



The Mardi Gras Chase

Maggie M. Larche

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Twelve-year-old Melanie is bored with her little sister and with yet another Mardi Gras in her hometown. But when she notices a secret code built into the floats of a Mardi Gras parade, she realizes that life might have some surprises left.

Melanie and her friends set off to break the Mardi Gras code. They chase clues throughout the season's parades, sneak into forbidden float barns, and even join forces with the intriguing boy who lives down the street.

But when they uncover the final clue, Melanie must decide how much she's willing to risk to learn the secret of the Mardi Gras code. And she may find that the solution to the riddle isn't the biggest reward of the chase...

The Mardi Gras Chase Details

Date : Published November 10th 2015 by Leopold Press

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Author : Maggie M. Larche

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From Reader Review The Mardi Gras Chase for online ebook

Patrick Hodges says

Living in Mobile, Alabama during Mardi Gras week may sound exciting, but for 12-year-old Melanie ... not so much. But that all changes when she notices something amiss with some letters that appear askew in a series of floats that wander by during a parade that she attends. She surmises that the mis-formed letters are some sort of code, and her curious brain takes over. Enlisting her best friends Faye and Kate, she leaves no stone unturned to figure out what the code could mean.

This book was a very enjoyable and quick read for me, and that is thanks mainly to Ms. Larche's easygoing writing style. The characters were engaging, fun, and relatable, which is a must when writing a whimsical adventure story for preteens.

What ultimately cost the book a fifth star for me was that there wasn't much of a buildup toward the end. Yes, the girls went all-out to try to decipher the code, even going a couple of places they probably shouldn't, but I never got the sense that there was anything sinister or even unpredictable afoot. The ending did indeed provide some measure of satisfaction, but the parts leading up to that did not have me on the edge of my seat.

All in all, though, a very good book for young readers or any lovers of MG fiction.

Emma Blythe says

Loved this fun book that is just perfect for tweens. It really reminded of the mystery books I loved to read as a child/teen, and I got totally caught up in cracking the mystery code along with the main characters. I enjoyed how well-rounded the girls' characters were, and loved the fact there was such a positive emphasis on friendship and working together. Without giving away any spoilers, I also loved the ending and how the mystery was tied up - along with hinting at more adventures to come! Looking forward to reading more.

Kristy Cooper says

This was my second book by Maggie M. Larche. 12 year old Melanie's friends drag her to a Mardi Gras parade that she's not really feeling it. Then she discovers that a bunch of the floats have random backwards letters on them. and she get curious whether there is a pattern. They decide they need to attend the rest of the Mardi Gras parades and find out what letters they have already missed to potentially put together a code.

The mystery Melanie and her friends find themselves in seems a little forced at first (but probably not so much for a younger reader). That being said, though the plot gets more engaging as the girls get closer to figuring out what is going on with all of the Mardi Gras floats. I especially liked Melanie's little sister Lacey and how their relationship helped the girls put some of the final pieces together. I liked how Larche explained the entire rationale for the letter puzzle and I think the conclusion will be particularly satisfying for young readers.

I also learned a lot more about Mardi Gras culture. I was always under the impression that it was meant mainly for adults, but in Mobile, AL where this story takes place, all of the parades the girls attend are family

friendly. The part about the Merry Widows of Joe Cain was very interesting (worth the Google image search).

Barbara Ann says

Fast moving middle grade mystery adventure involving three friends, Melanie, Kate, and Faye. While attending one of the mardi gras parades in Mobile, Alabama, the girls notice that some of the letters on the floats are upside down. They copy the letters R.C.E.N.R.A.P. In addition, the strange letters appear only on the high and "poufy" floats. These friends do some internet research, discovering that Mr. Simmingham is their designer. The girls visit the museum to investigate the floats stored from the parade they had missed and vow to attend the rest of the parades during the week to continue the investigation. But the friends must attend a history presentation on Saturday, so they enlist Matt to collect the information. The plot thickens when Matt is arrested; the girls are relieved to find he had already succeeded in his mission. They are unsuccessful in cracking the code until they receive help from an unlikely source. A visit to the cemetery leads to another hair raising adventure and unexpected rewards.

Targeted for a middle grade audience of eight to twelve year olds, the plot moves along quickly. There is probably a bit too much dialogue, but that is appropriate for this age group. Strong female role models, strong family relationships, a tinge of scariness and mystery, plus the unusual Mobile mardi gras setting, set it apart from the typical middle grade adventure tale. First book in a series that will succeed if the characters continue to grow and evolve.

Pop Bop says

A Nice Change From "Mean Girls"

I found this book to be very appealing, but mostly because of the three heroines rather than the mystery plot as such.

As to the plot, we have a mystery involving a secret message hidden in the backwards letters that appear in some of the words on various Mobile, Alabama Mardi Gras parade floats. Our three heroines have to collect all of the letters, (which requires detective work, skullduggery, and some lurking), and then break the code presented by the letters. The solution to the code offers a clue that has to be followed, and that leads to the big mystery reveal.

This is a fine storyline and allows for nice descriptions of Mobile and of the Mardi Gras parades and floats. We get to do internet research, and interview people, and sneak around looking at floats, and so on. There is no implausible action/adventure, but the investigation feels realistic and practical. It has a scavenger hunt sort of feel, and that seems to fit nicely with the target reader audience. It's also a nice change from carelessly plotted middle grade mysteries that turn on coincidences, hunches, overheard conversations, and other shortcuts that many readers consider "mystery cheats". This struck me as pretty fair for a middle grade mystery.

But more importantly, note the subtitle - "True Girls". This is the first of at least three True Girls books by Maggie Larche, (although each book features different girl characters). The True Girl aspect is what grabbed me. Our heroines are all twelve year olds and they are each others' BFF's. They are smart, practical,

independent and adventurous. They have different and distinct personalities, but they work together wonderfully as a team. They needle and tease each other, and get exasperated with each other, but are loyal and dependable when the need arises. They are very much straight arrows, but with just enough grit and independence to be interesting. I could see a middle grade reader very much enjoying their company.

So, if you want a briskly paced, atmospheric tale with a decent mystery, a bit of action, and a crew of engaging companions, this could be a nice choice. (Please note that I found this book while browsing kindleunlimited freebies. I have no connection at all to either the author or the publisher of this book.)

Debbie says

There were so many things to like about this book. (I read it to check out for my almost-8-year-old strong reader.) I really liked the three main characters, their personalities and how they worked together yet were different. I liked the family interactions, including realistic relationships with parents and siblings. I liked the quirky mystery (and a great solution) that wasn't ugly, gross, or unrealistic for 12-year-olds to experience or handle.

I do, however, have two complaints. First, the readers were not given the clues along with the characters. The first set of letters are spelled out, but none of the others were included, so it would be impossible for a smart kid to take their own guess to figure it out. Second, I am frustrated reading tween books that include a love interest, even an age-appropriate one. Twelve-year-olds are sometimes interested, but sometimes not, and any younger readers shouldn't be yet, so that makes me really hesitant to recommend these books to anyone younger than middle school. I am disappointed by that, because otherwise it would be a great book for me to recommend to kids!

Beverly McClure says

Most little kids and teens love a parade. Most grown-ups like them too. Who can resist the music, the treats tossed to the crowd, and the floats?

THE MARDI GRAS CHASE, a novel for middle grade/tween readers by Maggie M. Larche, has parades and a whole lot more. The story opens with Melanie Smythurst and her friends, Kate and Faye, watching the Mardi Gras parade, when Melanie notices that some of the letters on the floats are backwards. She gets to wondering why. Is it a code of some sort, a secret message? There's one way to find out. So the three girls set out to solve the mystery of the letters and discover a lot more than they anticipated.

Maggie M. Larche has created believable characters that aren't perfect. The girls make mistakes. They get in trouble. Like normal kids do. They're ambitious and don't give up easily when problems arise. THE MARDI GRAS CHASE is a fun story that should appeal to adventuresome young readers, who might even find themselves trying to help Maggie and friends solve the mystery of the letters.

This book would make a nice addition to school libraries, public libraries, and of course your personal library.

THE MARDI GRAS CHASE is the 1st book of the True Girls' Series.

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Scott Peters says

This middle grade mystery was a fun read. It held my attention and I read it in three sittings. I found it relaxing as it kept me turning the pages and wanting to find out how the mystery would be wrapped up. I liked the characters--the three main friends, and also the way Melanie, the main character, interacted with her baby sister. It was sweet and funny and I think Melanie makes a good role model.

I don't really know much about Mardi Gras, and I had no idea Mobile, Alabama had so many parades. It was interesting to hear about the local food and about waiting on the parade sidelines to catch beads and stuffed bears and other giveaways. That part reminded me of Hallowe'en, as kids apparently bring pillowcases to fill up with goodies. What seems normal for Melanie and her friends sounded totally exotic to me. It was great.

The writing is clean, moves quickly, and is easy to read. I would definitely recommend this book to middle grade readers who enjoy mysteries and puzzle solving, and hearing about girls in other cities.

I received a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Carolyn says

I got a free ebook version of this book by contacting the author, so many many thanks to Maggie M. Larche for being so open to spreading the love with her book!

This was adorable. I read it in a day, practically. By the end of chapter two, I said out loud to myself, "I'm going to love this." It's a cute, fast read, and refreshing. It was a simple mystery, one that I think could absolutely be expanded on! But I know it's in the low end of middle grade/children's books - age wise - so I can see why it was so simple. I liked its innocence and clean mystery, especially after the last book I read that was anything but! The idea of Mardi Gras has always interested me, and I totally believe this kind of thing could exist! I hope it does.

Check it out if you've got a couple hours to spare!

Whispering Stories says

'The Mardi Gras Chase' was a book I was not expecting to like as much as I did. I mean it is for a much younger audience and, at best, I thought I would be amused by their antics. But damn the author has done a brilliant job!

Melanie, Kate and Faye are three friends who study in the same school and live near each other. One day Melanie notices that a letter is upside down on a float in the Mardi Gras parade. She's curious and starts noting down all the odd looking letters and is determined to crack the code. Her friends initially think that it was just a mistake but her excitement manages to get them interested and soon they're running all over town, trying to crack the Mardi Gras code.

School, Chores, Family and baby sitting has to be juggled but they work at it until.....well I won't tell you the ending.

This is reminiscent of 'The Famous Five' or 'The Secret Seven'. I found myself eager to see what was happening next and although I kept putting off reading this for quite a while, when I did get started I was hooked from page three.

It's very well written with each person's character and personality clear. I know what Melanie would like and what Faye is like and what Kate will do! It's great to see such steady clarity in a younger book. I'd always assumed that Enid Blyton was the best that was ever written but it might just be time to admit that there are other books around that are book.

I must admit though that based on the target audience that fact that there's a love interest actually creeped me out a bit. I removed one star for that. But that was one of the creepiest parts of the book. I kept thinking "These girls sound too young to have a love interest or too stupid for their actual age which is why they seem so young." I'd suggest checking out that portion if you want to before letting your younger kids read this.

Apart from that one gripe, I'm thrilled with this.

Reviewed by Vicky at www.whisperingstories.com

Angelina Kerner says

Title: The Mardi Gras Chase

Author: Maggie M. Larche

Source: Received as a gift for an honest book review

My Rating : 5 Stars

After finishing reading The Mardi Gras Chase, I realized how awesome it used to be a kid. It made me think of the books that I've read when I was a kid, with one of them being, Time Cat. At least that's what I think the title was. It was pure pleasure to loose myself in the Children's Middle Grade (ages 8-12) genre. The book should be at the top of the list for any parent.

It is a story about a girl, Melanie, who's not a fan of Mardi Gras, that is until she realizes that the floats are sending a secret message that needs to be cracked. Melanie, along with her two best friends, Kate and Faye, decide to crack the code... even getting Matt in trouble with the police to do it.

The story is fun to read, fast paced, and interesting. I think the kids would like to see some illustrations, like of the floats, the warehouse, and the cemetery. I know that I would. ;)

I would recommend to anyone to read it who is in the age group of 8-12, and some adults who want to feel like a kid again for a short amount of time.

Sara-Lisa Andersson says

A fun and easy read about a group of friends attempting to solve a puzzle during Mardi Gras in Mobile. The adventure was age-appropriate and realistic, no super-heroics or implausible lucky breaks required, just persistence and a keen mind (plus a little help from friends, siblings, and even strangers). The girls made

good use of the resources at hand, and the puzzle had a satisfying resolution.

The book was well-written and a great introduction to the Mardi Gras tradition for readers who (like me) have never visited the south and experienced the parades first hand. Snippets of Mardi Gras history are elegantly weaved into the narrative in a perfectly natural manner that doesn't feel the least bit forced. Both Melanie and her friends are well developed with their own individual characteristics and the surrounding cast contains many interesting characters that one might hope to encounter in later installments in the series. I look forward to getting to know the girls better and tag along on their next adventure.

My one objection is that the readers aren't given all the clues as the girls uncover them. I would have liked a chance to solve the puzzle along with the girls. (Not that I would have been able to, but still ...)

Vernita Naylor says

In *The Mardi Gras Chase (True Girls) (Volume 1)* by Maggie M Larche, Melanie, Kate and Faye are attending one of the many Mardi Gras parades in Mobile, Alabama that usually lasts for several weeks. Melanie is bored and can't see what all of the hoopla is about in attending the parade. Faye is unhappy because she never seems to get enough beads in her bag, and Kate is ecstatic because she is quickly filling up her bag with beads. As Melanie is contemplating whether to stay to watch this annual event - which bores her every year - something catches her attention. Melanie sees that the signage themes that precede each parade float has one of the letters upside down in the titles. Why? *The Mardi Gras Chase (True Girls) (Volume 1)* by Maggie M Larche is ideal for a pre-teen because it not only tells a great story, but helps with cognitive thinking. As Melanie goes through the steps to solve the mystery of the letters R, C, E, N, R, A, P that appear out of sync, the adventure begins.

I loved how Maggie rolls out *The Mardi Gras Chase (True Girls) (Volume 1)* because she gets the reader immediately involved in the story. Melanie looks for clues beginning with the parade the day before and, upon her investigation, she notices from the photos that the F in the title was backwards. Maggie gets the reader going through the process as they help to discover the clues and uncover the mystery with Melanie and her friends. *The Mardi Gras Chase (True Girls) (Volume 1)* by Maggie M Larche is not only a great book, but a great way for the reader to process thoughts, create solutions, and complete the puzzles. *The Mardi Gras Chase*

Maggie Larche says

READERS' FAVORITE REVIEW: In *The Mardi Gras Chase (True Girls) (Volume 1)* by Maggie M Larche, Melanie, Kate and Faye are attending one of the many Mardi Gras parades in Mobile, Alabama that usually lasts for several weeks. Melanie is bored and can't see what all of the hoopla is about in attending the parade. Faye is unhappy because she never seems to get enough beads in her bag, and Kate is ecstatic because she is quickly filling up her bag with beads. As Melanie is contemplating whether to stay to watch this annual event - which bores her every year - something catches her attention. Melanie sees that the signage themes that precede each parade float has one of the letters upside down in the titles. Why? *The Mardi Gras Chase (True Girls) (Volume 1)* by Maggie M Larche is ideal for a pre-teen because it not only tells a great story, but helps with cognitive thinking. As Melanie goes through the steps to solve the mystery of the letters R, C, E, N, R, A, P that appear out of sync, the adventure begins.

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We Said It: Literary Reviews w/ Ts Blogging says

Title: Masks, Mayhem, Mysteries & More!
“The Mardi Gras Chase” by Maggie M. Larche

Reviewed by B. Smart
2/18/16
4:28 p.m.

Love puzzles, clues, and hidden treasure hunts? The Mardi Gras Chase is a heart-warming story about three friends in Mobile, Alabama who go on an adventure to decipher a mysterious code hidden in the Mardi Gras parades. 12-year-old Melanie Smythurst is bored of her small town and wishes desperately that her life was more interesting. Her dream comes true one night when she notices crooked letters on some of the parade floats. As Melanie and her two friends Faye and Kate collect more clues and delve deeper into the mystery, they uncover one of the biggest secrets they could have ever imagined.

Author Maggie M. Larche tells a wonderfully fun tale filled with humor, heart, and wit. Her characters are endearing, energetic, and clever and the reader roots for them until the very end. It is enjoyable, fast-paced, and a must-read during the Mardi Gras season. The Mardi Gras Chase is a story about the importance of friendship, loyalty, and trust. The three friends stick together in the best of times and the worst of times- even if it means braving a spooky graveyard or sneaking into a sketchy warehouse.

The Mardi Gras Chase tends to be a little under-detailed and dialogue-heavy at times, but this is to be expected for a middle-grade read. Larche’s characters appear goofy and surface-level, but that is part of their charm; they also have immense courage, sharp minds, and kind hearts. Melanie, Faye, and Kate would do anything for the ones they love which sets a great example for children of all ages.

I would recommend this book to anyone who loves a good, wholesome mystery.

I give “The Mardi Gras Chase” 4 out of 5 stars.

Cheers,

B. Smart
www.mcwpub.blogspot.com
