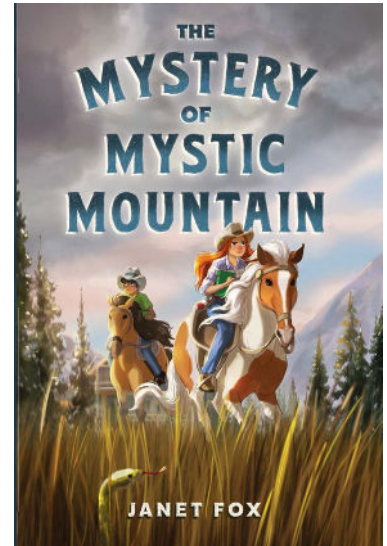


# Book Club Guide for The Mystery of Mystic Mountain

## About the book:

When Becca Soloway is dragged to a dusty Montana dude ranch for the summer, she expects boredom and heartbreak. But a mysterious treasure map, a long-lost outlaw, and a new friend named Jon pull her into an adventure filled with secrets, danger, and the chance to find more than just gold.



## Discussion Prompts

### Opening ideas:

#### 1. First Impressions

What were your expectations when you first picked up the book? How did the opening chapters set the tone for what followed?

#### 2. Setting the Scene

How does the setting of the dude ranch and the Montana wilderness influence the mood and action of the story?

### Plot and mystery:

#### 3. Clues and Twists

What was your favorite clue or twist in the mystery of Pearlhandle Pete? Did you try to solve the mystery before Becca and Jon?

#### 4. Pacing the Puzzle

Were there moments where you couldn't stop reading? What made those scenes so compelling?

#### 5. The Treasure

What do you think the "real treasure" in the story was? How did your idea of the treasure change as the story went on?



## Characters and growth:

### 6. Becca's Journey

How does Becca change over the course of the summer? What does she learn about herself and her family?

### 7. Friendship Dynamics

What makes Becca and Jon's friendship strong? How do they help each other face their fears?

### 8. Adults in the Story

How are the adult characters (like Becca's mom or Jon's dad) portrayed? What roles do they play in helping or hindering the kids' journey?

## Deeper themes:

### 9. Truth vs. Legend

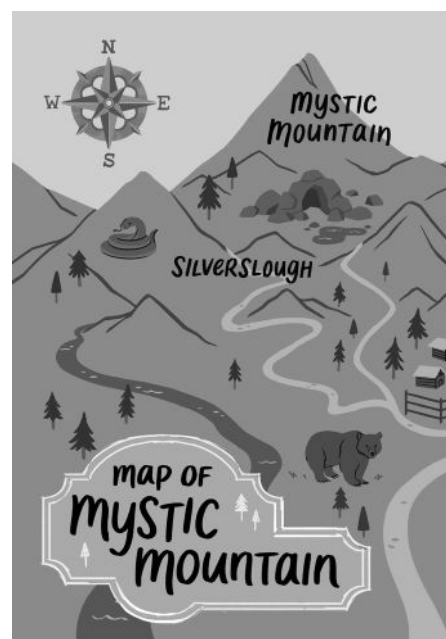
The story blends history and myth. What do you think it says about how stories are passed down over time?

### 10. Running Away or Facing Truth?

Becca's mom takes her to Montana to escape problems. Do you think that was a good decision? Have you ever needed space to see things more clearly?

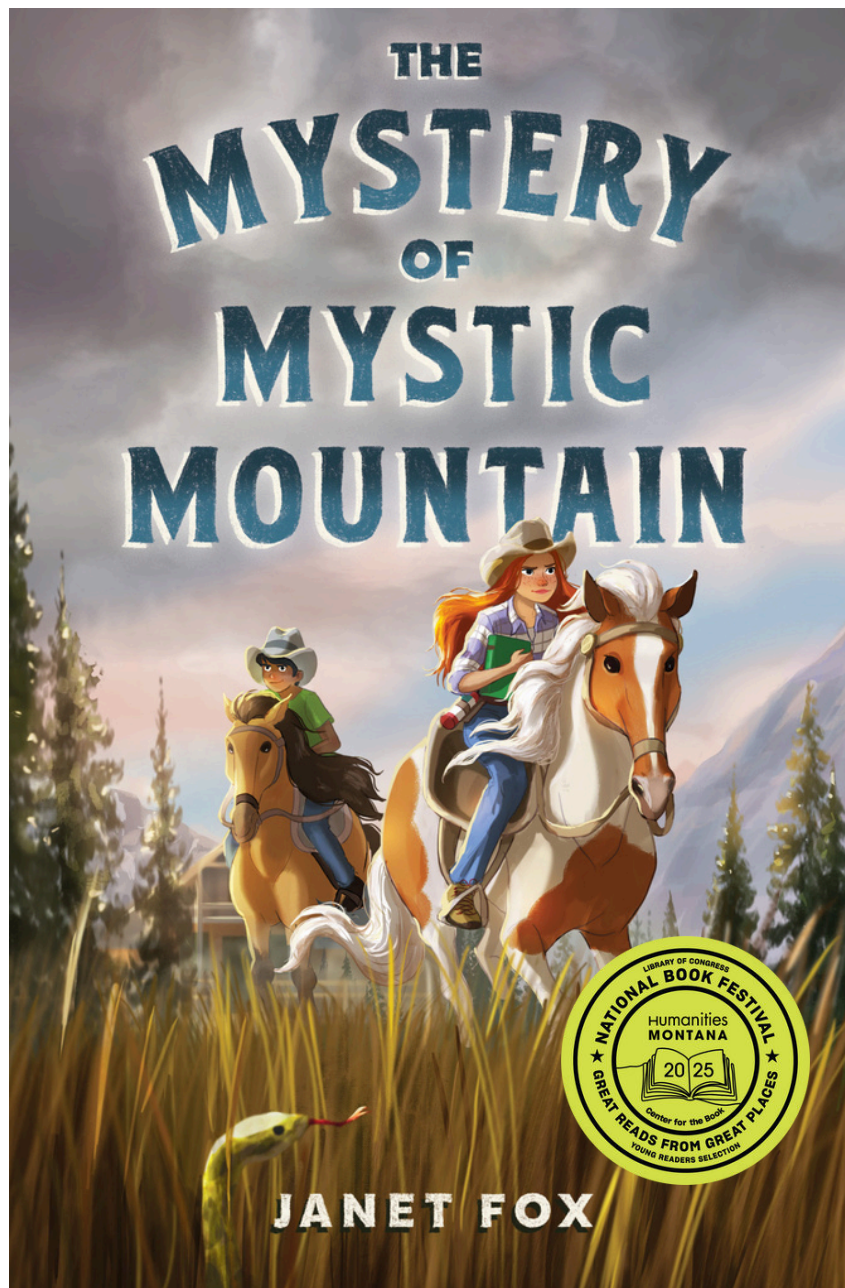
## Creative Activities

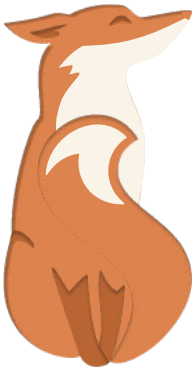
- Map Your Own Mystery: Create a treasure map for a fictional story set in your neighborhood or town.
- Rewrite the Ending: How would you end the story differently? Would you make the treasure real, or leave it symbolic?
- Character Playlist: Choose 3–5 songs that represent Becca's journey and explain why you chose them.



# The Mystery of Mystic Mountain

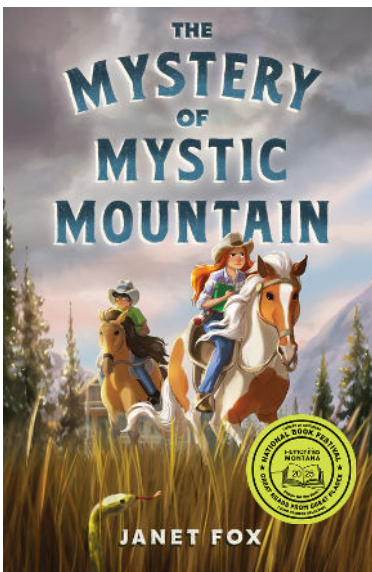
An Author Visit Guide for  
Teachers & Librarians





# Janet Fox

Author & Teacher  
Books for Young Readers



Hello! I'm Janet Fox. I'm a children's book author and teacher. I'm proud to announce that my most recent book, *THE MYSTERY OF MYSTIC MOUNTAIN*, has been selected by Humanities Montana as a Great Reads from Great Places book, as well as a One Book Montana, in the Youth category for 2025.

It is my hope that I can help schools and young readers across the state of Montana in the coming months and foster literacy by visiting either in person or virtually with as many schools and libraries as possible.

This packet contains information about the book, about me, and about the kinds of visits I'm happy to offer.

## About the Author

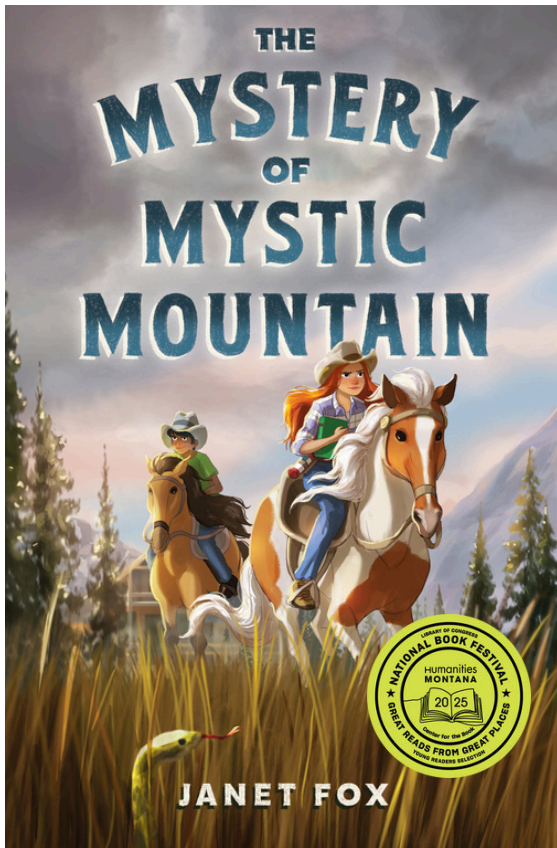
Janet Fox is the award-winning author of twelve books for young readers, including three YA novels, 3 middle grade novels, two picture books, and one middle grade non-fiction, with more books coming. Her most recent books include the middle grade *CARRY ME HOME* (Simon & Schuster 2021) about a pair of unhoused sisters, and picture book *WINTERGARDEN* (Neal Porter Books 2023, illustrated by Jasu Hu) which received four starred reviews.

The middle grade *THE MYSTERY OF MYSTIC MOUNTAIN* (Simon & Schuster 2024) is a kid-driven hunt for a long-lost outlaw treasure set on an aging dude ranch in Montana and is a finalist in the Juvenile category for the 2025 Edgar Award from Mystery Writers of America and the 2025 youth selection for Great Reads from the State of Montana.

Janet is a writing craft teacher and has an MFA in writing for children from Vermont College of Fine Arts, and lives with her husband and their friendly yellow Lab in the Montana mountains. You can find more at [www.janetsfox.com](http://www.janetsfox.com) and follow her on writing craft here: <https://janetfox.substack.com/>



# About THE MYSTERY OF MYSTIC MOUNTAIN



Simon & Schuster, Books For Young Readers

October 22, 2024

978-1665956666

256 pages

8-12 years

Hardcover \$17.99

Paperback (October 28, 2025) \$8.99

Audio book \$14.99

A girl tackles a summer filled with mystery, treasure, and learning to be her true self in this middle grade adventure that's a modern-day Holes set on a dusty dude ranch in Montana.

Becca Soloway's perfect summer goes up in smoke when her mom flees a looming divorce by dragging Becca to a Montana resort. To make matters worse, her mom's hasty booking lands them not at a spa, but an aging dude ranch called Far Away.

Becca is miserable until she meets the wrangler's son, Jon, who shows her what might be the first clue to a century-old mystery: the lost treasure of a Robin Hood-like outlaw known as Pearlhandle Pete.

As they slowly uncover the true history of Pete, venture into the mountains, search haunted ghost towns, and are threatened by a treasure-hunter-social-media star, Becca discovers that treasure is in the eye of the beholder and the important things in life are always worth fighting for.

## Awards and Accolades for THE MYSTERY OF MYSTIC MOUNTAIN

Chosen by the Montana Center for the Book for the "Great Reads from Great Places" list for the 2025 National Book Festival of the Library of Congress

Finalist for the 2025 Edgar Award from Mystery Writers of America

Finalist for the Willa Award from Women Writing the West in Middle Grade Fiction/Nonfiction 2025.

Longlist for the M&PIBA Reading the West Award

A summer 2025 selection for Middle Grade from THE HORN BOOK

Judges Top Pick, Silver Falchion Award, Killer Nashville

Youth Selection 2025 from Humanities Montana as a One Book Montana, a statewide read.

*With themes of family, grief, and loss, Fox has crafted a multifaceted mystery novel with even more to the story than clues and riddles.*

The Horn Book

## Awards and Accolades, cont.

*Thoughtful conversations about death, friendship, shifting family dynamics, and the power of storytelling permeate this frothy summer adventure by Fox , which bristles with gentle thrills and chills.*

Publisher's Weekly

*Against a rural Western backdrop, rumors of a hidden treasure pull two young people into an adventure...Vivid, poetic descriptions bring the setting and characters into focus, and the mystery maintains a strong pace...A well-written mystery adventure bolstered by high stakes and a burgeoning friendship.*

Kirkus

*An adventure story that keeps readers guessing... Fox deftly weaves a high interest plot with facets of young people's real lives. Solving treasure puzzles isn't something one gets to do every day, but trying to figure out who you are, and who your true friends are, is a universal experience. Readers will connect with at least one of the many characters who are uncomfortable with themselves and, perhaps, also find ways to come to appreciate who they are. A great read for all fans of mysteries, puzzles, true love, and friendship.*

School Library Journal

*Fox stuffs her tale with classic mystery, adventure, and coming-of-age tropes and ties most of them together with expert ease in the wake of a suitably tense and spooky climax with riches of both the shiny and the intangible sorts at the end. She also keeps things simple so that Becca's personal choices are clear-cut and readers will have no trouble approving of both them and the final comeuppance of the thoroughly villainized Lochster. A pleaser for fans of uncomplicated Nancy Drew/Hardy Boys-style exploits.*

Booklist

## Author Visits from Janet Fox

Janet can create author visits to suit the needs of the audience, from workshops to presentations to simple Q&A discussions.

In this packet are 4 downloadable files, from book club discussion guides to a puzzle game for younger readers. The guides can be used to initiate conversations around the themes of *THE MYSTERY OF MYSTIC MOUNTAIN*, and to bring questions for discussion with Janet.

Her current presentations include:

"It's So Mysterious: Solve It With Story" - a how-to-write mysteries for audiences of 10 and up.

"Storytelling for Beginners" - how to create a story from the ground up for audiences of 12 and up.

*"After your talk, the 5th grade teachers had classroom discussions. The sharing that went on, according to the teachers, was absolutely amazing! They want to have you come back..." N. Young, Librarian, Meadowlark Elementary, Bozeman*

## Author Visits, cont.

In-person visits with workshops or presentations last one hour. Virtual presentations are usually Q&A-style with students who have read the book and they last from 30-45 minutes.

Honorariums for in-person visits are negotiable, with discounts for Title 1 and Tribal schools and local visits (in the Bozeman/Belgrade/Livingston/Big Timber area). Purchase of a classroom set of books (discounted for classrooms) offset some costs. Virtual visits are free.

Please contact Janet at [janetfox3@gmail.com](mailto:janetfox3@gmail.com).

*"Janet Fox is not only a terrific writer, but she's an excellent presenter. She connects with people through warmth, humor, and knowledge of her craft. Whether conducting a writing workshop for teens or speaking to an all-ages audience, Janet has a way of engaging people so they feel like she is talking directly to them.."*

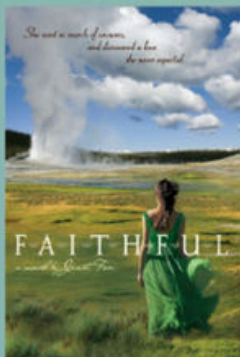
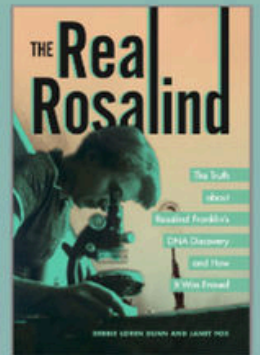
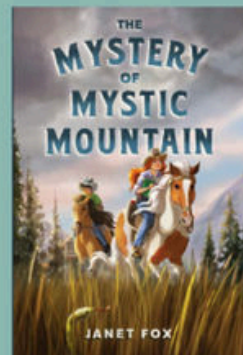
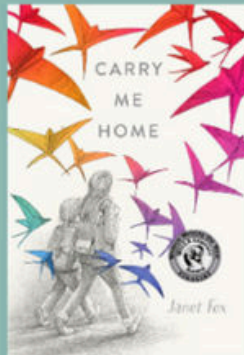
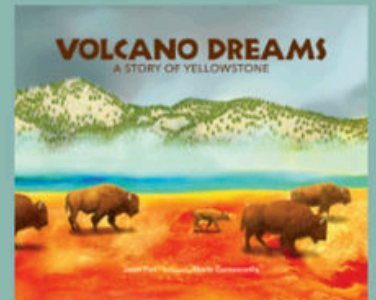
*Paula Beswick, Foundation Director, Bozeman Public Library Foundation*

# All Books By Janet Fox



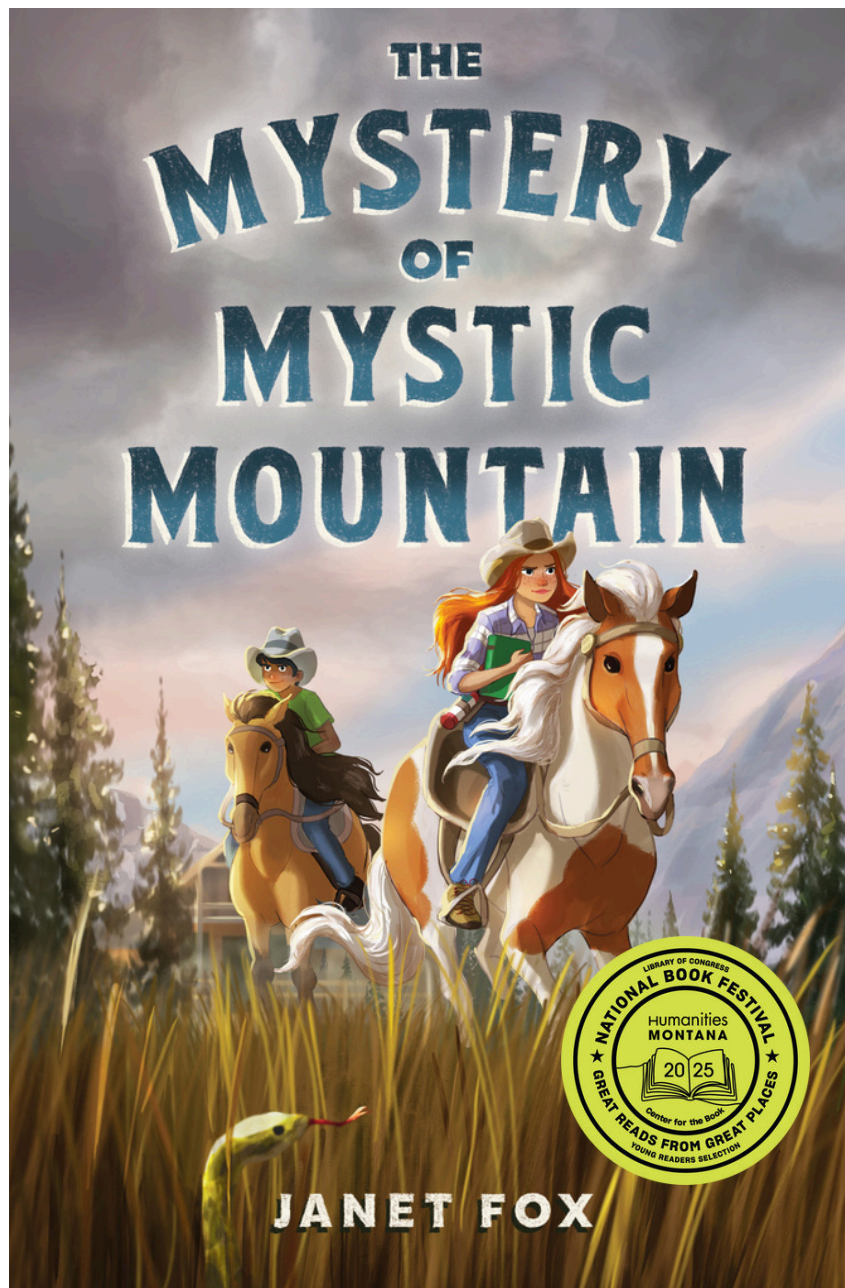
Janet Fox

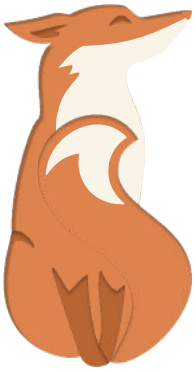
Books For  
Young Readers



# The Mystery of Mystic Mountain

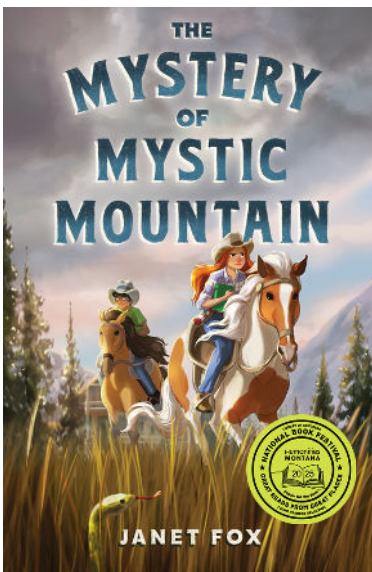
An Author Visit Guide for  
Teachers & Librarians





# Janet Fox

Author & Teacher  
Books for Young Readers



Hello! I'm Janet Fox. I'm a children's book author and teacher. I'm proud to announce that my most recent book, *THE MYSTERY OF MYSTIC MOUNTAIN*, has been selected by Humanities Montana as a Great Reads from Great Places book, as well as a One Book Montana, in the Youth category for 2025.

It is my hope that I can help schools and young readers across the state of Montana in the coming months and foster literacy by visiting either in person or virtually with as many schools and libraries as possible.

This packet contains information about the book, about me, and about the kinds of visits I'm happy to offer.

## About the Author

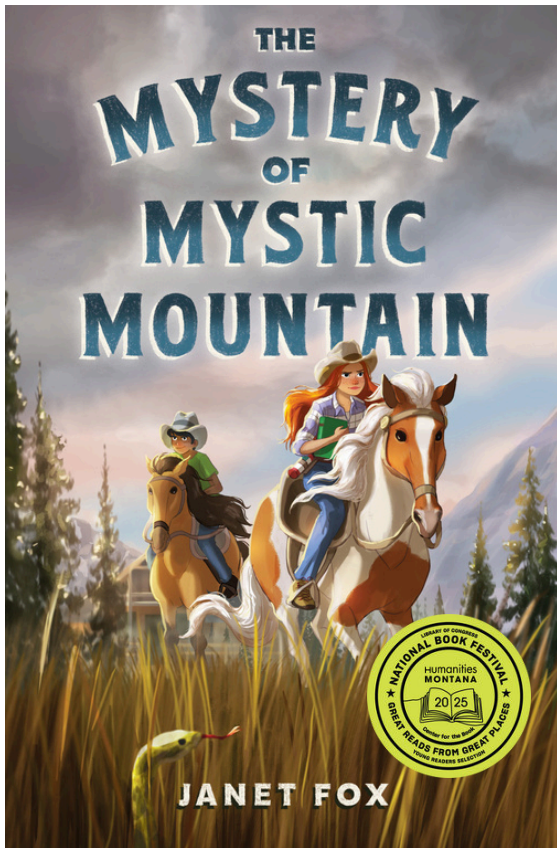
Janet Fox is the award-winning author of twelve books for young readers, including three YA novels, 3 middle grade novels, two picture books, and one middle grade non-fiction, with more books coming. Her most recent books include the middle grade *CARRY ME HOME* (Simon & Schuster 2021) about a pair of unhoused sisters, and picture book *WINTERGARDEN* (Neal Porter Books 2023, illustrated by Jasu Hu) which received four starred reviews.

The middle grade *THE MYSTERY OF MYSTIC MOUNTAIN* (Simon & Schuster 2024) is a kid-driven hunt for a long-lost outlaw treasure set on an aging dude ranch in Montana and is a finalist in the Juvenile category for the 2025 Edgar Award from Mystery Writers of America and the 2025 youth selection for Great Reads from the State of Montana.

Janet is a writing craft teacher and has an MFA in writing for children from Vermont College of Fine Arts, and lives with her husband and their friendly yellow Lab in the Montana mountains. You can find more at [www.janetsfox.com](http://www.janetsfox.com) and follow her on writing craft here: <https://janetfox.substack.com/>



# About THE MYSTERY OF MYSTIC MOUNTAIN



Simon & Schuster, Books For Young Readers

October 22, 2024

978-1665956666

256 pages

8-12 years

Hardcover \$17.99

Paperback (October 28, 2025) \$8.99

Audio book \$14.99

A girl tackles a summer filled with mystery, treasure, and learning to be her true self in this middle grade adventure that's a modern-day Holes set on a dusty dude ranch in Montana.

Becca Soloway's perfect summer goes up in smoke when her mom flees a looming divorce by dragging Becca to a Montana resort. To make matters worse, her mom's hasty booking lands them not at a spa, but an aging dude ranch called Far Away.

Becca is miserable until she meets the wrangler's son, Jon, who shows her what might be the first clue to a century-old mystery: the lost treasure of a Robin Hood-like outlaw known as Pearlhandle Pete.

As they slowly uncover the true history of Pete, venture into the mountains, search haunted ghost towns, and are threatened by a treasure-hunter-social-media star, Becca discovers that treasure is in the eye of the beholder and the important things in life are always worth fighting for.

## **Awards and Accolades for THE MYSTERY OF MYSTIC MOUNTAIN**

- Chosen by the Montana Center for the Book for the "Great Reads from Great Places" list for the 2025 National Book Festival of the Library of Congress
- Finalist for the 2025 Edgar Award from Mystery Writers of America
- Finalist for the Willa Award from Women Writing the West in Middle Grade Fiction/Nonfiction 2025.
- Longlist for the M&PIBA Reading the West Award
- A summer 2025 selection for Middle Grade from THE HORN BOOK
- Judges Top Pick, Silver Falchion Award, Killer Nashville
- Youth Selection 2025 from Humanities Montana as a One Book Montana, a statewide read.

*With themes of family, grief, and loss, Fox has crafted a multifaceted mystery novel with even more to the story than clues and riddles.*

The Horn Book

## Awards and Accolades, cont.

*Thoughtful conversations about death, friendship, shifting family dynamics, and the power of storytelling permeate this frothy summer adventure by Fox , which bristles with gentle thrills and chills.*

Publisher's Weekly

*Against a rural Western backdrop, rumors of a hidden treasure pull two young people into an adventure...Vivid, poetic descriptions bring the setting and characters into focus, and the mystery maintains a strong pace...A well-written mystery adventure bolstered by high stakes and a burgeoning friendship.*

Kirkus

*An adventure story that keeps readers guessing... Fox deftly weaves a high interest plot with facets of young people's real lives. Solving treasure puzzles isn't something one gets to do every day, but trying to figure out who you are, and who your true friends are, is a universal experience. Readers will connect with at least one of the many characters who are uncomfortable with themselves and, perhaps, also find ways to come to appreciate who they are. A great read for all fans of mysteries, puzzles, true love, and friendship.*

School Library Journal

*Fox stuffs her tale with classic mystery, adventure, and coming-of-age tropes and ties most of them together with expert ease in the wake of a suitably tense and spooky climax with riches of both the shiny and the intangible sorts at the end. She also keeps things simple so that Becca's personal choices are clear-cut and readers will have no trouble approving of both them and the final comeuppance of the thoroughly villainized Lochster. A pleaser for fans of uncomplicated Nancy Drew/Hardy Boys-style exploits.*

Booklist

## Author Visits from Janet Fox

Janet can create author visits to suit the needs of the audience, from interactive presentations to simple Q&A discussions.

In this packet are 4 downloadable files, from book club discussion guides to a puzzle game for younger readers. The guides can be used to initiate conversations around the themes of THE MYSTERY OF MYSTIC MOUNTAIN, and to bring questions for discussion with Janet.

Her current interactive presentations include:

"It's So Mysterious: Solve It With Story" - a how-to-write mysteries for audiences of 10 and up.

"Storytelling for Beginners" - how to create a story from the ground up for audiences of 12 and up.

*"After your talk, the 5th grade teachers had classroom discussions. The sharing that went on, according to the teachers, was absolutely amazing! They want to have you come back..." N. Young, Librarian, Meadowlark Elementary, Bozeman*

## **Author Visits, cont.**

In-person visits with workshops or presentations last one hour. Virtual presentations are usually Q&A-style with students who have read the book and they last from 30-45 minutes.

Honorariums for in-person visits are negotiable, with discounts for Title 1 and Tribal schools and local visits (in the Bozeman/Belgrade/Livingston/Big Timber area). Purchase of a classroom set of books (discounted for classrooms, see next page) offset some costs. Virtual visits are free.

Please contact Janet at [janetfox3@gmail.com](mailto:janetfox3@gmail.com).

*"Janet Fox is not only a terrific writer, but she's an excellent presenter. She connects with people through warmth, humor, and knowledge of her craft. Whether conducting a writing workshop for teens or speaking to an all-ages audience, Janet has a way of engaging people so they feel like she is talking directly to them.."*

*Paula Beswick, Foundation Director, Bozeman Public Library Foundation*

## Purchasing Classroom Book Sets

Please reach out to Sophia Gutierrez [sophia.gutierrez@simonandschuster.com](mailto:sophia.gutierrez@simonandschuster.com) to set up your account and place your order. All orders must be a minimum of 20 books. Please include the following information in your email:

- Quantity of Books Needed
- Confirm if you'd like the hardcover that is available now or the paperback that goes on sale 10/28/25 and will ship around the on-sale date
- Confirm if you are able to prepay via credit card, or if you will need to be set up with terms and pay via a purchase order.
- Add "Mystery of Mystic Mountain (Library Name) Order" in the subject line

## Important Links

Janet's email: [janetfox3@gmail.com](mailto:janetfox3@gmail.com)

Janet's website: [www.janetsfox.com](http://www.janetsfox.com)

Humanities Montana Great Reads From Great Places:

<https://www.humanitiesmontana.org/great-reads-from-great-places/>

Humanities Montana One Book Montana:

<https://www.humanitiesmontana.org/one-book-montana/>

To reach this document online, use this code:

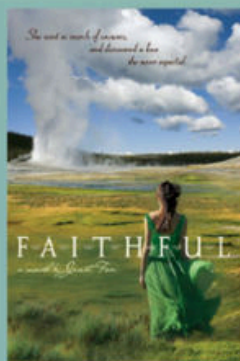
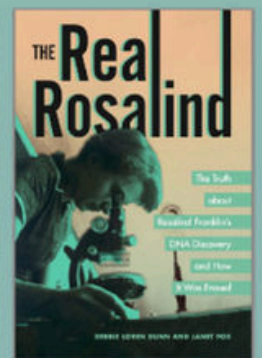
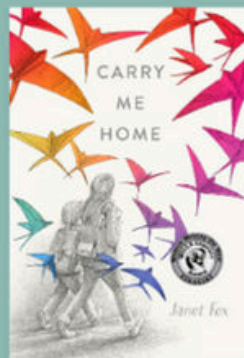
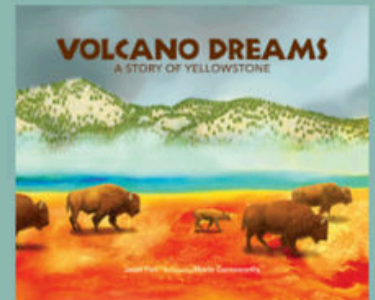


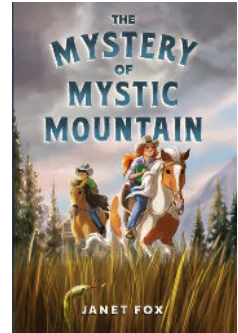
# All Books By Janet Fox



Janet Fox

Books For  
Young Readers





# Text Set Companion for The Mystery of Mystic Mountain

## Primary Sources and Research Materials

These texts offer deeper exploration of Montana history and landscape



### The Montana History Portal

The Montana History Portal is an online source for digital collections relating to Montana's cultural heritage. Contents may include maps, copies of photographs, rare books, historic documents, diaries, oral histories, audio and video clips, paintings, illustrations and art.



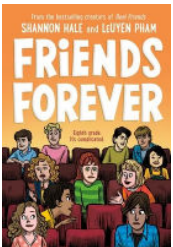
### The Montana Historical Society

The Montana Historical Society was established by the Territorial Legislature of Montana in 1865. It is a collecting and an educational institution.



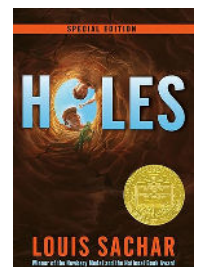
## Complementary Content

These texts offer deeper understanding of the themes of finding yourself and righting old wrongs in Mystery of Mystic Mountain



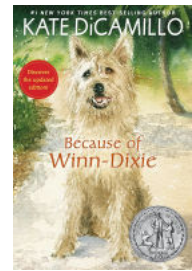
Friends Forever, by Shannon Hale and LeUyen Pham. A story about learning to love yourself exactly as you are.

Holes, by Louis Sachar, is "A dazzling blend of social commentary, tall tale and magic realism." —Publishers Weekly, Starred Review



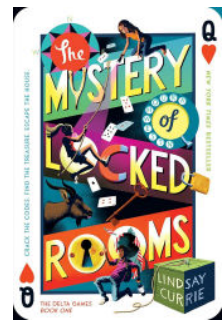
The following texts can be read with The Mystery of Mystic Mountain for a deeper understanding of aspects of friendship and teamwork, loss and grief, history as influence, adventure and treasure hunts, and family dynamics.

Because of Winn-Dixie, by Kate DiCamillo, is a story of a girl who survives the loss of her mother through believing in something bigger than herself.



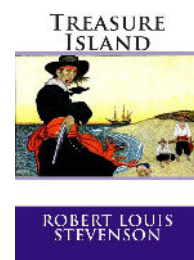
Wish, by Barbara O'Connor, is middle-grade novel about a girl who, with the help of a true-blue friend, a big-hearted aunt and uncle, and the dog of her dreams, unexpectedly learns the true meaning of family in the least likely of places.

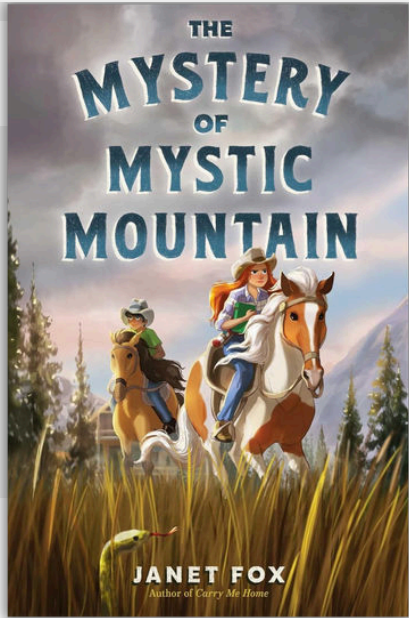
The Mystery of Locked Rooms by Lindsay Currie is an action-packed adventure novel about three friends who team up to find a hidden treasure in an abandoned 1950's funhouse.



The Secret of the Old Clock is the mystery that began it all for America's favorite teenaged sleuth. The accidental rescue of a little girl who lives with her two great-aunts leads to an adventurous search for a missing will.

Treasure Island is a tale noted for its atmosphere, characters and action, and also as a wry commentary on the ambiguity of morality.





# THE MYSTERY OF MYSTIC MOUNTAIN

Becca Soloway, a twelve-year-old from Connecticut, trades dreams of beach days and popularity for a summer stuck at Far Away Ranch, a no-frills dude ranch in the wilds of Montana. With no spa, no Wi-Fi, and no escape, she's ready to write the whole trip off—until she meets Jon, the wrangler's son. Together, they uncover whispers of a long-buried secret tied to the ghost town of Piney Woods and the legendary treasure of outlaw Pearlhandle Pete. Full of humor, heart, and a dash of ghostly mystery, this story explores friendship, identity, and the unexpected adventures that can change everything.

Written by Janet Fox

Published by Simon & Schuster Books for  
Young Readers

Janet Fox is an award-winning author of middle-grade and young adult fiction known for blending history and mystery into emotionally resonant stories. A former educator based in Montana, she draws deep inspiration from the state's natural beauty and rich heritage. With her background in teaching and her deep Montana roots, *The Mystery of Mystic Mountain* is a perfect fit for Humanities Montana's educational outreach. Fox's quietly magical storytelling invites classroom exploration and thoughtful discussion.



## THEMATIC OVERVIEW

identity || belonging || friendship || self-discovery || family tension || trust ||  
transformation independence || emotional growth || adventure || mystery || historical  
legacy || treasure hunt || rural life || outsider perspective || reconnection change ||  
courage || personal truth || nature's influence || Montana landscape  
paranormal || girl empowerment || community || storytelling || secrets || making peace

## PRE-READING CONVERSATION

*Sometimes the plan changes—and that's when the real journey begins.*

Tell of a time when your plans unexpectedly changed. What feelings did that stir up? What did you learn about yourself in that moment?

*What we see on the surface isn't always the whole story.*

Tell of a time when your first impression was wrong. What changed how you saw things? What hidden trails did you discover?

*Friendship can grow in the unlikeliest of soil.*

Think about a friendship that surprised you. What helped that connection grow? How did your initial feelings change? What brought you together—adventure, challenge, or something unexpected?

*Becoming yourself isn't always easy—but it's worth it.*

Recall a moment when you felt pulled in different directions. How did you figure out what felt true to you?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

*Nothing felt fair, or right, and Becca wanted to push back against the unraveling situation with a red-hot poker (pg. 7).*

- What does Becca risk losing as her summer—and family—unravels? How do her emotions in this moment help us understand what's really important to her?
- Why might anger feel easier than sadness or fear when things fall apart? Have you ever felt like Becca—wanting to push back against something you couldn't control?
- How do Becca's hopes for friendship and belonging shape her reaction to being at Far Away Ranch? What does this moment reveal about her deeper needs—and maybe your own, too?

*Because finding a treasure that was this big, if the rumors were true, would be amazing. So much fun (pg. 57).*

- Why might a treasure hunt feel so exciting to Becca right now? What is she really hoping to find—beyond gold or a famous outlaw's revolver?
- Why do you think Jon shares his secret with Becca—and not someone else? What does this tell us about how trust begins between people who feel alone?
- Have you ever been invited into something secret or special? How did that change your connection with the person who invited you—and with yourself?

*Tad reached down and took it out of her hand before she could stop him... (p. 89).*

- Why do you think Tad takes the canister so boldly in this scene—and what does that moment foreshadow about his role in the story?
- In what ways is Tad a “shapeshifter” character—sometimes helpful, sometimes threatening?
- Have you ever had to figure out whether someone was really on your side? How did your feelings change as you got to know them better—and what did that teach you about yourself?

*That's how Pearlhandle Pete became a changed man and found his partner in all things...” (p. 122).*

- What makes this moment in Pete's story so meaningful to Jon? How does learning about Pete's love and loss shift Jon's understanding of his own grief?
- How might this story within a story help Becca and Jon see their lives differently? What are they each struggling with—and what do they begin to learn about truth, kindness, and connection?
- What do you think it means to “forge a new destiny”? Have you ever had to change your direction or face something hard? What helped you do that?

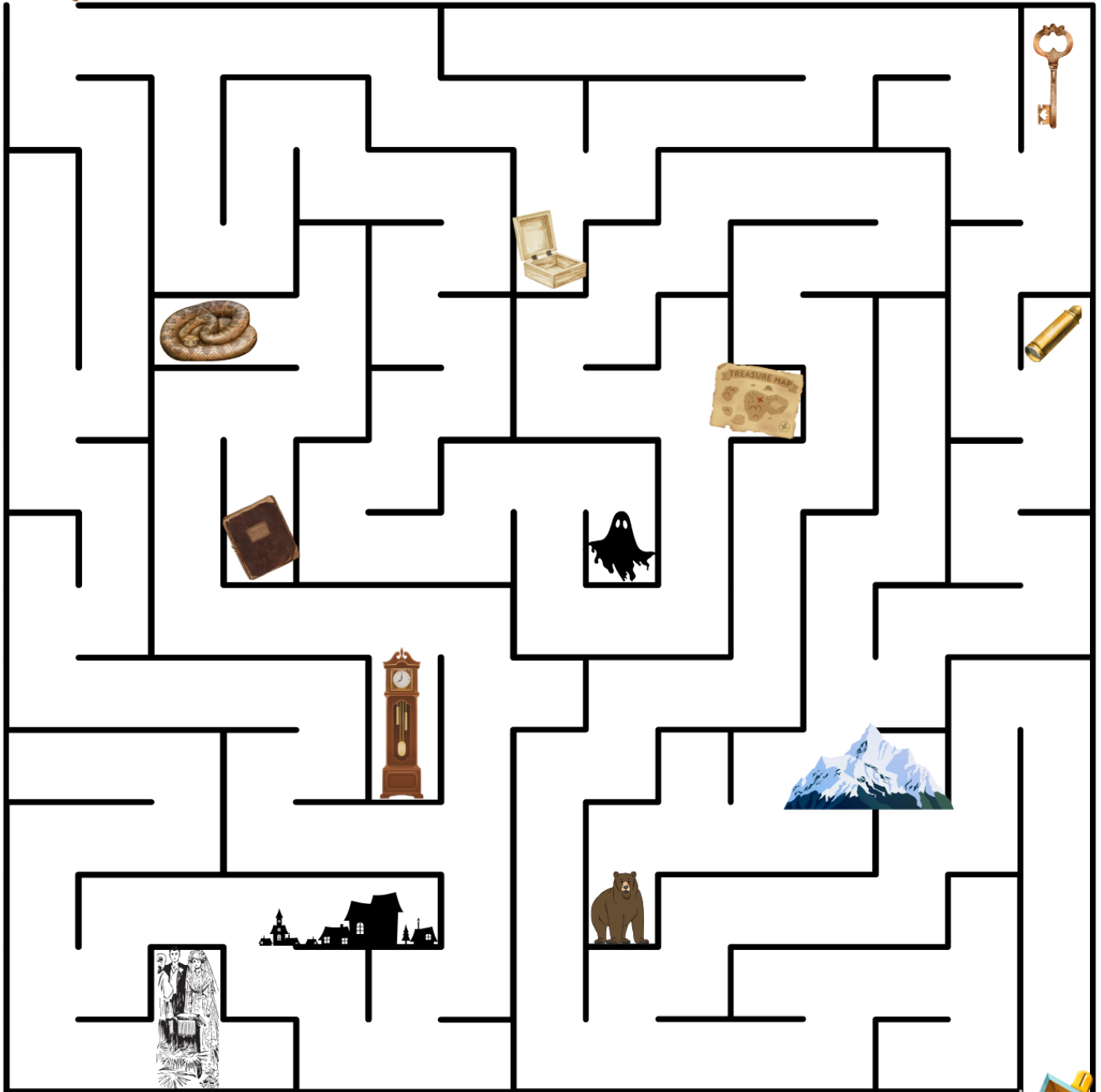
*“It's not a coincidence. None of it... Like Terry says, it's part of the plan” (p. 215).*

- Why do you think Liam believes everything is “meant to happen”? How does this idea give hope to characters like Jon, Becca, and even Terry?
- What do you think the “plan” really means in this story? How does it connect to Pearlhandle Pete's choice to leave behind more than treasure—to build a future for others?
- Have you ever had something unexpected lead to a positive change in your life? How can believing in a bigger plan help us face difficult moments?



# Find Pete's Treasure!

In *THE MYSTERY OF MYSTIC MOUNTAIN*, 4 kids seek the lost treasure of Pearlhandle Pete. They use riddles and puzzles and clues to search. You just need to find your way through the maze. Start at the cabin, but be careful!



*THE MYSTERY OF MYSTIC MOUNTAIN*, Simon & Schuster, ages 10+  
by Janet Fox  
[www.janetsfox.com](http://www.janetsfox.com)



# Humanities MONTANA

## *The Mystery of Mystic Mountain* Extensions for Learning

### Program Video

<https://youtu.be/lgyA54tYlgM?si=3xIhSKjwdHXOhYCK>