

The Return of Trixie Belden

The spunky sleuth from the Trixie Belden series that began back in the 1940s is back, along with her friend and fellow spy, Honey Wheeler, and the rest of the beloved cast of characters. Out of print for 15 years, the books are being given a new life by Random House Children's Books, with the first two books in the series, *The Secret of the Mansion* and *The Red Trailer Mystery*, to be released this month.

Senior editor Jennifer Dussling, who is in charge of the Trixie program at RHCBC, has been trying to bring these books back into print for some time now. "It started when I was at Golden," she said. "There were a couple of die-hard Trixie fans there."

They got to talking and realized they wanted to give the books another life. The original 16 books had been published by Whitman Publishing Company, and Golden Books added numbers 17–39 in the late '70s and early '80s. "We did some research into bringing the books back out," Dussling said, "but Golden didn't have much of a presence in the chapter book market. We were concerned about whether people

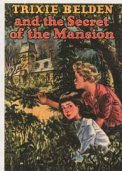
would take us seriously." Then, some years later, Golden was bought by Random House, and Dussling saw it as another opportunity to try to bring the series back.

Nancy Drew may be the best-known fictional teenage detective, but Trixie also has a longstanding following. "We had clues that there were Trixie fans out there," Dussling said. "As soon as you get on the Internet, you see that this is a vibrant property. There is a brisk trading of books going on at eBay, and fans also hold a Trixie convention every year." Besides being a big fan herself, Dussling thinks the books will appeal to a wide variety of readers. "The writing is lots of fun, the characters are great, and the series is very well developed," she said. The original text of the books has been retained, save for a few changes in consistency and grammar.

Random House considered three possibilities for the reissues: jacketed hardcover, paperback or paper-over-board. They ultimately decided to go with the latter, for two reasons. First, the Nancy Drew and Hardy Boys series are successful in this format, and secondly, paper-over-board series are thriving,

The books have new cover art, as the illustrations on the previous editions were outdated. The new look has a "retro feel with a modern touch," according to Dussling. "We didn't want covers that were too modern because we didn't want to lie to the readers. We wanted them to know that the stories don't take place today, but are still fun." The original interior line art will remain the same in all the books.

Random House does not plan to reissue all 39 books in the series just yet. "We want



A makeover for Trixie: the 1948 cover, and its replacement, 55 years later.

to see how the books are received," said Dussling. "We'll publish two a year as the demand continues." — JOY BEAN ■