



Kirsten's Surprise: A Christmas Story

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The books in this collection tell the stories of six American girls who lived long ago:

Felicity, a spunky, spritely colonial girl, full of energy and independence Josefina, an Hispanic girl whose heart and hopes are as big as the New Mexico sky Kirsten, a pioneer girl of strength and spirit who settles on the frontier Addy, a courageous girl determined to be free in the midst of the Civil War Samantha, a bright Victorian beauty, an orphan raised by her wealthy grandmother Molly, who schemes and dreams on the home front during World War Two

You can share their worlds - their friends and families, their struggles and successes, their sad times and celebrations, their secrets and adventures. You'll see that some things about growing up have changed, while others - like families, friendships, and feelings - haven't changed at all. These are the important things that American girls will always share. They come alive for you in the American Girls Collection.

Kirsten's Surprise: A Christmas Story Details

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Author : Janet Beeler Shaw

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From Reader Review Kirsten's Surprise: A Christmas Story for online ebook

Halee says

Kirsten's Surprise is part of the American Girl Book Series. This tale follows a young Sweden girl who recently moved to Minnesota with her family. Christmas is near and there is a huge snow storm that hit their cabin. Kirsten and her father get caught in the snowstorm on their way home from town. Kirsten must think fast because her father is hurt and they cannot stay stuck on the road in their wagon.

This book would be great to have different cause and effects with solutions that students choose. I would have a variety of options that students would blindly pick. In groups they would make the best of the decision and plan out how they would survive the night time in the snowstorm.

Sara says

I read this years ago when it was a much newer book and there were only three American Girls. Kirsten was my favorite because she looked the most like me, and because I have always had a soft spot for stories about frontier life, though I have to admit I always loved Samantha's clothes.

In this book, Kirsten is about to experience her first Christmas season in America. She wants things to be the same as they were in Sweden, and that includes having all of the same items they had in Sweden, some of which are in storage in a town ten miles away. Ten miles seems like nothing these days - I drove more than 10 miles today alone. But in 1854, during winter in Minnesota, ten miles was a long way, and it is questionable whether they will be able to make it to town to get the trunks before being snowed in until Spring.

Brenda D says

Great book ... really brought back memories of my Swedish grandmother and celebrations at Christmas time!

Catie says

5 ?? Eloise
Great discussion starters about history.

Amanda Caldwell says

Review from The Book Babe.

Kirsten has always been one of my favorite American Girls. I've always had a soft-spot for anything Swedish and Kirsten and her family traveled a long journey across the Atlantic Journey from Sweden to America. In this installment, we find Kirsten a bit homesick for Sweden. In Sweden, St. Lucia's Day is celebrated and marks the beginning of the Christmas season.

Kirsten and her cousins, Anna and Lisbeth, decide to throw a St. Lucia's Day surprise for their families. The only problem is that the items Kirsten needs to be the St. Lucia's Day Queen are still in the painted trunk which the family had to leave behind a few towns away. Papa has still not gone to pick them, but decides he should do it quickly before the snow gets any thicker. Kirsten goes along with Papa to pick up the trunk, in the town of Maryville 10 miles away.

Papa and Kirsten are stuck in blizzard conditions on their way back home to Uncle Olav's farm. Their horse is frightened and will no longer walk on his own, so he has to be led by Papa. When Papa twists his knee leading the horse, it is up to Kirsten to save the day and lead them to safety.

Readers often complain that Kirsten is a bit boring and on the dull side, however this book stands out. I find books about bad weather really interesting and so this one was definitely a bit "edge-of-your-seat". Kirsten's story also educates young readers on the Swedish tradition of St. Lucia's Day. I am giving Kirsten's Surprise 4 out of 5 stars.

Felicity The Magnificent says

I liked this book because Christmas was coming. This was her first Christmas in America and she knew that things were going to be different. In Sweden, they had a holiday called Saint Lucia's Day. She asked her cousins Anna and Lisbeth to help her. They made a crown for her, but they couldn't get a dress and a ribbon, because they were in the trunks and Kirsten's family had to leave the trunks back in Maryville when they didn't have enough money to buy a wagon. So one night, on the night before St. Lucia's Day, Kirsten and her Dad went to get the trunks. When they came back, Anna and Lisbeth helped to get Kirsten ready, and then they were ready. Their teacher was helping them, and so she had asked everybody to close their eyes. It was morning time, and then Kirsten came into the room and said, "Saint Lucia invites you to breakfast." And they had a wonderful breakfast. *-by Felicity*

Cami says

This is my favorite in the Kirsten series so far! I had never heard of Saint Lucia's Day, but now I want to celebrate it with my family! It sounds simple and fun. The blizzard was just scary enough to keep the book interesting, and her bravery shined through.

Yuliana Gallardo says

I really liked this book because it was about a girl that was maybe my age and she had to overcome lots of challenges. It was about a girl named Kristen and she used to live in Sweden but she moved and where she went they didn't celebrate Saint Lucia. So she told her cousins that didn't live there how they celebrate it and when and she has to go really far for a trunk for her white gown and then they all celebrate it. I recommend

this book to girls because it's a book of American Girl Dolls and that could happen to someone where they move to another country and they don't celebrate their favorite holiday and you can bring it back and make it more popular.

Xyra says

I would love to give this book a 5 as I loved it and it was amazing in that it revealed the origins of one of my own family's traditions. However, sticking directly with just the story I think it could have been a bit deeper. That being said, I am looking at it from the perspective of an adult and not the target audience of an 8-year old (or 9 or 10).

In this installment of Kirsten's story we find out the Larson's have yet to be reunited with many of the possessions they brought with them from Sweden. They had to leave their personal items in storage and carry their household belongings to their new home. Part of the story revolves around those items. The other part of the story introduces the reader to Swedish Christmas traditions. Mainly Saint Lucia Day.

The themes I picked up from this story included patience, persistence, strength, and resourcefulness.

The historical "Peek into the Past" piece after the story brought tears to my eyes. It focused on Christmas traditions of pioneer settlers in the midwest, Minnesota. It showed how new people to the area would keep their traditions and share them with their neighbors and vice versa. One of the Swedish traditions mentioned was the gifts from the Swedish Christmas Elf sported clues and you would try to figure out what was inside before opening. I grew up with this tradition from my mom and her parents-here I find the tradition is older and more common than I thought! <3

Fabulous story. Nice read. Good vocabulary.

Elise (LiveLoveYarn) says

I'm not crying, you're crying!! Okay...I am totally crying. When Kirsten and Papa get home and they open up the trunk with all their most precious possessions from Sweden- waterworks. I absolutely adored these books as a kid and rereading them as an adult is so wonderful and nostalgic <3 I love the illustrations, I love that each book builds on themes from the last and references past events. I just love them okay? And as a doll collector I am freaking obsessed with how the outfits and accessories are taken directly from the stories.

Elise says

I enjoyed it, these stories are easy and fun.

Erin says

I just got done reading a bunch of my old childhood books again. I blitzed through the first four Kirsten

books (Meet Kirsten, Kirsten Learns a Lesson, Kirsten's Surprise, and Happy Birthday, Kirsten). I have this thing about re-reading books that I haven't read since I was 10 or younger... in one way, it's fantastic because you can relive those moments when you were first falling in love with characters or, in my case, historical fiction. However, re-reading these books can also be really really disappointing because, as an adult, I realize how totally horrible the writing in the series is. Ugh. Seriously, Janet Beeler Shaw, your stories are ultra boring. No wonder Kirsten was discontinued by American Girl. Your books make her seem like a snoozeville character when in reality, being a Swedish immigrant with rad circular braids is super cool and exciting. My adult self gives this series two stars, but my inner child totally bumped it up to three stars.

Rebekah says

Alternate title- The one where she gets her doll.

The American Girl books are rather formulaic. Book 1 we meet the girl and her world. Book 2 we see what school is like during that time period. Book 3 How that girl and her family celebrate Christmas (and of course that girl gets a doll as a present). And so on and so forth.

This is slightly different for the Kirsten books because Kirsten doesn't get a new doll she convinces her father to travel to retrieve their trunks, which they left behind for lighter travel west. When they left the trunks she was also forced to leave behind her doll Sari, as well as the props for her favorite part of the families' Christmas celebration St. Lucia's Day.

I loved this book and read it over and over again when I was a little girl. My family even began celebrating St. Lucia's Day despite the fact that we are of German decent and Mennonite.

Emily says

Another one of my favorite American girl books. The Swedish Christmas tradition is warm and cozy and I enjoyed learning about it.

Bree says

This review is from the perspective of a mother - Kirsten's surprise centers on Kirsten's wish to celebrate Christmas in the way she was accustomed back home - with St. Lucia's Day as the focus. Kirsten comes across a bit selfish and impulsive with her obsession with getting their trunks out of storage, but her courage and clear-head during the snowstorm show how much she is maturing. I like how this series is really focused on the trials and successes of pioneer life while still bringing it back to a 9-10 year old girl's life.

Haley says

I recently found my boxset of these books. Kirsten was always my favourite as a child, and with Christmas being in 6 days, I decided to read this book. I always loved it, and wanted so badly to celebrate St. Lucia

Day, wear a white gown with a red sash and a crown. Reading it now, 12 years later, I remembered the heartwarming moments of this book, and am feeling extremely nostalgic.

Sarah Crawford says

Kirsten wants to do something special for the holidays, but that depends on getting their trunks out of storage. In those days it meant driving a horse and cart to the relatively nearby town, getting the trunks and returning, and in those days that would have been a full-day's job. In this case it was even worse since it started snowing during their trip and the snow turned into a blizzard.

Then Kirsten's father gets hurt and can't walk and the horse acts up and doesn't want to move. It's going to be up to Kirsten to find some way to get them to shelter so they can survive the storm and then make their way back home.

A lot of good information on Swedish holiday celebrations in the story and the historical section.

Alexandria says

I don't usually review the books I read as a child, mainly because I don't remember much about them and I was unable to read them with a critical eye. But this book, I will review.

I grew up in a family that was forming its own traditions. Call it a symptom of the broken family, but we didn't have a very strong sense of where we had come from. Reading about a young woman with such a close community, sense of family history, and tradition set, I grew to understand that there was more than commercialism to the holidays.

This book taught me so much more than facts about Swedish holiday traditions. If I had to pick one American Girl book to give to my children, it would be this one. When I think of the magic of Christmas, I think of this book.

Becky Keir Grace says

Kirsten is about to celebrate her first Christmas in America, however, this makes her homesick for her family and life in Sweden. They would be getting ready to celebrate Saint Lucia's Day. Her cousins have never celebrated this holiday, and the girls decide to surprise the family with the celebration. There is a slight problem; the items Kirsten needs for the day are in their trunks from Sweden which are in a town 10 miles away. She begs her father to go get them, but there is too much work to do. Kirsten does not give up, and Ann, Lisbeth, and Miss Winston help her make the crown she needs to wear and keeps it hidden. Finally Papa agrees to go get the trunks and Kirsten pleads to go with him. Reluctant, but Papa agrees, and they set out. On the return trip a blizzard hits, and Papa is injured. Their horse Blackie loses the way; all hope seems lost, but then Kirsten realizes she knows what to do!

Kirsten gets a little on my nerves; I find her to be whiny. However, in this book she shows what she is made of. This is a great book for learning about Swedish traditions! I never heard of Saint Lucia's Day and

appreciated what I learned. Ten miles to us is nothing today, however, in 1854, during a blizzard, it could be fatal. Kirsten has to use her head and remain calm in order to get her father and herself home safely. I can also see this book being another good one for discussion.

Lauren says

Enjoyed this as a child. Especially since this tradition is in the family.
