



Betsy-Tacy

Maud Hart Lovelace , Lois Lenski (Illustrator)

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Best Friends Forever

There are lots of children on Hill Street, but no little girls Betsy's age. So when a new family moves into the house across the street, Betsy hopes they will have a little girl she can play with. Sure enough, they do—a little girl named Tacy. And from the moment they meet at Betsy's fifth birthday party, Betsy and Tacy become such good friends that everyone starts to think of them as one person—Betsy-Tacy.

Betsy and Tacy have lots of fun together. They make a playhouse from a piano box, have a sand store, and dress up and go calling. And one day, they come home to a wonderful surprise—a new friend named Tib.

Ever since their first publication in the 1940's, the Betsy-Tacy stories have been loved by each generation of young readers.

Betsy-Tacy Details

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Author : Maud Hart Lovelace , Lois Lenski (Illustrator)

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From Reader Review Betsy-Tacy for online ebook

Victoria says

I saw this at the library and was in a weird mood, so I brought it home. Adorable story about 5-6 year olds doing 5-6 year old things at the turn of the century. I know I read the first few books twenty-some years ago, but I think I'm about to (re)discover the entire series.

Lisa Vegan says

Thank you to Goodreads friends Ginny & Constance: I saw Betsy-Tacy among your favorites listed on your profile pages and borrowed this book from the library – even by chance got the original 1940 edition which was pretty cool.

How did I miss this series of Betsy-Tacy books when I was a child?! I would have really enjoyed them. The titles Heaven to Betsy and Betsy in Spite of Herself do sound familiar so maybe I did read those; I don't remember.

This Betsy-Tacy book is so well-written, and the illustrations are wonderful too. It certainly describes a more innocent time (no worries about child kidnapping here!) and it shows a mostly idyllic childhood for these two girls, although the story does not shy away from life's difficult parts either. I loved the depiction of the friendship. Captured so well how imaginative young children can make such good use in play of such items as old appliance, in their case piano, boxes. I grew up well after these girls and in a city, but I recognized the rhythms and the specifics of these girls' play so well from my own childhood. Adored Betsy's storytelling!

Note for modern kids: Reading it for the first time in my fifties and in 2007, I did notice the sexist language, but it would be obvious to young readers that this story took place a long time ago, and I'm sure that many of my favorite books from my childhood have the same issue. And I'd happily still recommend all of them.

Virginia Messina says

I've been an avid reader for as long as I can remember, and have many favorites from childhood, but none have ever meant as much to me as the happy and cozy Betsy-Tacy books.

My beloved aunt dug a dusty old copy of Betsy-Tacy out of her attic for me when I was 4 or 5 years old. From the very beginning, I wanted to climb inside this book and live there forever. Written in the 1940s, it is an autobiographical account of Maud Hart Lovelace's turn-of-the-century childhood in Mankato, MN--which becomes Deep Valley in the book. All of the main characters and most of the minor ones are based on people that Lovelace really knew. The stories of a childhood lived simply and happily are pure magic, as are the illustrations by Lois Lenski. Ms Lovelace went on to write nine more books in this series, following Betsy's life through her first year of marriage. A particularly nice aspect of the stories is that the reading level increases with each book.

Adrienne says

Maud Hart Lovelace is frank and short-sentenced. The storyline goes something like, “Once upon a time, there were two little girls who became best friends, even though one was lively and imaginative and one was terribly shy.” Lovelace is not interested in drawing riveting characters. She tells us who they are in stubby sentences in the first chapter of the book and then she moves on. But, like the Little House series, these are books about the way of life in a time. The early 1900s homes line a single crossroad that makes up the town. They all have orchards and chickens. The two best friends carry their dinners to the end of their street, where it meets a meadow and a bench, and there, they eat the meals prepared by their mothers every evening. Without saying much, Lovelace evokes the tenderness of that, the wobbling glasses of milk in little girl hands and the street with its barefooted children. The girls play pretend and long for sweets and run around in their Midwestern, summer lives. Major life events seem to waft through the book. Tacy’s baby brother dies. About one and a half pages later, Pa takes everyone on a wagon ride. Lovelace isn’t worried about continuity or really even fluidity. But the few details she gives are solid enough to construct the little town and its little delights. The abrupt transitions lend to the feeling of episodic recollection so peculiar to childhood. It’s a surprisingly wistful read. I’ll confess, though, I wasn’t sorry to move on to a book where something might happen.

Melody says

9/2012 This book gets better every time I read it.

12/2009 I have loved this book so long I can't remember when first I read it. I certainly didn't have two numbers in my age. I've re-read it countless times, and every time I've read it as an adult, I marvel at Lovelace's skill. Told from the perspective of a five-year-old girl, it rings true on every possible level. Read from the perspective of a forty-five-year-old woman, it's poignant and heartbreakingly nostalgic and delightful. This is my first re-read since I made the journey back to Mankato (the real-life Deep Valley) and it's pretty wonderful to read about the houses in which I have stood, tears in my eyes.

I cannot recommend this book, and the books which follow it, enough.

Rachel (Kalanadi) says

Every single detail is dear to me!

Laura says

I can't remember when I first starting reading this series but 2 years ago I bought them all again to read and

own because as a child I had always checked them out from the library. I re-read them all and although the first stories are meant for child level readers I enjoyed a trip down memory lane with Betsy, Tacy, and Tib (a character who comes later on in the series). The reading level grows with the characters which is good for young readers. Utterly delightful stories of adventures and friendship.

Zoe says

I remember reading this with my mom as a child. The stories are so cute and I remember wanting to be just like the girls. I still sometimes thumb through the book and find new stories that I have forgotten. It is also interesting to reread since the innocent point of view of a child is captured perfectly.

Audrey says

A delightful book that celebrates the innocence and imagination of childhood. This book is written for a very young audience and makes a perfect read-aloud. When I was little, all I wanted was a friend like Tacy. :) I've said it before and I'll say it again: growing up is okay, but nothing compares to the magic of childhood—when simple things can become most adventurous and exciting. This book is the first in a series of ten books about Betsy (plus two books about other characters in which she is mentioned). The reading level and plots DO increase as the books progress and the characters mature. So don't give up on the series if you are an older reader and find this one boring. (Though I still think it is charming!) This is a series that no childhood should be without.

Duane says

Ah! The world of little children. We forget what life was like when we were 4, 5, 6 years old, the wide-eyed wonder of the world, the power of our imagination, the love of our family, and the pure joy of the friends we laughed and played with. If you have children and grandchildren then you experience it again through their lives. And you can experience through the words of a wonderful book like Betsy-Tacy. It's a timeless story that's just as beautiful to read today as it was when it was written.

Allison Tebo says

Perhaps I would have liked this more when I was younger . . . perhaps. While this was a perfectly fine little book, it struck me as a little blah and stilted; not nearly as brilliant and honest as Elizabeth Enright or Jeanne Birdsall.

Carmen Maloy says

The Betsy-Tacy series may be the most influential set of books I ever read. I reread them over and over, because they never lose their beauty. Betsy-Tacy is the first book in the delightful series by Maud Hart

Lovelace. Five-year-old Betsy longs for a best friend and finds one when Tacy moves in across the street. Together they have many adventures, including going on picnics, selling sand, playing with paper dolls, going "calling" on neighbors, climbing The Big Hill, and going to school for the first time.

The Betsy-Tacy books were highly autobiographical and Lovelace perfectly captures the innocence and magic of childhood. Betsy's imaginative stories, such as riding a feather, are delightful. Even though they are children, Betsy and Tacy's lives are, as in real life, not always happy. The death of Tacy's baby sister, left tears in my eyes yet joy at the innocence of youth as Betsy and Tacy leave an Easter Egg in a tree with the belief that a bird will carry it up to Heaven and give it to Tacy's sister.

If you read this book and love it, please read the series. It will be books that you will never forget as long as you live. I also recommend the "Betsy-Tacy Companion" which is an amazing book that dissects each book and compares it to its real-life counterparts, including pictures of the "real" Betsy, Tacy, Tib and all the gang.

I had the pleasure of visiting "Deep Valley" (aka Mankato, Minnesota) for a Betsy-Tacy convention back in 1996. It was incredible to step back in time and enter Betsy's world. We toured the city and I was actually able to step foot in "Tacy's" bedroom and sit on the famous bench at the top of the big hill. It was truly a life-altering experience. I have to thank my sister, Julie for introducing these books to me and changing my life.

It's obvious how much these books mean to me. My first born child was named Tacy Kelly Maloy. Please read and enjoy. They are a treasure!

Lori says

My all-time favorite series as a child. I read every book in the Betsy Tacy (and Tib!) series multiple times and fervently wished I lived on Hill St. with them at the turn of the 20th century. I am so obsessed with this series that I want to visit Mankato, MN and see all things Maud Hart Lovelace related. Maybe I can force my daughter to get interested in this series when she is old enough?? Then, I'll have an excuse to read them all over again.

Sacrilege that it is for me to say this, as a child of the 1970s, I preferred this series to the Little House books (even though I read all of them multiple times as well). I suppose I am just much more of a bourgeoisie Edwardian than I am a pioneer gal.

Jess says

Turns out I'm more old and jaded than any teenager has the right to be, because I found this to be a 100 page slog about quirky childhood antics. However, I'm going to keep reading, because I first encountered these as 'Anne of Green Gables but she follows her career dreams' and book 10 sounds like one worth sticking around for. Also: Joe, whomever he may be.

Annette says

Ahh! the innocence of youth! This is a really cute book about two little girls who become best friends. It takes place at the turn of the century which makes it especially charming. It's written in a very simple way which makes it perfect for younger children to enjoy. I read it to my two little girls ages 6 and 4 and they loved it so much that we have decided to read the next one, too, "Betsy-Tacy and Tib".

Sherwood Smith says

There were a few books I skipped reading in my local library, and this was one. Most of the books I skipped were boys' sports, or monster books, but also I tended to skip anything illustrated by Lois Lenski. Illustrations were too integral to the story for me, and if I didn't like the cover art or the frontispiece, I often wouldn't read a book until talked into it.

Yep, I missed some good books that way; I still haven't read the "Limberlost" books, which I remember taking down, looking at, and hating the drawings so much back it would go on the shelves.

Betsy-Tacy was another that went back on the shelves, probably because in the first one, the characters are not quite five. While I didn't mind reading about kids younger than me, that was too young: they couldn't possibly have the adventures I craved.

I wish someone had given me those books at six or so, because I would have loved them. Though I would have sobbed my heart out when Baby Bee dies, as I did when Ginger died in *Black Beauty*, and I worried myself sick over the Five Little Peppers when sickness struck.

But old me can appreciate the imagination of this gentle book, the vivid details, the kindness, the faithful depiction of childhood logic when the kid isn't warped by PTSD. I loved stories about normal kids, when I was young--they were so alien, so comforting, though I'd soon crave adventure again. Or more correct, agency.

The Baby Bee chapter is so simply written, but in its way almost as lovely as "Piper at the Gates of Dawn" in *Wind in the Willows*.

Now I have to read the others, and skim my eye past the illos, which I still don't like, but at least I know why: the figures are out of proportion, like paper dolls, the faces squashed. Lenski was better with her folksy houses and settings.

Orinoco Womble (tidy bag and all) says

Let the record show, I went into this one predisposed to be underwhelmed. And to be honest, there's not a lot of "story" here. But it is a lovely, warm, gentle read, just the story of a couple of five-year-old girls at the

turn of the 20th century in Mankato, Minnesota. Betsy and Tacy play all day, and are allowed to be little kids. Deep Valley (Mankato) is safe enough to let them wander at will and talk to "strangers" (ie people their parents don't know from church or work.) I was impressed with the way the author revives how it feels to be three, or four, or five--young enough to be unaware of the world beyond your neighbourhood. *In fact, I was visited by a blast from my own past; a very young me riding on my father's shoulders across the street during a rain shower asked, "When it rains here, does it rain all over the world?" because it seemed quite possible to me. That was when I found out that the world is not your block. Some people in my medium-sized city now (900,000 inhabitants) are unaware of this.*

I realised when I got to the end of the book that this series is mentioned in passing in the film "You've Got Mail" when the Meg Ryan character is showing a little girl the books and talking about the characters in them. She mentions "Tib whose real name, I'm sorry to tell you, is Ethel." Growing up in Iowa in the sixties and seventies, my teachers were all about the Little House books; we never heard of Betsy-Tacy, and I'm quite sure they weren't in the local children's library, as I knew it inside out.

I understand there are several more in the series, so the characters will be more developed; even in this one, though, Lovelace does deal with what today would be considered some heavy issues--death, birth and serious illness among them--but with a light touch. It surprised me that Tacy is painfully shy, which being from a very large family seems odd, given my experience of a large family myself. If she had been the middle child...but who knows.

I am curious to read more of the series if I can find them.

Irene says

A very sweet story of two little girls growing up in a simpler time. In this day and age of social media and online games, it was refreshingly quaint to read about a time when ladies went calling, milk was delivered in horse-drawn wagons, and children's play was limited only by the scope of their own imaginations. Betsy and Tacy, both five years old, play games and explore their neighborhood with their mothers' permission but without adult supervision.

The author takes Betsy and Tacy through several big life events, including the first day of school, the birth of a baby sister, and even the death of a baby sister. The situations are not treated lightly, but they convey the innocence of a child's perspective. I love that the girls show compassion and take care of each other in difficult times.

I also like that young children reading this book will probably encounter new vocabulary, even if the reading level is appropriate. First published in 1940 and presumably set in the late 1800's or early 1900's, many frequently used words from that time are now less common. When the Kelly family moves in, Betsy sees a moving "dray", not a moving truck, and their houses have "parlors", not living rooms or family rooms.

The edition I read included some fun facts about the author and where she got her inspiration for writing the book, plus a delightful little map of the girls' neighborhood.

I think this will be a fun series to follow, and I'm looking forward to the next book.

Emily says

Has it really been seventeen years since my first (and hitherto only) reading of this book? This time around I liked it better than I did back then. Back in 2000, I was eager to start a series so many of my book-friends loved, but I was impatient to find myself reading a book about 5 year-olds, and was a little underwhelmed. Rereading it now (after reading some of the later books in the series multiple times), I appreciate how beautifully layered the series is, with each successive book showing a broadening perspective as the girls grow up. And so, being ready now to appreciate this one on its own terms (and perhaps being older and wiser?) I found it just lovely.

Hilary says

We loved this story. Two young friends meet just as they are about to start school. Apart from the absence of cars and the fact that however rural your home might be 5 yr olds don't go off alone together these days, much of this book could have been in present time. Imaginative play, family life, happiness, sadness and the beauty of the passing seasons.
