere he goes. I think this book will

appeal to people who like mystery, adventure, and humor books. This is a great first book in a great series.

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### **Nan Sprester says**

Omigosh, I love this book. It's an homage to the Hardy Boys and a send-up at the same time. My fellow school librarians should read this first book in the series if for no other reason than to savor the notion of librarians as part of an elite force of secret agents. For students looking for humor with their mystery, this series should fit the bill.

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### **Kate Feldman says**

I listened to this book with my 8 year old son. He loves the Hardy Boys and we've listened to a bunch of them together. This book was fantastic - modern and dryly hilarious, poking fun at all the anachronistic and completely unrealistic aspects of the Hardy Boys, while filling the same need for wildly outrageous action and narrow escapes from dire situations.

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### **Ms. Yingling says**

I am REALLY late to the game on this series, but thanks to Iron Guy Carl, I now have the series for my library!

Steve Brixton loves the old series of Bailey Brothers mysteries, especially the spy handbook, and has all of their escapades practically memorized. When he has a school project on American quilts, he goes to the public library to check out a book to help with his research, gets mistaken for a detective, and is plunged into a world of mystery and intrigue in order to find the McGuffin quilt. Sadly, the tips from the Bailey brothers don't always help, and Steve, along with his friend Dana, finds the investigating to be hard going. Adults don't believe him, he's wanted by the government, and he's not getting any sleep. Even when he triumphantly solves the mystery, he's stuck with a two million dollar fine for damaging the library book on quilts.

Fortunately, he can work this off by continuing his investigations.

Strengths: Despite the lackluster review (second week of school; oddly quiet, but worried about getting research classes lined up, and rather tired!), this was quite fun. It's a great length (178 pages), has some illustrations by Adam Rex, and neatly turns classic child detective mysteries on their ears. Betsy Bird has a fantastic review of it on Goodreads. The librarians are great spies, and all of the odd plot devices are convincingly done, if a bit far fetched. I'm looking forward to the next book in the series.

Weaknesses: Not wild about the covers, so these will take some hand selling.

What I really think: Don't know how I missed these, but glad to have them now!

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### **Ensiform says**

Steve Brixton, normal kid and superfan of an old detective series called The Bailey Brothers, finds himself involved in a bizarre caper involving a top secret spy organization called Librarians (who are also librarians). These Librarians enlist a reluctant and incredulous Steve to find the McGuffin Quilt, a Revolution-era quilt

on which is encoded all of America's most important secrets.

What makes this book stand out among the many mysteries and thrillers with kid protagonists is the humor. First and foremost, the fictional Bailey Brothers books are a thinly veiled and pitch-perfect pastiche of the hokey, outdated Hardy Boys, but Steve accepts the books' ridiculous advice on how to be a detective at face value. This leads to him walking into a bar dressed as a sailor, talking like a heavy from a badly written 1950s noir film – only to be taken at face value as well. The police call him “Detective” and tell him to clean up his own messes, while the bad guys treat him as a gumshoe and not a kid. The plot is clever, the mystery is tricky, the danger and thrills are real, and deadpan humor is flat-out hilarious. A brilliant book, maybe even too clever for its young audience to appreciate.

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### **Kate Willis says**

[highly trained librarians (hide spoiler)]

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### **Michael says**

Part Encyclopedia Brown, part Hardy Boys homage and parody, the first installment in the Brixton Brothers mystery series is a lot of fun and one of those books that kids will get a kick out of while older readers smile at the jokes and references.

Steve Brixton is an ordinary kid who loves reading the fictional adventures of the Baily Brothers (his favorite is whichever in the 50 plus series he's reading at the time). Steve is assigned a school project to write about the history of quilt making, something he is less than thrilled about. He heads out to his local library to get a book and before he knows it, he's being pursued by a secret society of librarians, the U.S. government, his mom's new boyfriend.

"The Case of the Case of Mistaken Identity" is a fun book in the vein of the old Encyclopedia Brown mysteries I grew up reading. But the story does have an over-the-top absurdity factor that keeps the smiles coming and will have you racing through to see how it all ends. The asides in which Steve reflects on advice he's taken from the Bailey Brothers mystery series and their detective's handbook are a pure joy and worth the price of admission alone.

I only hope the next installment comes soon.

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### **Nicole says**

The case of the case of Mistaken Identity identiy is about a boy named steve brixten and his favorite writer is Mac Bart. I think that is realy cool that steve has a favortie writer because you can read the whole seres or just the one book and know they are good because it is your favortie author. He writes letters to Bart and one day he gets one back form Mac. I was really exited when i heard that he gets a letter because it is so awesome that he got a letter from his favorite author,then he gose and tries to met him. This is my favorite part because it starts the mystery and it kind of makes you want to keep reading unit you finish the book. It is a realy good book and i hope you read it.

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## Treasa says

Twelve-year-old Steve Brixton has always dreamed of being a detective. He hopes one day to be like the Bailey Brothers, the heroes of his favorite books. When Steve is assigned a topic for an essay, his life gets very strange very quickly. Suddenly he finds himself in the middle of a mystery as the suspected criminal, and he needs to use all those skills he learned from the Bailey Brothers to save himself and the world. Who knew early American needlework could be so interesting?

This book cracked me up. I suspect that I would have found it even funnier if I had been a big Hardy Boys fan when I was younger because that is very obviously what this book is mimicking. I know enough about the Hardy Boys to find those references amusing, but it would have been funny even if I knew nothing about them. Any book that involves librarians as secret agents automatically earns major points. And throw in lines like "Every Librarian is a highly trained agent. An expert in intelligence, counterintelligence, Boolean searching, and hand-to-hand combat" and... yeah. I laughed a lot both because it was funny and because it was so very awesome.

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## Sophia says

The boys in my elementary library would not leave this book on the shelves long enough during the school year for me to read it. And when they kept coming in asking me for more like it, I knew I had to read it myself just so I would know what they are looking for!

This book has all the classic elements that boys are looking for in a book -- mystery, detective work, a little humor, and lots of very SHORT cliffhanger chapters that will leave them saying, "OK, just one more chapter!"

The illustrations are all done in black and white. Also included are letters, notes that the main character, Steve Brixton, takes about the crime he is solving, and references to a detective handbook Steve enjoys reading. (References in a fiction book about another fiction book is coined *metafiction*, a new and highly popular writing style.) It is easy for the reader to follow along with these references because the font is different. Steve is constantly referring to his handbook to help him out.

Librarians are portayed in this book as secret agents (one of the reasons I love this book). I loved all the references to their undercover abilities..."Every Librarian is a highly trained agent. An expert in intelligence, counterintelligence, Boolean searching, and hand-to-hand combat."

I enjoyed reading this fast paced mystery. I even caught myself laughing out loud a couple of times (and I solved the mystery before the book ended and I didn't even skim the last chapter!) And hey, if Jeff Kinney and Jon Scieszka give their stamp of approval, then what more convincing does anyone need?

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## **Vimal Thiagarajan says**

An experimental light read that I took up searching for something similar to Hardy boys. It's that kind of YA mystery where juvenile sleuths who've never been behind the wheel go about honking and tonking in stolen police cars, and the police go about chasing them in commandeered bicycles painted blue with white bubbles and sporting a basket in front. But that is to say nothing of a clever twist here or an intelligent dash of good humor there. Sometimes I thought it to be perfect for the target audience-'the reluctant reader' category and sometimes I thought the book was even better than that and more current. An okayish kids-get-lucky read.

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## **Cara says**

“Dear Mom,

I won't be home this weekend because I'm wanted for treason and I have to clear my name. Also, I took the last Sprite from the fridge.

Love, Steve”

The audio version of this book was very well done. The narrator does a good job.

The story itself was funny. Steve loves detective stories, so when he gets caught up in a mystery he is well prepared.

He is up against librarians, the police, and a mysterious bad guy named Mr. E.

With the help of his chum, Steve tackles "The Case of the Case of the Mistaken Identity".

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