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Mable Riley: A Reliable Record of Humdrum, Peril, & Romance

Katelyn Osborn

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Title: Mable Riley: A Reliable Record of Humdrum, Peril, & Romance  
Author: Marthe Jocelyn  
Reviewer: Katelyn Osborn  
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Publication Year: 2004  
ISBN: 9780763621209  
Number of Pages: 279  
Interest Level: Intermediate, Young Adult  
Rating: Excellent

Review

When Mable’s older sister Viola gets a job teaching school in a town far from their home and Mable is assigned to go with her, she is thrilled to be somewhere new and different, where adventures are bound to happen, and she’ll finally have something interesting to write about. Much to Mable’s dismay, life at the Goodhands’ farm is as dull as it was back in her hometown. Between being bossed around by Viola, monotonous chores assigned by the Goodhands, and trying to make friends at her new school, Mable’s ready to give up. But one day while on an errand, she meets Mrs. Rattle, a real life writer, just like Mable wants to be. When Mrs. Rattle asks her to help serve at the Ladies Reading Society meeting, she jumps at the chance. However, Mable soon learns that the Ladies Reading Society isn’t a reading society at all, but a way to meet secretly about something much more important - the burgeoning women’s rights movement - and not everyone in town is happy about it. Will Mable have the courage to stand up with her new friends when she’s given the choice?

Written as a series of diary entries, Mable Riley is a lighthearted look at an important time in history. Mable is a relatable narrator, and has a wonderful, youthful voice perfect for her age. At the beginning, she has a childlike, romanticized view on the world and tends to complain about the humdrums of her life. However, through meeting Mrs. Rattle and becoming involved in the suffragette movement, she matures into someone that realizes choices have consequences, and sometimes what appears as humdrum is hiding a possible adventure beneath. As the book progresses, characters that originally seemed one-dimensional and flat gain depth and relatability. Readers will find themselves laughing out loud on more than one occasion. Fans of Anne of Green Gables and the like will find another favorite in Mable Riley.

*Contains one instance of mild violence.