



Tracing Stars

Erin E. Moulton

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A charming novel about sisterhood, self-identity, and friendship from the author of *Flutter*

Indie Lee Chickory knows she's not as cool as her older sister Bebe. Bebe has more friends, for one. And no one tells Bebe she's a fish freak, for two. So when Indie accidentally brings her pet lobster to school, makes a scene, loses him in the ocean and embarrasses Bebe worse than usual, she makes a wish on a star to become a better Chickory. She tries to do this by joining the stage crew of the community's theater production, *The Sound of Music*. (Bebe has a starring role.) But Bebe is worried that Indie will embarrass her again, so she gives her a makeover and tells her who she should be friends with. That means Owen is out. But he's fun and smart, so Indie keeps her friendship with him a secret. At night, Indie and Owen rebuild a tree house into a ship in the sky to catch Indie's pet lobster. But during the day, Indie has to hide her friendship with Owen.

When things come to a head, Indie realizes that being true to yourself is more important than being cool. But what's even more surprising is that Bebe realizes it, too.

Tracing Stars Details

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From Reader Review Tracing Stars for online ebook

Izabelle says

SPOILER ALERT

Imagine being the fish freak of Plumtown and to make it worse you have a pet golden lobster. The genre of this book is realistic fiction because all these events can have the ability to happen in real life. I really liked this book because of the somehow feeling of warmth it gave me.

In the story a girl named Indie Lee Chickory tries to be a better her throughout the entire book, but loses her pet Monty-Cola after a big incident when he accidentally sneaks into her book bag and when she runs to Crawdad Beach to get him in some water Monty-Cola runs into the water. On the other hand her sister Bebe is trying to get in with the cool popular girl Kesley because she wants to get into the next musical, but when Indie joins the back stage crew Bebe totally changes everything about her like I mean EVERYTHING including how she behaves because Bebe believes that as a person she is not perfect so she tries to make her and anything around her seem that way. That's when Indie then meets Owen who helps her find Monty-Cola by building a large version of the Mary Grace 2 (the boat that originally caught the lobster) to recreate the events that led to the catch. Also along the way Indie meets a girl named Sloth who she works with in the stage design crew. After that Kesley and Bebe convince Indie to prank Owen, so unknowingly it was Owen Indie trips him making him more of a disappointment to his dad, but after all that drama Owen decides to forgive her and they finally end up getting Monty-Cola back. In the end Bebe and Indie make up and become happy with a sister Pisces charm wish (a Pisces is a constellation of a fish in the sky that is also carved into 2 necklaces between Indie and Bebe that is has the ability to wish on). The type of conflict in the story is person vs person because throughout the story like I said Indie tries to better her but has to deal with an adventure with her and her friends. The main character Indie in my opinion is sorta confused on what she has to be at this point but is very determined to figure it out, and on an unrelated note she has a really funny way of showing that she is nervous because she actually names all the fishes possible. Next is Bebe and she is very conceited and selfish to me but deep inside she truly wants to be one thing and one thing only: Perfect. After that is Kesley who is also very selfish and will do anything to stay at the top "where she belongs" even if she has to crush her true friends. Another sweet character is Owen and he is so geeky considering that he keep a log journal of everything that happens, but in all he really cares for Indie as his first ever true best friend. Last is my favorite character Sloth and she is a very hard rocker with really spiky hair, but beneath that rocky exterior she cares for her friends including Indie and Owen.

The point of view of this story was 1st person because the text was coming from Indie's perspective of everything. I was moved in the end when Indie and Owen were in the Mary Grace 2 just talking and laying there holding hands. I liked the way the author wrote this book because it was just like one big puzzle and each of the chapters I read fit perfectly together, and it really made the story make more sense. I was satisfied with the fact that this book was named Tracing Stars because it all came together that Indie got her wish from the Pisces Charm at the end which was to be a better version of her. My favorite part of the book was when Indie was doing all she can to apologize to Owen for tripping him because it was a moment that looked as if she really truly cared for him with all her heart. I can connect this story to me because my sister would always judge and try to change me all the time so I would be an "embarrassing" sister. I can compare this book to another called Mockingbird because the main character was in search for something throughout the whole story just like Indie was but the main difference was that that the thing they were searching for was Closure not a better version.

In conclusion I really loved this book from the way it was written to the way it made me feel. I would rate this book a 10-10 because it was so fantastic I really could not stop reading it. I would recommend this story to anyone who can find a true meaning to something or can read with anticipation. So what is your Pisces

wish if you had to think and choose one?

babyhippoface says

***NOTE:** I started writing this review, then got side-tracked by one surgery, one staph infection, and one stomach virus. I'm having a hard time remembering everything I originally wanted to say here. Just read this one, okay? Trust me. It's good. Even the lobster part.

Never read a book about a lobster before. Especially not about a pet lobster. A pet lobster named The Lobster Monty Cola. So this felt awkward for me, right from the beginning. People keep lobsters as pets? But I am not a coastal child, so what do I know?

Indie Lee Chickory is the local "fish freak". She's an expert in making a stunning variety of fish faces. She can recite species of fish in alphabetical order, and she does so whenever she needs to calm herself. Her sister, Bebe, used to make fish faces with her. Now Bebe thinks all of Indie's fish-related interests are embarrassing. Bebe wants to be a star, and her sister's weird behavior might just keep her from becoming one.

When Bebe lands the role of Brigitta in a local production of *The Sound of Music*, she decides it's time for a new Indie. She needs to wear certain clothes, fix her hair a certain way, and be friends with certain people. Which does **not** include Owen, a weirdo kid who works backstage. But Indie thinks Owen is fun and smart, and he helps her look for her lost lobster, Monty Cola, every night. So she keeps her friendship with him secret. Not so hard most of the time. But when those two worlds collide, more than one heart is broken. Luckily, hearts can be repaired with enough kindness.

Amber says

Tracing Stars should top your summer reading list! The characters, from the young passionate protagonist Indie and her popular sister Bebe to the punk teen Sloth and lovably,quirky, nerdy Owen, are beautifully constructed and imaginative while at the same time so true to life that you will see yourself reflected in them. You will join Indie and Owen as they embark on an adventure and learn some important lessons about independence, peer pressure and the friendships that really matter most. But along the way, you'll fall in love with Indie's pet lobster Monty Cola, want to start your own version of "Owen's Book of Logic and Reason," and maybe even start building a Tree Boat of your very own!

Hannah Greendale says

Eleven-year-old Indie Lee Chickory's best friend is a golden lobster named Monty Cola. When The Lobster Monty Cola sneaks into Indie's backpack and later gets lost, she starts a quest to find her missing best friend. She might just make some new friends along the way.

Indie Lee Chicory is such a lovable protagonist. She's enjoyable for the brightness of her spirit and her benevolent outlook toward a world that's not necessarily kind to her. Many of her peers speak ill of her, not just behind her back but to her face. It's easy to feel sorry for Indie; she's a sympathetic character right from the start. She's the type of awkward, strange child that tends to suffer merciless teasing when young but later

blossoms into an interesting adult with a magnetic personality.

The Lobster Monty Cola is my best pal besides [my sister] Bebe. And even a better pal now that Bebe got all perfect and can't stand me anymore. Monty's not some ordinary crustacean; he's a golden lobster. Pa says you come across one golden lobster in every 30 million lobsters you trap.

There's a fantastic sense of atmosphere in the setting of *Tracing Stars*. The story takes place in a small coastal town with shops suitably named Sandy's Saltwater Candies, Crawdad Coffee House, and Barnacle Briggs. Indie makes the setting even richer with her knowledge of myriad aquatic creatures. She often makes use of similes or metaphors that rely on the ocean and its many wonders to describe what she sees or how she feels:

I see Bebe throw her hands up in the air and float away from the rest of the crowd like a lone mackerel in a school of carp.

And between that and the cafeteria smelling like cartons of milk, my stomach gets a little choppy, like the waves before a storm.

Tracing Stars skillfully weaves together several subplots and explores themes relevant to Indie's age group, such as growing up, navigating new friendships, the dynamic shared between clashing personalities, the quest for approval, and the bond of sisterhood.

As an added bonus, this book is delightfully reminiscent of Beverly Cleary's books about Ramona Quimby and her older sister Beatrice (Beezus).

The writing is fairly simple, clean and consistent, though once in a while a moving passage shines through:

"Hello, Al Rischa," I say to Pisces' brightest star, pointing at her with my other hand. I trace the fish across the sky over and over. One side to the other. I pretend I'm dipping my hand into the dark the way I dip my hand into the ocean. I drag it down through the universe, pretending I can spin the stars in my path into circles and pinwheels. I picture them bending away like seaweed as my hand nears them.

Overall, this is a beautiful book about growing up that features a memorable protagonist. *Tracing Stars* twinkles from start to finish.

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Special thanks to Goodreads and Erin E. Moulton for providing a free autographed copy of *Tracing Stars* in exchange for an honest review.

Erin McWilliams says

I thought the book *Tracing Stars* was a good book. I really liked the character of Indie, and how she was just a little different from everyone else. Indie would be a great and interesting friend to have because she would always have something cool to say. I thought that her back story was pretty cool, but not really out of the ordinary. Her older sister Bebe was totally different. Bebe seemed like the kind of person that was fun and unique when they were young, but got normal and boring when they were older. Whenever Indie did something, Bebe crushed it and made Indie sink and hide herself. When Monty Cola ran away, I felt the pain for Indie because I know how it feels to lose a pet. Indie really loved Monty the lobster, and Bebe didn't care at all. I didn't like the character of Bebe very much. I felt that she had to have it about herself all the time. Bebe also made Indie do things for the good of herself, even when Indie didn't want to. Bebe was being a stick

in the mud when she scowled at Indie for being silly. I think that Bebe thought she was a "Grown up" even though she wasn't even close. But my favorite part was when Indie and Owen worked together to find Monty. I felt happy for Indie even though she doesn't even exist! I liked that part because I like happy endings. Overall, I would give this book a 4/5. Not a 5/5 because I felt that Bebe should have been working with Indie, not against her. This was a pretty good book, and I would read it again!

Barb Middleton says

Writing reviews is tricky. You don't want to be too nitpicky; you want to be respectful; and you want to give an honest take on a book. Personal taste can taint an analysis and (unbeknownst to you) can skew your review. That's why I really admire some of the Goodreads reviewers who walk the fine line of giving an honest review that helps me in my book purchases, as well as give witty, insightful, and very helpful advice. So thank you! I need to log more hours in before I will start feeling comfortable with this reviewing process and not wracked by self-doubts. This journey of better understanding literature is an odd walk and I know some of my reviews are kind of weird - in a good way - but weird all the same. Indie Lee Chickory is weird too. She tries to hide it and conform but she likes to make fish faces, calm her nerves by reciting different types of fish, and wear tomboy clothes. She wants to be liked by her sister and is frustrated by her awkwardness and always "messing" things up. I can relate to her inferiority complex and clumsiness whether it is writing reviews or burning dinner up on the stove. Indie's internal journey of accepting her uniqueness is what touched me the most in this realistic story and I think it will touch others as well.

Indie is a bit of an oddball at school who enjoys making fish faces and whom the other kids tease calling her a "fish freak." When her pet lobster sneaks into her backpack she tries to find it some water over recess. Problems rise when the lobster decides to peak out from under her shirt like an alien from outer space. She loses the lobster in the ensuing melee and then sets out to get it back with the help of a newfound friend, Owen, who is even odder than her. He sounds like a walking encyclopedia who makes lists in a notebook trying to categorize everything. His personal life is out of control and this is what calms him.

Indie's sister, Bebe, is embarrassed by her younger sister and when Indie gets a job at the community theater where her sister has a part in the play production, Bebe is mortified with how Indie dresses. Every night Bebe lays out girly girl clothes for Indie to wear when she comes to the theater because Bebe is trying to impress another girl, Kelsey. Kelsey is a bully who hates Owen's different personality. Indie desperately wants to please her sister and stop doing klutzy, embarrassing things and she wants to be Owen's friend. When a prank goes too far, Indie has to decide between being herself and feeling good about her choices or following the crowd.

The plot has some unbelievable spots, but they add tension, humor and drama so I didn't care. I don't think the kids would steal a neighbor's golf cart (why not ask) and then forget to return it, especially Owen. I don't think Sloth would have freed Indie from her bedroom or a lobster would have crawled in her backpack, but it's fun. Indie sneaks out of the house at times when her family is awake and I didn't think this would happen either, because in previous chapters her mom comes in to say, "good night" and she and her sister are close in age. This is one of those instances where I might be being too nitpicky.

The characters are interesting. Bebe is a perfectionist and finds it hard to be around her bumbling sister. I thought the flashback was a bit awkward. It is supposed to show how much Bebe wants to be an actress and why she is intolerant of her sister, but I think her perfectionist personality comes through with her extra play rehearsals in the early morning. The flashback isn't necessary for the plot or character development. I did like all the fish imagery and tying it in with the constellations. The other great scene is Sloth and Indie dancing around the shop room like crazy girls. I laughed hard and thought about how we'd do that in college singing

into our curling irons like they were microphones and sticking popcorn up our noses with the floors vibrating from the cranked-up music. Good times.

I have never had a pet lobster. I didn't even know you could have them as pets, much less put them down your shirt; however, I did act out books. Probably the dumbest thing I did was carve a peep hole in their beautiful wood door with her. She got a new chisel set for her birthday. We ate clam chowder, saltines, and Velveeta cheese for lunch taking turns looking through the hole to make sure her brother wasn't spying on us. Little did we know that we should have been looking for an angry parent, not a snoopy brother. I had another good friend who saved all the spleens from the animals she dissected in biology class. She's now a neurosurgeon. I really thought she'd be a mortician. Guess we all have our quirks.

Aeicha says

4.5/5 Stars

THREE WORDS: Quirky, Charming, Fun

MY REVIEW: Erin E. Moulton's Tracing Stars has everything I love in middle grade books: charming characters, a fun story and full of quirkiness. I had a blast reading this book!

Indie Lee Chickory doesn't fit in as well as her big sister Bebe. The other kids don't appreciate Indie's impressive fish face skills and call her a Fish Freak. And when her pet lobster, Monty, accidentally comes to school with Indie and she must smuggle him out, it ends in disaster. Not only does Indie embarrass Bebe and herself, she loses Monty in the ocean. Indie makes a wish on a star to become a better Chickory and to find Monty. Indie volunteers to be a part of the stage crew for the summer musical, in which Bebe has a starring role. Afraid of another embarrassing disaster, Bebe gives Indie a makeover and strict rules about who she can be friends with. So when Indie becomes friends with the nerdy Owen and they come up with an ingenious plan to find Monty, she must keep their friendship a secret. And when this secret is discovered, both Indie and Bebe must decide what's more important: being liked or being true to yourself.

Moulton's Tracing Stars is a quick, but very enjoyable read. Moulton has crafted a very well-written, witty and poignant story with a simply delightful heroine. Nicely paced and full of excitement, readers of all ages will be captivated from beginning to end of this MG contemporary.

The story is quirky in the best way possible: a missing pet golden lobster, fish faces, a boat in a tree, a small community of eclectic people, a true friendship between two outcasts, oh my! This page-turner is full of laugh-out-loud moments (just wait till you read all about the lobster-in-a-school escapade!), heartwarming relationships and poignant messages. Moulton writes with a fresh, amusing voice that captures the essence of youth wonderfully.

The story's heroine, Indie, shines bright with her quirky personality, compassion and refusal to be anyone but herself. This is a heroine that readers will easily relate to and want to root for. Owen is such a unique, smart and fascinating boy. I love the friendship between these two and how genuine it is. The sibling relationship between Indie and Bebe is very realistic, full of fights and love. And of course, Monty, the lobster is quite the scene stealer!

Indie's journey to find Monty is full of new experiences, new friends, a mean girl, life lessons and a lot of laughs. Moulton has crafted a relatable glimpse into the sometimes difficult years of adolescence. And the

author offers readers a heartwarming and encouraging message about friendship, love and acceptance.

MY FINAL THOUGHTS: I had a wonderful time reading the MG book. Tracing Stars is bursting with humor, characters that shine and touching moments. A must read for all ages!

Sharry says

Erin Moulton's charming and heartfelt Tracing Stars is a story of friendship, family loyalty and what happens when the two collide. Moulton's fast paced, funny and irresistible writing beautifully captures summer life in the New England seaside town where Indie Lee Chickory, the plucky, inventive and good-hearted protagonist, isn't afraid to break rules to save what she loves and in the process discovers what it means to be yourself.

Ann says

Indie Lee Chicory wants "to be a better Indie Lee Chickory...a really good Chickory, not the fish freak of Plumtown." She also loves fish, making fish faces and has a pet lobster named The Lobster Monty Cola, which don't help much in the part about not being a "fish freak." She loses the lobster in an incident that causes her sister and former best friend, Bebe, to find her an embarrassment. Indie Lee is left alone. When Bebe joins a summer theatre production, Indie Lee ends up working in the Scene Shop, where she meets Owen, a boy who is considered a "loser" by Bebe and her friends. But Owen is smart and ready to help her find The Lobster Monty Cola.

A lot can happen in one summer. As Indie Lee tries to impress Bebe, find her pet and discover how to be her best self, she gets herself into some complicated predicaments. But despite her sister saying "Can't you do anything right?" Indie Lee's spirit and good heart help her not only land on her feet, but figure out what it means to be true to herself.

Barbara says

Sometimes it's a mistake to judge a book by its cover or by its book blurb. That's the case for this particular title. When I first looked at it, I told myself, "Here comes another of those beach books." Then, I read the blurb, and thought, "No...it's going to be a bit weird since Indie Lee Chicory has a pet lobster. Wow! Yeah! That's really different." I wasn't sure if it would be a good different or a bad different, and I'm certainly glad that I gave the book a try because I ended up liking it quite a lot. While the opening scenes when Indie Lee's beloved pet, The Lobster Monty Cola, comes to school on the last day of fifth grade and then escapes into the ocean are funny and too strange for words, what follows is so amazingly true to life to make me forget all my initial assumptions. At its heart, this is a book about self-acceptance and having the courage to be the best person you are and stand up for others, even when that's an unpopular decision. Indie wants to please her older sister, Bebe, who is trying to get in good with some of the other teens involved in summer theater, and because Bebe asks her to, she changes her clothing in order not to embarrass Bebe. But as Indie realizes while searching for her lobster with a lot of help from Owen, considered a loser by Bebe's crowd, is that she can only be the best person she can be by being true to herself. There's not a reader among us who hasn't felt

the pressure to betray someone in order to fit in with the popular crowd, but clearly, doing so is a heavy, soul-stealing price to pay. Despite the seriousness of the book's theme, it contains many hilarious scenes. I'm not sure I buy that Sloth would make her way to Indie's home in order to free her once she has been grounded, but the rescue did provide plenty of comic relief. The book abounds with good messages about self-empowerment and being true to myself. Plus, I had no idea that anyone ever kept a lobster as a pet.

Alyssa Wallace says

The book Tracing Stars by Erin E. Moulton tells the story of a girl named Indie Lee Chicory and about how everyone calls her fish freak of Plum Town. She loves to make fish faces, and has a pet lobster Monty cola, who lives outside her bedroom window. For her it's hard to make friends. But she does have her sister Bebe. And how one day Indie accidentally brings Monty to school, which causes a disaster, bebe almost dies of embarrassment, and Indie is left with no one. And One night, Indie wishes on her favorite star. She wants to find Monty and get bebe to like her again which is an all-day and all-night job. And during the day and night Indie and a new kid owen try to find monty. And during the day Indie tries to show bebe how much she can fit in. So I recommend this book to anyone who likes drama and adventure.

Angelina Justice says

This is wonderful story, with powerful writing. It will appeal to a broad age range and would make a great family read-aloud.

In summing up the feel of this book, my mind mashed together Ramona Quimby and Huckleberry Finn. The element of always striving to be better versus the need to be true to oneself is integral to this story.

Character development and consistency was beyond excellent. An example of what I mean is found in chapter 8 as Indie gets her first glimpse of Punk rocker, Sloth. Indie has always been fish obsessed and it follows through in this description, "Sloth is standing there looking at both of us. She has so many face rings, she looks like a fish that never gets caught but just drags the hooks away into the deep blue sea."

This is how a real kid thinks. Whatever they are obsessed with spills over into every aspect of their lives. It's little details like this that catch a young reader.

Heidi says

I loved this book. The characters, the setting, the plot, the whole thing. Indie is a very endearing, but flawed character. She desperately wants to be a better person, one who doesn't embarrass her sister or lose family pets (a lobster). I think most human beings have a desire to be better than we are. For Indie, after making a wish and 'tracing' her favorite constellation, she believes she is making progress. Before long however, she is hiding things from her family and pretending to be someone she isn't comfortable with. Both Indie and her sister Bebe are sympathetic characters, but at times I found myself torn. Part of me understood completely where both girls were coming from (the kid side of me) and the adult part of me winced at some of the poor decisions that were made. Owen adds a sweet and sensitive note to the book and more than once I wanted to

give him a great big hug.

Moulton does a fabulous job creating a believable setting. I could almost feel the fresh ocean breeze or taste the delicious candy or feel the sand beneath my toes. I found myself wishing that I could visit this place.

Plotwise, I enjoyed watching Indie slowly come to a sense of herself and what it truly means to be yourself. Some of the plot elements I picked up on pretty early, I did not however find this annoying as they were presented in a fresh, interesting way. The themes of friendship, loyalty, and family were beautifully presented and I did not feel in the slightest like they were old or worn out plot lines.

Overall, I highly recommend this book as a great read and a great read-a-loud. There is much here worth discussing. I liked this so much that I immediately picked up Flutter, Erin Moulton's debut middle grade novel.

Nalliyah Mulkey says

I didn't really like this book, it was boring to me, don't recommend it

Donalyn says

This is a beautiful book about finding your identity, friendship, and the complicated relationships between sisters. Exquisite descriptions of shore life.
