



Full of Beans

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Newbery Honor Book *Turtle in Paradise* is beloved by readers, and now they can return to this wonderful world through the eyes of Turtle's cousin Beans.

Grown-ups lie. That's one truth Beans knows for sure. He and his gang know how to spot a whopper a mile away, because they are the savviest bunch of barefoot conchs (that means "locals") in all of Key West. Not that Beans really minds; it's 1934, the middle of the Great Depression. With no jobs on the island, and no money anywhere, who can really blame the grown-ups for telling a few tales? Besides, Beans isn't anyone's fool. In fact, he has plans. Big plans. And the consequences might surprise even Beans himself.

Full of Beans Details

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From Reader Review Full of Beans for online ebook

A.E. Conran says

Jennifer Holm yet again enchants us with humor, heart and historical mastery. I too wanted to know more about Beans and this book does not disappoint. Such fascinating facts about the new dealers, bermuda shorts and illnesses in Key West. Such great characters and one-liners. So happy that Beans is still not impressed by that writer fellow!

Alex (not a dude) Baugh says

It's July 1934, and times are hard for the Curry family. Poppy's out of work and in New Jersey looking for a job, and mom is taking in laundry, so son Beans Curry does what he can to help out. But after sifting through garbage, collecting empty cans and expecting to get 10¢ for every twenty cans, he is cheated out of 5¢ by the wily Winky, who now claims he said 50 cans per 10¢. One thing that Beans knows for sure is that grown-ups lie and Winky is a good example of that. Angered, Beans is determined to find another way to help his family out. Luckily, "businessman" Johnny Cakes happens to be looking for Beans with a job proposition.

Turns out, Johnny Cakes is a rum runner, and Beans's job is to help him get the illegally gotten Cuban rum off ships in the middle of the night. All Beans has to do is set off the fire alarm to divert any possible attention from the docks. It job pays good money and Beans doesn't mind doing it, but after so many false alarms, the fire department stops responding to them. Which is too bad, since one night there is a real fire, destroying the house of one of Beans's best friends. Racked with guilt, Beans never confesses his part in the fire, but he does stop working for Johnny Cakes and turns his sights toward more positive work trying to assuage his guilt.

At the same time, the federal government has sent down some New Dealers to decide whether to simply evacuate Key West, or clean it up and turn it into a warm, sunny tourist attraction. As the transformation of Key West begins, and houses get painted, a playground gets built, and stray dogs are rounded up, Beans manages to find a way to help in the beautification of Key West rounding up his gang of friends to collect garbage and rake seaweed.

But perhaps Beans's real saving grace will be his uncanny ability to take care of babies, after all, he certainly has a way with them.

Jennifer Holm returns to depression-era Key West, Florida in this fun prequel to *Turtle in Paradise*. It's a place she is familiar with, since her family had lived there since the late 1800s. The story is told in the first person by Beans, who draws the reader right in the midst of the sights, sounds and smells of 1934 Key West.

I thought Beans was a wonderful character. He's got a great sense of humor, a deep sense of loyalty towards friends and family, and despite his brief foray into crime, he actually has a moral compass and conscience to go with it, and, amazingly, he never complains when he is asked to help out at home, no matter what is asked to do.

I loved the historical references, the mention of movie stars and writers of the time - Ernest Hemingway is already a Key West resident, Robert Frost a visitor, and with money in his pocket, Beans escapes life for a

little while at the local movie theater. As he tells readers, Shirley Temple is just beginning to make it big and he is sure she will be a star.

I thought it interesting that Holm mentions leprosy. Sitting in the dark theater at night, Beans notices a man who seems to vanish in thin air after each movie ends. It turns out that the man, named Murray, has leprosy, and can't go out during the day: "It's not safe...They'd send me to the leper hospital in Louisiana. Nobody ever comes back from that place." (pg 125) (as a middle grader, I had read a book called Miracle at Carville by Betty Martin. This is the hospital that Murray is referring to).

Since this novel is grounded in the real history of Key West during the Great Depression, Holm has included an extensive Author's Note, with a number of photographs, and there is even a list of Beans's Favorite Kid Actors and his friend's Pork Chop's Best Sayings.

All in all, Full of Beans is definitely full of fun.

This book is recommended for readers age 9+

This book was sent to me by the publisher, Random House BFYR

This review was originally posted on Randomly Reading

Mx. Firke says

This book gets to some big issues in a way that is fun! It's also a very quick read. :) I won't spoil it, but I think this is a GREAT choice if you were interested in the historical period of Bud, Not Buddy.

Melanie says

A charming companion story to TURTLE IN PARADISE!

Emily Scheinman says

My favorite book of 2016. Such a wonderful joy to read. Beans stole my heart. And Jenni's storytelling, just wow!

Niki (Daydream Reader) says

Turtle in Paradise is my favorite book by Jenni Holm! So I loved reading about Beans and The Diaper Gang again. A very enjoyable book!

Janet says

I loved this historical fiction novel for younger readers. The characters are expertly sketched, and as readers mature they will begin to more deeply understand the relationships presented. I am a huge fan of Key West and learned so much about the island's history in this slim volume--now I want to read even more Jenni Holm books!

Trin says

Lively middle grade historical fiction, set during the Great Depression on Key West. I never knew that the New Deal was responsible for making Key West the tourist destination/artists' colony it is today, so there's some fascinating and unusual history at play here. Beans, the main character, has an engaging and quirky voice, but Holm introduces a *lot* of characters and plot threads, and some don't go anywhere, while others are resolved a bit too abruptly. But I think kids will be pulled along by this story, as happy as babies in a wagon. (It's a thing: just ask Beans.)

Michele Knott says

Loved finding out pieces that connect this story to TURTLE IN PARADISE.

Loved the details of the setting.

Loved each and every character.

Loved the ending.

Stacy Feters says

"I had never held so much money in my whole life. I felt like Daddy Warbucks. Except with hair."

Received from my blogger partner JT. He received it at ALA Orlando 2016!! Thanks!!

My first experience with Holm was with *The Fourteenth Goldfish* and it was so different and I was dying to read more of her work.

This might be one of the first Middle grade historical fiction that I have ever read and I can't say that I was disappointed, but I wasn't captured like I was with her other book.

1934 was a rough year for the United States and even worse for Key West, Florida. The Great Depression was in full swing and it was every man, woman and child for themselves. Roosevelt wasn't doing much to help out either.

Beans, best marble player in town and part of a gang that everyone wanted to be apart of must take in a full load. His dad leaves for Jersey as he looks for a job and makes him man of the house. Taking care of his two siblings and his mom.

He picks through trash for cand and even starts to do some underhanded stuff with his brother to help his family out.

Delivering alcohol to local businesses for a few pennies. Anything to help his family.

As the town starts to go downhill, Roosevelt sends some people down there to liven up the community and bring back booming business and tourists. Trying to save that entire community from despair.

Very historically profound and at times funny, this is a tale of growth and love. These kids had to give up a lot in order to make it during that horrid time. It was an okay story, but I felt that I was missing something. Pieces didn't connect very well and felt like it jumped too much and way too fast for my tastes. But this could also be from me having a book hangover thanks to SJM. And let's not forget that Hemingway dig.

Amy says

Summary: Strongly voiced male protagonist in depression-era historical fiction, ideal for whole class reading or book clubs for grades 4-5 and for readers who have already read *Turtle in Paradise*. Students might need some background knowledge on the Great Depression and the New Deal.

Disclaimer: Review from ARC on behalf of a reader advisory program.

Review: At the not-so tender age of eleven, Beans Curry has learned a hard truth: adults lie.

Beans's mother lies when she says everything's going to be all right even though his father can't find a job. His employer, Winky, lies when he says he's going to pay a dime for used cans and then doesn't. His teacher lies when she says all he needs to become better at mathematics is more practice.

Beans lives a shoeless existence in Key West. Key West is so poor that garbage gathers on the streets without anybody to clean it up. Dilapidated houses are made of wood and are infested with termites and scorpions. Some have to resort to illegal means just to make ends meet.

Beans's voice, a combination of swagger and desperation, carries this story. Some examples (quotes from ARC):

"The ringing bell on the door of Gardner's Pharmacy sounded like money disappearing from my pocket."

"If I was a ghost, I wouldn't haunt these shabby little houses. I'd haunt somewhere nice, like a mansion. But maybe ghosts were like the living and down on their luck."

"I'd been practicing arithmetic since I'd first stepped into the school, and I never got better at it. Besides, I wasn't the only one who was bad at arithmetic. President Roosevelt wasn't much of a whiz, seeing how the country was still in a depression."

Amidst this desperation is a solution. One day, a Bermuda shorts-clad Mr. Stone arrives, bent on transforming Key West into a tourist destination. Houses get painted and refurbished. The garbage gets cleaned up. A playground is created.

Beans isn't sure he is on board with all of these changes, however. He's not sure how he feels about the stray dogs being taken away, and he isn't a fan of the New Dealers' desire to crack down on the ever-popular Bolita gambling game.

This transformation of the island takes place amidst a backdrop of other vignettes: there's Dot, the girl he

refuses to play marbles with; there's Termite, the dog who won't stop following him until he makes him his own; there's Beans's "secret" cure for diaper rash, and at the center of Beans's emotional life is a pit of guilt he promises himself never to throw himself into again.

This is a book that's easy for adults to fall in love with. It has everything we like, coupled with just enough moral ambiguity to keep us intrigued and a happy ending.

However, I'm not yet convinced that younger or less experienced readers will fall in love with this book the same way adults will. Less experienced readers might find this book "slow" and may not have enough background knowledge to make connections to the past. That's why I think this book is best for younger readers if it's paired with some intentional teaching.

Younger readers can use this book to learn to ask questions about a setting: they can ask questions about why Beans is so excited to make a dime, why he has to go to a neighbor's house to make a phone call, and why he and his friends play marbles in the street. More experienced readers can make historical connections to Roosevelt and the New Deal and contemplate themes of heroism, the value of telling the truth, and when it is and isn't okay to lie.

Having not read *Turtle in Paradise*, I'm not sure how the two compare side-to-side. However, I'm floored that this strongly voiced and punchy historical fiction piece came out of the same person who did the ever-popular graphics *Babymouse*, *Sunny Side Up* and the thoughtful if quirky *Fourteenth Goldfish*.

Ms. Yingling says

Copy provided by publisher

Beans, Turtle's cousin from *Turtle in Paradise* (2010) is doing the best he can to help out his family during the Great Depression in Key West, Florida. He and his brother, Kermit, dig through the trash for tin cans, babysit, and even engage in illegal activities in order to make some money. Their father is away in New Jersey, trying to get a factory job, and their mother takes in laundry and occasionally tries her hand at dressmaking. When New Deal men come to town and try to clean up Key West so it can be a tourist destination, Beans is apprehensive. These men are wearing Bermuda shorts! They can't be official. After one of his money making enterprises goes sadly wrong, Beans feels awful enough that helping the New Deal men make Key West more attractive seems like a good way to give back.

Strengths: Holm has based this book on family lore, and includes period photographs at the back. I think the best part of this is all of Beans' money making schemes. While families struggle today, it seems like children are not able to help. At other points in history, children were given a lot of opportunities to be useful. Other period details, such as movies, cars, and games children played, as well as local culture, make this a fun, fast paced book.

Weaknesses: *Turtle in Paradise* seemed like much more of an elementary book, and it doesn't circulate a lot. Luckily, this can be read alone, and I think that it's funny enough that readers will pick it up.

What I really think: Will give this to children who enjoy the core novel *A Long Way From Chicago* and want to read more about the Great Depression.

Linda says

There is much to love in this middle grade story about a time during the Great Depression and the re-making of a town about to die. Yes, it's historical fiction, and Jennifer Holm manages to weave a story about Key West, and a government program that helped it be re-born into a vibrant and successful tourist destination. But the real story is about Beans Curry and his buddies who lead different lives from children today. They are poor, shoeless, and spend a lot of time on the streets, trying to find ways to make a few pennies, and sometimes getting taken by crooked adults. Everyone in this time is desperate for a few cents, most adults too. The underlying thread connects to lying, and the sub-title on the cover tells it like it is: "Never tell a lie unless you have to." Beans tells the story, which involves playing marbles, going through trash for condensed milk tins, a girl he hates (maybe), an evil grandmother, a loving father and mother, a dark secret of hidden people, and some very good friends! Holm adds an author's note and pictures about this re-building of Key West, and added sources. It's a great story.

Beth says

I had no idea what this book was about when I started it, and sometimes that is the best way to read a book. This book was a joy to read. I learned stuff that I didn't know...and it was cool stuff about Key West in the Great Depression. The characters are totally characters! The whole Nana Philly thing is a hoot! I think kids and adults alike are going to fall in love with this book.

Mary Ann says

Does building resilience in kids mean they have to be able to handle everything by themselves? Or that they can weather the hard times, with their sense of self intact? I adore Jennifer Holm's newest novel Full of Beans precisely for the way that Beans struggles through hard times, learning about the consequences of his decisions, yet never losing his sense of humor or his loyalty to his family and friends. It is both delightful to read and wonderful to reflect upon.

Read my full review at [Great Kid Books blog](#).
