

REVIEW - ISABEL'S SECRET by Meadow Rue Merrill

Horses. A Colorado ranch. Two best friends. One with a secret. What a great set-up for a middle-grade novel!

"Isabel's Secret" is the first book in The New Millennium Girls series by Christian author and educator Jan May (2011, New Millennium Girls Books). The main character is 11-year-old Isabel Morningsky, who lives with her parents on Angel Ridge Ranch. All she wants is to win a local horse race but finds herself at the center of a family controversy that could pull her away from her family's ranch. Why is Grandmother Biltmore intent on taking Isabel away? The question threatens Isabel's future.



As the trouble deepens, Isabel reminds herself, "Winners never quit and quitters never win, because I serve the mighty God that lives deep within," adding a twist on a oft-recited maxim. While struggling to make sense of her future, Isabel holds onto her faith, seeking God's help when facing with difficult decisions. And yet, this young heroine isn't a Pollyanna, showing spunk and determination and a willingness to do what is right even when events don't go her way. The end will leave readers wanting more.

With fast-moving, engaging prose, an interesting mystery, and spiritual themes, "Isabel's Secret" would make a delightful gift for any eight-to-twelve year old girl this Christmas. You can even buy it as a bundle with accompanying books meant to spur young girls' creative imaginations. "Creative Writing Made Easy," a workbook by Jan May, guides students in writing an adventure similar to Isabel's in which the main character grows in her faith towards God. "Isabel's Closet" is a fun paper doll and craft book to let readers roll play Isabel's adventures.

You can find multiple home-school resources and other books meant to inspire faith in the next generation at Jan May's website above.