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American doll history books

The Central Series are the core stories of American Girl's historical characters, covering about two years' worth of each character's story. Originally published by Scholastic for Pleasant Company, the series started being published directly by American Girl in around 1991. Unlike dolls and their accessories, Central Series books can be found through various book sellers, not just from the company itself. Early on, the first book in a character's series was usually packaged with their doll, but this changed with BeForever releases. Some characters' books were available in hardback versions, especially for library or special editions, until around 2007. Since then, only select hardbacks have been made. American Girl's six-book sets were often included with dolls or purchased separately, with the slip case included until around 2000 when it started being sold separately, except for a short period after Felicity's complete collection release. Starting from 2004, new cases featured large character images. Initially, there were different types of book sets like Hallmark sets and ones with game boxes. The latest books are not packaged in box sets anymore but some older editions have activity journals included. Standard Elements Included for Early American Girls Books
The first two books in the brand featured distinctive standard elements, which were used consistently across the series. Each girl had a specific color chosen for her, which was applied to various parts of the book, such as the year on the front cover, silhouette on the back cover, and the selected dingbat style logo on the spine. This color was not prominent on the books themselves. Characteristics - A unique color was assigned to each girl, used in the following ways: - Year displayed in oval frames at the bottom of the front cover (e.g., Samantha's would have "19" in burgundy) - Character listed chronologically on the back with their color-themed silhouette next to a brief description - Book summaries were placed either on the inner front flap (paperback) or underneath the dust jacket cover with the Pleasant Company logo (hardback)
Background Information
The American Girls Collection tells the stories of three pioneering girls: Kirsten, a strong and spirited pioneer; Samantha, an orphan raised by her wealthy grandmother during World War II; and Molly, who schemes and dreams on the home front. The books share common themes, such as families, friendships, and feelings, which have remained unchanged over time.
Key Changes - 1989: Book numbers were added to the series under the title and subtitle on the front cover and spine. - 1991: Felicity was added with a green silhouette, listed chronologically, and a spunky colonial girl description. - 1993: Addy was introduced with a burnt orange silhouette, placed between Kirsten and Samantha, described as a courageous girl during the Civil War era. - 1997: A full overhaul of the character list layout was implemented, featuring miniature portraits next to descriptions, with images alternating sides. As Josefina, a Hispanic girl with a heart as vast as New Mexico's sky,[4] we reflect on the evolution of growing up. While some things have changed, others - like families, friendships, and emotions - remain unchanged. These are the essential bonds that American girls will always share. They come alive in the American Girls Collection. In 1998, Addy and Samantha's books were reimagined with new illustrations by Dahl Taylor, Dan Andreasen, replacing Melodye Rosales and Bradford Brown, and Luann Roberts' images respectively. The book covers featured a parchment style with the Pleasant Company logo at the bottom right. In 2021, limited edition bundles celebrated the 35th anniversary, featuring re-releases of this style of book. Molly's and Addy's books used their newer illustrations from 1989 and 1998, while Samantha's retained its original illustrations from 1986. The back cover displayed a book summary with the Pleasant Company logo. In 2024, re-released versions of Addy Walker, Josefina Montoya, Kirsten Larson, along with their birthday outfits, came with parchment-style books. Kirsten also had a limited edition release of Kirsten's Surprise with its holiday-themed birthday book. The second style, introduced in 2000, featured faded backgrounds and detailed illustrations. The cover design included:
* A more detailed background that filled the entire cover
* Re-positioned title, year, and book number at the top
* Colorized spine matching each character's specific colors
* A mini-arch of mini-portraits at the bottom representing other characters
The back copy described the book's plot, listed the character's series, and emphasized the American Girls Collection. Hallmark sold these books in their stores with a modified back cover featuring "The American Girls Collection from Hallmark" and a Hallmark logo on the spine. In 2023, a limited edition celebrated the collection's 100th anniversary. Fourth style covers were released as part of BeForever; this design lasted from 2014-2019. The Central Series was revamped, with six-book series being bundled into two-volume Classic Series and individual volumes no longer available. Each Classic Series volume had a unique name, containing three books without titled separation and transitions added between stories. This style change aimed to make the books more suitable for e-book formats and target an eight-to-twelve age range. The Meet Books retained character introductions in meet outfits, while Holiday Books kept larger character images in holiday wear. Character illustrations had glossy overlays from backgrounds, with BeForever being the most significant design overhaul in Central Series history. New Chapter Book Format Introduced by American Girl
American Girl has recently transitioned its characters to chapter books with minimal illustrations, a departure from their traditional book style. This change has led to some misconceptions about the full set of stories for characters released under BeForever. In reality, each character has six individual stories included in three volumes. The new format features a distinctive top stripe with the American Girl Logo and the BeForever Logo below it. The character's name is displayed in a single color stripe on the right side, along with the year. The font used for names is now a standard brush-writing style, replacing individual styled handwriting. Internal illustrations have been removed, and previous dingbats have been replaced with new designs unique to each character theme or era. Cover illustrations are more photo-realistic, featuring detailed backgrounds and accurate color schemes for each character's themed colors. The Looking Back Section has been renamed "Inside [Name]'s World" and now serves as a two-page summary of the character's era. The spine features the assigned color, while the BeForever logo is displayed at the top-left corner when held vertically. The back cover includes promotional text highlighting the character's full name or the continuation of their story, along with information about other books in the series and American Girl's branding. Name badges were previously personalized with a small burgundy ribbon and year stamp, but this has been replaced by designated colors on the book's spine. Additionally, some character cover images were resized or repositioned for aesthetic purposes. However, these changes did not affect Caroline's volumes. The 2019 redesign saw significant modifications to abridged volumes, including condensed storylines and removed chapters. For instance, Maryellen: The One and Only lost its final four chapters, which covered a holiday-themed storyline, and Kaya: Smoke on the Wind had nearly all of Kaya and Lone Dog and Kaya Shows the Way removed from it. This "Abridged Edition" notation is now present on re-released books in this style, initially found only in Kaya, Rebecca, Nanea, Maryellen, Melody, and Julie's volumes. Revised editions of Josefina, Addy, Kit's, Samantha's, and Molly's books followed in 2020-2022. Interestingly, Addy's, Kit's, and Josefina's abridged versions retained major storylines while mostly removing minor details, whereas Samantha's were heavily modified with entire events removed and new scenes inserted. Starting from 2022, character journals became available to supplement some books, featuring excerpts in the American Girl Online Library. The newer volumes showcase the character's name as a unique logo just below the American Girl stripe, accompanied by their specific color designation on the spine. These blurbs have been edited and presented within character-appropriate framing or printed over full illustrations. Illustrations return for characters, with Maryellen, Melody, and Nanea receiving them for the first time. Julie has new large photo-realistic illustrations, while older ones are shrunk to vignettes; other characters maintain their prior illustrations. Some images feature BeForever-released outfits, especially meet outfits. Samantha's volume features added, modified, and moved illustrations connected to her new story plotlines. Family and Friends portraits return, with new ones created for those without prior ones. The front of the book includes character "snapshots" and diagrams taken from older books when possible. Handwritten letters are now displayed in faux-handwriting fonts. Author information, dedications, and advisory board data are present inside the front flap; publication data, illustrator(s), copyright, and image credits are on the back flap. Each volume's back page shows characters with new abridged style books, their portraits, and name logos. The "Inside [Name]'s World" section often includes text from prior volumes with few expansions. Authentic images and items of the era are integrated throughout. The Central Series, which began in 1986, had a consistent pattern of story plots and covers for its Historical Characters through 2000 and 2001. Each character's series had a distinct cover style that varied only by the character and era, serving to display items from the Historical Collections and show parallels among characters. However, starting with Kaya's series, there was a deviation from the standard six-book formats, unique to each character due to reasons specific to their stories. Kaya's stories didn't follow the traditional patterns or titles set by the first seven historical characters. Her Indigenous culture is distinct from the Euro-American cultural pattern established earlier, leading her storyline to have parallel events such as winter festivals and summer trips but with a different lifestyle and no Christian holidays or birthdays in the same manner. Kaya's titles tried to relate to prior books, with subtitles reflecting the events of each book. Julie's series also deviated from the standard title pattern, similar to Kaya. While her main stories were loosely equivalent, they didn't share the same format. Julie's holiday book focused on Chinese New Year instead of Christmas, and her "birthday" book centered more on social environmental concerns in the seventies rather than personal maturity. Rebecca's series further confirmed the departure from traditional titles and patterns set by the first seven characters. Her holiday book highlighted a specific theme, indicating that the Central Series was moving away from its initial formula towards more individualized stories for each character. As Jewish girl Cécile and Marie-Grace navigate American culture, they face challenges honoring their family's traditions amidst Christian-dominant surroundings. Like Julie, the main stories retain original series' patterns without subtitles, except for Rebecca to Rescue. Cécile saves the day in her books, while celebrating birthdays in some titles. The Central Series' dual Meet Books show parallel events from both characters' perspectives, differing from traditional titles. Marie-Grace's birthday is March 3rd, but no birthday book exists; instead, it's celebrated in Caroline's Secret Message. In Caroline's series, seasonal settings follow a pattern like others, with her birthday being in fall and saving the day multiple times due to War of 1812's impact on Sackets Harbor. Maryellen was first introduced solely within BeForever, without separate volumes, but her books can be loosely sectioned into six-book format internally. Melody's classic-volume books lack tight sections or a six-book structure, unlike prior characters' collections. Maryellen's series is notable for its unique approach to storytelling, with each volume reading like a single book rather than three separate ones. Her birthday, January 1st, holds significance as the earliest in the calendar of any Historical Character. Instead of focusing on Christmas celebrations, her story focuses on New Year's/Watch Night and her own birthday at the start of Volume Two. She takes a summer trip to a different location, with a partial saving of the day. Felicity's BeForever books differ from others by not including recurring transitional paragraphs between previously separate books. Her covers feature a new style, with her name in large script at the top and no "A Classic Featuring Felicity" text. Nanea's classic-volume books are written as fully flowing stories without sectioning off internal chapters. Nanea's story starts in Fall 1941, directly covering the bombing of Pearl Harbor and its aftermath. Her birthday is only lightly touched on, and Christmas celebrations are not a major focus. Due to the attack's aftereffects, Nanea doesn't resume school until February 1942. Her books span under a year from November 1941 to late June 1942. Nanea's covers resemble Felicity's, with her name in large script at the top and no back cover listing of her full name. Molly's volumes, released after hers, updated older versions' covers to match styles. Some added transitional paragraphs were included. Molly's abridged books differ from the six-book format; each deviation occurred post-2019 and has similar cover designs. Courtney's first book, "Courtney Changes the Game," was released alongside her second book, "Courtney: Friendship Hero," in February 2021, similar to older collections that started with only the first three books. As Courtney's books were written within the new format, they are not abridged and considered complete as-is without notations on the back. Her books have distinct story spans; "Courtney: Friendship Superhero" covers a longer period than "Courtney: Friendship Hero." Despite having only two books, Courtney has a full set of stories with some compression. Samantha's re-released abridged books are also condensed, and her first volume is rewritten by American Girl's executive editor, Jennifer Hirsch. The changes aim to focus on Samantha's relationships with Nellie O'Malley and Cornelia Edwards, removing scenes that do not fit this narrative. New events have been added to flesh out the plots, including new details connecting the existing stories. The revised edition of the series features only minor changes, with the most notable absence being Ryland. The rest of the books have undergone revisions to align with the retelling of events in the first volume. Claudie's book, Meet Claudie, has a similar title format as other volumes but is presented in the newer single-volume style. Like Courtney, Claudie's books were written in full style and are not considered abridged. The story concludes with cliffhangers, making it less self-contained than other "meet" books. The first book of Claudie's series, Meet Claudie, features an introduction from author Brit Bennett on how she drew inspiration from the Addy Central series and its creator, Connie Porter. The second book, Adventures with Claudie, includes an interview with the author and a chapter from Finding Freedom. These limited-edition hardbacks offer unique content for fans. In contrast to the other characters, Isabel and Nicki were initially released without a central series book accompanying their collection. Instead, they came with illustrated character journals that started in mid-December 1999 and covered about twenty days leading up to the New Year's celebration. The more traditional "meet" book for these characters, Meet Isabel and Nicki, has alternating viewpoints and was released in hardback in September 2023. Molly's story is also presented in a unique format, with her first volume released as a physical book in 2022 but only available as an audiobook or abridged text for the second volume. The American Girl series underwent changes to create the "BeForever" revamp, resulting in new volumes and modifications to existing ones. American Girl dolls came with books that encouraged users to write their own stories for the characters. The books included summaries, writing guides, and stencils. Initially, six-book sets were provided but later reduced to a single "meet" book and eventually retired by 2000. The American Girl series spans various historical periods in the United States. To read the books chronologically, follow this order:
1. **Kaya (1764)**: Set during the time of the Native American tribes in present-day Idaho. This series deals with sensitive issues such as death and mild violence.
2. **Felicity (1774)**: Takes place in colonial Williamsburg, Virginia before the Revolutionary War. It addresses some mild abuse to a beloved horse.
3. **Caroline (1812)**: Explores life during the War of 1812.
4. **Josefina (1824)**: Set in New Mexico and deals with themes like poverty and illness.
5. **Molly (1944)**: Focuses on life during World War II, covering issues such as bombing raids and rationing.
6. **Kit (1934)**: Also set during the Great Depression and World War II era, it addresses themes of loss and personal growth.
7. **Addy (1864)**: Follows a young African American girl as she escapes slavery. This series handles sensitive issues like racism and kidnapping.
8. **Samantha (1904)**: Takes place in New York during the early 20th century, focusing on themes of love and heartbreak. Reading these books in chronological order provides a broad understanding of American history. The American Girls series consists of historical fiction novels that follow the lives of young girls from different eras and backgrounds, showcasing their struggles, triumphs, and relationships with family members, friends, and community. Each book tackles sensitive issues such as mild violence, death of close family members, slavery, poverty, mild slave abuse, and divorce. The series includes characters like Josefina (1824), a Hispanic girl living in New Mexico; Cecile and Marie-Grace (1853), a free black girl and the daughter of a New Orleans doctor; Kirsten (1854), a Swedish-born pioneer girl; Addy (1864), an African-American slave girl seeking freedom; Samantha (1904), a wealthy young orphan; Rebecca (1914), a Jewish girl; Kit (1934), a resourceful girl during the Great Depression; Molly (1944), a girl whose father serves overseas in World War II; and Julie (1974), a sporty girl dealing with her parents' divorce. The books have been enjoyed by many, including a mother who read them to her daughter. The series allows readers to learn about U.S. history in a gentle and natural way through characters from different eras. The mother suggests using enrichment activities like creating a timeline with the American Girls and printing out maps of the United States to label each state where they lived. Overall, the American Girls series offers an engaging and educational experience for young readers, providing insights into historical events and the lives of girls from diverse backgrounds.

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