

Secrets of the Shopping Mall

Richard Peck

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Trying to escape the vicious King Kobra gang and a troubled life at home, eighth graders Bernie and Teresa flee the city. With only four dollars between them, they hop a bus, hoping to find a new life at the end of the line. Destination: Paradise Park. But Paradise Park turns out to be a cement-covered suburban shopping mall--not quite the paradise they had hoped for.

With no money and no home to return to, they are forced to stay. And paradise park takes them in--in more ways than one. Bernie and Teresa spend their days and nights in the climate-controlled consumer paradise of a large department store. And just when they think they can live there unnoticed forever, Teresa and Bernie find that even Paradise Park has its secrets. Even in the dead of night, they are far from alone....

From the Paperback edition.

Secrets of the Shopping Mall Details


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Author : Richard Peck

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From Reader Review Secrets of the Shopping Mall for online ebook

treva says

I only remembered a few vague details from when I read this as a kid, and I was stoked to find a copy at this year's library book sale. But now I just have a lot of questions, the foremost being, will casual identify theft solve ALL of my problems FOREVER?

D.M. Dutcher says

Two lonely, abandoned inner city kids flee their homes. Two dollars gets them as far as Paradise Park, an upscale shopping mall. They try to live in the mall at night, but soon find they aren't alone.

The book is odd. It's not much of a spoiler to say that the supernatural element you'd think exists doesn't. However that makes the book even more unrealistic than you think, especially as it winds to a conclusion. That tonal inconsistency is the main reason I only give it two stars...it's very nicely written and very sad in parts. The opening scenes are surprisingly brutal, set in a lawless school and with a couple of harrowing scenes of cruelty. There's also a sad thread of unwanted children throughout the book, at all ends of the societal spectrum. It's just the oddness of the book softens those parts.

Also a minor problem is that this is really only Teresa's story, Bernie's is barely told after the first part. The ending is kind of eh, too. This story absolutely cried out for an afterschool special though; as a book it was a fun read but the "real" explanation of the story made it a bit sillier than poignant.

Kressel Housman says

Not my favorite Richard Peck book, but a great concept. Two runaway teens make a home for themselves in the shopping mall, blending in with the shoppers by day and hiding out from the security guards at night. Then they discover that they're not the only ones. . .

As I said, it's not my favorite Richard Peck, but there's a delicious Luna-like character in it!

Karin says

My brother and I were always allowed to choose our own reading.....a nosy neighbor who used to look after us in the evenings got her hands on this. Took it to my mom and tried to get me in trouble for reading books "inappropriate" for my age. (I think I was about 11 or 12). Story is about two pre-teen kids who escape their inner city lives and leave their gang ridden school to go and live in the mall. I guess neighbor lady felt they weren't good role models, being drop-outs and all. This was a GREAT story, and my brother and I both loved it and re-read it over & over.

Michael Lawing says

I saw the cover of the 1979 Dell printing and had to read it. It looked campy, and didn't reflect the real plot.

The book is definitely not the greatest plot, but presents a unique take on both the survival-in-a-mall and kids-as-adults genres.

Cheryl Zaidan says

I used to love this book as a child and thought I'd revisit it due to Richard Peck's recent passing. It's a bit dated (Shaun Cassidy and Jaws 2 anyone?) but it was still fun and there was a bit of crazy imagination to it.

Yep, I still enjoyed it, even after all these years. :)

Susan says

Loved this as a kid. Still think the idea is interesting.

Courtney says

One of my favorite books from my early teen years.
I still imagine scenes from it most times I'm in the mall.

Trina says

Not the best Peck book, but with a title like that, I was interested. I think it was an extension of a short story he wrote, in which a short boy and a tall girl make friends and run away from home to get away from a gang, only to live in a shopping mall where an uptown gang lives indoors and a no-as-uptown gang lives outside the mall and they come to a clash.

Tatiana says

oh man, another random jogged memory. what's great is that i read the description of this book and it didn't ring a bell at all. maybe because i don't remember how they got to the mall, but i remember them at the mall. and the mannequins. and the mannequin war with the skater punks. crazy. not as artsy as the mixed up files, but hey, who didn't wander around a store or mall when they were little and figure out how they could live there. no? when you walked into banks did you take note of the security cameras and people and figure out

how you would rob it at night (if you were that kind of person)? no? just me?

Kerith says

Of all the authors I've met, Richard Peck is the only one I personally disliked. I remember reading this book as a kid. Two middle schoolers run away and live at the shopping mall -- a fairly interesting scenario I guess -- some of the pop culture references date it (Battlestar Galactica is mentioned, and it's not the recent version!) and it is not a hopeful story. Reading it as an adult I can see Richard Peck's lovely attitudes toward schools and the people who work for them shining through, ha.

Maya Rock says

I like finishing off with a book I actually like, SECRETS OF THE SHOPPING MALL.

In this book two teenagers who are total losers, run away and live in the mall. One of them pretends she works in the mall. I forget what the other one does. Anyway they get in conflicts with a whole teenage gang that also lives in the mall. In the end, they achieve victory and the best part is they KEEP IMPERSONATING THESE PEOPLE (the boy I remember now impersonates an exec's son) AND STAY IN THE MALL.

Magda says

Peck is amusing and strange as ever, with a little thought-provokingness included, but not too much to make this more than a light read. The middle was a bit surreal.

Therese says

These unloved kids run away to live in a shopping mall (apparently before they used wire grates to cover the individual stores at night and before security cameras. And guards...apparently). Haven't you ever wondered what it would be like? Turns out really cool, but not what you'd expect. Also, you're not alone.

Melanie says

As a child, my favorite genre was Kids Getting Up To Mischief In Places Where Kids Probably Should Not Be: children in museums/libraries/shopping malls overnight, runnin' around and causin' trouble, occasionally encountering easily-solved mysteries. (See also: *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* and *Help! I'm a Prisoner in the Library.*)

Laura says

I've read this book over & over because the story is so vivid yet unrealistic. I had it until probably 2006, when I sold 3/4ths of my books. Ultimate urban fantasy with great characters. Good for kids 4th grade plus. Crystal was my favorite secondary character.

Inas says

I found this book lying around my house a few months ago and I thought I'd make it less lonely and add it to my bookshelf keeping in mind that I would eventually get to it in the future but still it didn't seem like it fitted with the type of books that I usually read and enjoy and also the synopsis didn't really strike me as very interesting and so I never thought about picking it up.

However, recently, I made a TBR jar of all the books that I have on my bookshelf and that I haven't read yet and I made it one of my goals to pick one book randomly out of the jar each month and try my best to read and finish it within that month, and guess what book was picked for this month?

Yep you guessed it, it was *Secrets of the Shopping Mall*!!

Now this book was a surprise to me on many levels considering I didn't really fully get the premise of it when I read the back cover and so I went into technically blindly. But it really did not disappoint!

First of all, it was a fairly short book and also pretty fast-paced with a really clear, simple and easy-to-follow writing style which made reading it very enjoyable and fun. The characters were developed pretty well for such a short book but they felt weird and unrealistic at times (or maybe it's just me losing touch of how fourteen year olds act). I really liked the dynamic between the two main characters and how they constantly helped each other out and completed each other in a way. Concerning the other characters, I disliked them at first but then I felt bad for them because at the end they were just kids, no more or less. When it came to the setting of the story, I thought that the shopping mall was a very interesting and vast setting with so many possibilities of exploration and also very creepy at times which I loved. I liked the symbolism of how the "rich kids" kind of mirrored the upper classes of modern society and also governmental powers.

All in all it was a very enjoyable book and like nothing I've ever read before but unfortunately it was also very unrealistic at times and gave the right and wrong message at the end which was the reason why it didn't deserve a 5/5 stars for me.

This book was weird and creepy and funny and and sad and heartbreaking and interesting and just all around awesome! Would recommend giving it a try!

Lisa says

I took a YA writing class recently, and one of the other students mentioned that this had been her favorite book as a teen. Maybe that got my hopes up too high, but I really wanted to like this book more than I did.

I love the premise of two kids running away from home to live in a shopping mall (I think every kid has dreamed of doing that at some point), and the cover image on my old paperback copy (two grayish mannequins about to pounce on unsuspecting kids) is wonderfully creepy, but the story itself was kind of a letdown.

After reading it, I kept wondering... (view spoiler)

Deanna Anderson says

I read this book in high school, and while I remembered the cover and that "mall" was in the title, I had forgotten the full title and author...but I never forgot the contents.

I have wanted this book for years, and knew that when I saw it, I would know it was the title I was looking for...finally, 27 years after high school, I find it and re-read it. It is different than I remember, but nonetheless good.

Barnie and Teresa run away from troubled homes, a horrible school, and a mean gang ready to do them serious harm. When they take the bus to Paradise City they anticipate a Snow White world with beautiful gardens, friendly animals, and no pain or hurt or loneliness. What they get is miles of paved parking lot and a huge multi-level mall.

Still, there's food and bedding and clothes so they make it their home. But there are others who have also made it their home....

This book has suspense and intrigue and there are times I really worried about the characters, even though I knew they'd persevere. As a teen, this was enthralling and probably a little frightening at times, as an adult it was just one good read...and still had that small element of fear. I really enjoy this title and it will be on my "keep this forever" shelf.

J.M. says

This was a favorite of mine as a child, and I just reread it for probably the fourth or fifth time. The story is about two loners, Teresa and Barnie, who forge an unlikely friendship when they find themselves the target of a bully's rage. Afraid of retribution, they hop on a bus and run away, only to end up at a local shopping mall. The two decide to hide in a fancy department store after the mall closes and spend the night sneaking around, eating out of the deli area, and avoiding the night watchman.

The next day, they hang out at the store, blending in with the crowds, changing clothes for new outfits off the racks, and just basically coming to terms with the thought of living in the store for the rest of their foreseeable futures. Unfortunately, they aren't alone.

Other kids, either runaways like Teresa and Barnie or lost children who wound up at the store, live there as well, pretending to be display mannequins to avoid suspicion. They think Teresa and Barnie are members of a rival gang called Mouth-Breathers, who live in the parking lot outside the mall and constantly try to infiltrate the store. When the Mouth-Breathers break in the night Teresa and Barnie are captured by the others, the timing couldn't be more wrong.

While rereading this story, I remembered why I loved it so much as a child. The thought of being self-sufficient without guidance appeals to preteens eager to be out from under their parents' yokes, but living on the streets is scary and dangerous. Sneaking away to hide in a mall sounds perfect, particularly for kids who are at the age where they prefer to hang out with their friends at the stores rather than stay at home. A department store has everything you'd ever want or need ~ food, clothes, a bed to sleep on, books to read, games to play ... It's a wonderful alternative to running away to be completely on your own.

I enjoyed the idea of the mannequins not so much "coming to life" but rather being more than they seem at first glance. The story is well-written and fast paced, and at the end I found I couldn't put the book down. Despite the fact this was originally published in 1979, it still reads as fresh and relevant today as it did when I first picked it up years and YEARS ago.
