

Priceless: Crime Travelers Spy School Mystery & International Adventure Series Book 3

Paul Aertker

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The Crime Travelers series combines action and adventure with global awareness and smart humor.

Loyalties are challenged and the bonds of family and friendship tested in Paul Aertker's *Priceless*, the third installment of Crime Travelers, a global adventure series for middle grades featuring a squad of international teenage agents, supercharged action, and explosive energy.

With archnemeses Siba Günerro and her (decidedly not) Good Company on the verge of bankruptcy, fourteen-year-old Lucas Benes and the New Resistance corps of underage operatives are ready to put them out of business once and for all when an underwater clue changes the game, causing both sides to question what is truly valuable in life.

Still reeling from the events of book two, *Diamonds Are for Never*, Lucas and his fellow spy kids return to the waters of the Mediterranean where they encounter an unexpected band of teenage girls with deadly fighting skills and hairstyles that pay homage to Cruella de Vil. Although it's possible to treat this as a stand-alone book with brief explanations of past events and people, to fully enjoy the sophisticated story line and character evolution and growth, the series is best consumed in order beginning with book one, *Brainwashed*.

Appealing maps and "New Resistance Notebook" pages provide some clarification with statistics and fun facts, adding to the already substantial international appeal.

With a new home base in Barcelona, the New Resistance, made up of savvy, culturally diverse teenagers from all around the world, makes short work of exploring the cities and countryside of Spain. Utilizing planes, trains, automobiles, boats, helicopters, and even a horse named Amigo to race, evade, and pursue the bad guys of the Good Company, Lucas covers ground from Barcelona, Madrid, and Granada to Gibraltar and the coastal waters, highlighting not only the local geography but pieces of history, architecture, and current events as well. The saturation of culture is evident throughout; an unlikely art heist spurs discussions of famous artists and paintings, their motivations, and even the political climate the work was situated in.

Whether sipping *café con leche* at a vineyard in Andalusia, using jackhammers to rescue monks from the palace fortress of Alhambra, or fighting for their lives in scuba gear deep in the Mediterranean Sea, the New Resistance kids maintain an attitude of fun. The clever wordplay, humorous dialogue, and heartwarming team rapport are present throughout the chases, battles, and action sequences, as well in the moments of reflection, as both the Good Company and the New Resistance attempt to locate "treasures far more valuable than priceless."

A spy thriller with both brains and brawn, Paul Aertker's *Priceless* will appeal not only to middle-grade kids but to parents and teachers as well. The Crime Travelers series combines action and adventure with global awareness and smart humor.

PALLAS GATES MCCORQUODALE (April 18, 2018)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book and paid a small fee to

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