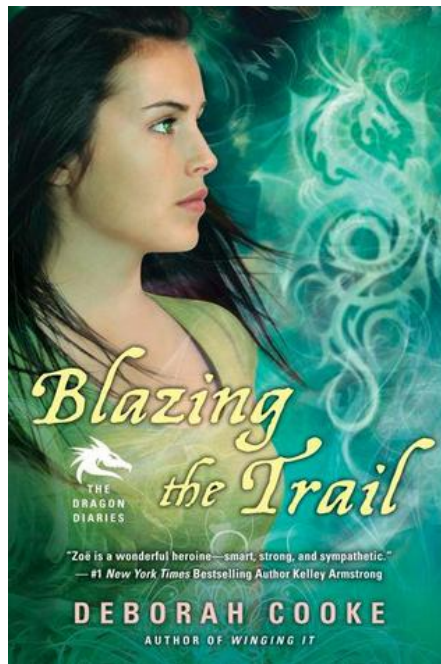




Blazing the Trail

Deborah Cooke

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From the author of the Dragonfire Novels comes a new series about the next generation of shape-shifting dragons—they're ready to lead their pack.

It's almost Valentine's Day, and Zoë Sorensson's love life is heating up. Cute, loyal, and understanding, wolf shifter Derek is pretty much the perfect guy. He likes Zoë, and he knows what it's like to have to keep a secret. Yet, Zoë can't help but wish it was rebel rocker Jared asking her to the Valentine's dance instead. But Jared's too busy playing hot and cold with her heart, calling Zoë his dragon girl one minute and then taking special interest in her best friend the next.

Zoë is just about ready to breathe fire, especially once she uncovers a new threat that targets her friends. Although Zoë thought the Mages were defeated, they're back and have invoked an old spell to give them new power—they plan to eliminate all shape shifters on the night of the big dance. Now, Zoë must lead an alliance of young shifters to battle the Mages and figure out exactly what—and who—she wants, before it all goes up in smoke...

Blazing the Trail Details

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From Reader Review Blazing the Trail for online ebook

Sandy S says

BLAZING THE TRAIL (The Dragon Diaries YA #3) by Deborah Cooke

BLAZING THE TRAIL is the third novel and June 2012 new release in Deborah Cooke's Young Adult series-The Dragon Diaries. Zoe Sorensson is the only female dragon and Wyvern in a world of the shape-shifting supernatural, and must learn about her powers and abilities on the fly-literally. But when the 4 remaining shifter-lines are targeted for death by the Mage, Zoe and her friends must find a way to stop the Valentine's Day ritual that could end all of their lives.

At the end of WINGING IT, Zoe and her friends had virtually destroyed the collective mind of the Mage. Without memory or purpose, the Mage numbers were dwindling. But those too young to be caught in the mind-sweep were banding together and targeting the remaining shifters-Dragon, Thunderbird, Wolf and Cat. With her powers as the Wyvern came dreams and pre-cognition of what may or may not happen. Without the guidance of the previous Wyvern, it is up to Zoe to decipher the messages that continue to haunt her nightly dreams. But a new dream ally will surface with both a weapon and advice that will aid Zoe with her fight to stay alive.

Knowing that the shifters are targeted by the Mage, an Alliance is formed between the remaining groups to help strengthen and combine their knowledge regarding their survival or demise. But the powerful spell-songs (of) and the use of the Nightblade by the Mage will trap more than one of Zoe's friends and it will take the new-found powers of a young Wyvern to discern and break through the tangle of spell-light weaves. But it is the Shadoweaters (former Mage) who find the portal between their worlds that will place everyone in danger. With guilt weighing heavily, Zoe must tap into her dreams hoping to solve the puzzles and clues that will bring an end to the Mage and the Shadoweaters that many will become. And it is the revelation as to the origins of the Shadoweaters that will have you scratching your head wondering if the Mage have any concept as to the evil that will eventually take hold and destroy.

Many of Zoe's allies and friends return. Meagan, her BFF and Mage is learning the power of spell-song; Derek the shy and quiet wolf-shifter who is hoping for more than friendship; Kohana the Thunderbird and sometime friend; Jessica and her new-found abilities; and Jared-Mage and Zoe's long time crush. Fellow Dragon-shifters Nick, Garret and Liam are called in to aid and protect Zoe. And we will see the development of a couple of potential relationships between the young dragons and some of the other supernatural friends.

The return of Jared will force Zoe to make a choice between two friends, but it is Jared who will sacrifice more than his friendship to save the life of someone he has grown to love. Kohana is still an enigma. Like Zoe, the reader is unsure as to his true purpose until the death of a friend will find the Thunderbird paying back a debt owed to the young Wyvern.

BLAZING THE TRAIL is another fantastic addition to Deborah Cooke's Dragon Diaries series. As a lover of all things dragon, my only complaint-we didn't see enough of the young Pyr. Blazing The Trail focuses more on the Mage and the other shape-shifters. I also liked the fact that Deborah does not concentrate on the typical teen love-triangle. Although there is the potential, it was not the center of the story. Many YA authors tend to write a series around a trio of friends who will inevitably come to odds with regards to relationships and love. Deborah allows the story to develop, but keeps the angst-filled relationships on the periphery. Blazing The Trail is a wonderful story from a great author.

see all of my reviews at : thereadingcafe.com

Alice says

This book has been on my TBR for five years. Now there is a reasonable explanation, my library system does not have a copy of this book. Anyway if I read this book when I was sixteen I would have adored it. Reading it as a twenty-one year old was still pretty enjoyable. Obviously sixteen year old me would have loved it even more hence the four star rating.

Zacy says

Why?

WHY DID SHE HAVE TO END UP WITH JARED?!

I can honestly say that I hate the guy, I mean he's barely there, discarding the fact that he is mentioned through out the series. Zoe doesn't even know much about him except for what she's seen and what she's been told, when he, on the other hand can read her like an open book. And whenever Zoe tries t contact him, he shrugs her off. It's seems pretty clear to me that he isn't completely serious about Zoe. It doesn't matter how much he says those sweet words. *They are just words, dammit* And honestly, I don't find anything cool about him, save for his musician stunt in book two. I know he's trying to be mysterious, but he just ended up sounding like a side character instead of a love interest. And there's the fact that he spent a lot of time with Meghan. Seriously? Who spends more time with their love interest's best friend than the love interest?

Okay, so maybe this story doesn't completely revolve around the love story but still, i felt Derek's presence more than Jared. It doesn't seem to do much justice to him.

All in all, I think this series was okay. Mediocre. I liked the idea of the Pyr and Wyvern but the plot and character development could use a bit more improvement.

Katelyn says

How can it be over?! After I was finished with this one I went looking for information on when or if there would be a fourth installment in the series. After looking through Cooke's site and seeing her mention that no plans were in the works I was not a happy camper. I can't say that things were left hanging or unfinished but at the same time I am kind of feeling disappointed. I wasn't ready to say goodbye to these characters. Cooke mentioned that we might one day see these characters in her adult novels, but who knows?

Now that I've gotten that off my chest I feel like I can go on and say how much I enjoyed this series as a whole and this installment most of all. Zoe and her team of loyal dragons and friends were at it again and this time the action was at an all time high! All kinds of shifters were thrown into the mix, the mages stepped up their game and the love triangle that was giving me major anxiety was FINALLY resolved. I won't spoil

anything by commenting on who Zoe chooses, between Derek and Jared, but I have to compliment and tip my hat to Cooke with the way she went about that resolution.

So while I'm sad to see the gang go, I've started to backtrack into Cooke's adult Dragon series, Dragonfire, and I'll admit that three books into it and I'm loving it. If you're a fan of literature outside of the YA spectrum and were also totally unprepared to say farewell to this world and these characters, this might be just the series for you.

Kt says

Review originally posted on my blog: A Book Obsession..

Zoe did the impossible by bringing the remaining shifters together to form an alliance, so why can't she bring herself to choose a guy? On one hand she has the incredibly Derek who seems like the perfect match. He should be the obvious choice, but her heart seems to have a mind of its own. She just can't forget Jared, the sexy rocker who has come and gone from her life more times than she can count. But her relationship worries are the least of her problems. After destroying the power base of the Mages, their threat should have been a thing of the past. But now the Mages are brewing something more terrible than Zoe ever could have imagined. This time around, they aren't taking chances and plan to take all of the shifters out in one swift blow. It's up to Zoe and the other wildcards to take them out once and for all or risk their very extinction.

Zoe has come an incredibly long way since she was first introduced in Flying Blind. Her maturity level has really increased, and she takes the time to think things through before she acts. She's finally learning to trust her instincts. Granted, she still makes mistakes along the way, who doesn't? She's had a lot thrown at her in such a short time, and so much rests on her shoulders. I really admire how the good of the alliance between the shifters is always first priority in her mind. In fact, she's willing to sacrifice everything personally and emotionally for the good of the alliance if the situation calls for it. She's definitely proved herself and become the Wyvern all of the different shifters so desperately needed.

Above all, I was most impressed with the way Zoe handled her relationship issues. Prior to this point she had only been attracted to the inaccessible guys, the ones she could never have. First it was another Wyr which biologically couldn't have worked, then it was with the much older Jared who runs hot and cold with her constantly. After he left, she may have rushed into things a little fast with Derek because he was steadfast and she knew she could rely on him. But his loyalty alone can't make her love him, and I really like how she's finally taking a step back from things to really decide what she wants before she goes any further with anyone. This isn't your typical love triangle as she isn't really involved with either one, so there isn't any stringing along, and for that I am incredibly proud of her.

Blazing the Trail finishes the Dragon Diaries Trilogy in a really good place, but I'm not entirely sure whether the ending is a completely satisfying one. Don't get me wrong, the overall plot ties from the series are wound up, but things are just left too open to give me the sense of completion that I craved. Of course this could turn out to be a good thing if it is because Deborah has plans for these characters in the future. There were just so many possibilities that were opened up and I'd love to see where things go. But for now, I am mostly content and will just sit tight and hope for something more in the future when these great characters are a little older. Overall, Blazing the Trail was an impressive end to the Dragon Diaries that will definitely leave a smile on your face.

Kathy Martin says

This is the third book in the Dragon Diaries series. If you are sensitive to spoilers, you won't want to read beyond the first paragraph. For new readers, then, this is a series whose main character Zoë is the only female dragon shifter and who is also sixteen. Both would cause enough problems on their own but add in a group of human mages who are determined to wipe out all the remaining shifters and Zoë and her friends have lots of extra pressure.

Things should be going well for Zoë. She and her friends have managed to defeat the adult Mages by destroying their hive mind and capturing the NightBlade which deprived any remaining mages of their power. She has formed an alliance with the wolves, the cats, and the Thunderbirds to destroy the NightBlade. Her best friend Meagan had discovered that she has magical powers as a spellsinger and learned about Zoë being a dragon shifter. Zoë has gotten her driver's license and the use of her mom's car while her parents are on vacation.

But all is not rosy, Zoë still has to deal with the school bully Suzanne who is sure that Zoë is keeping secrets. She has to deal with Trevor who is an apprentice mage and determined to carry on with the Mages' goals. Trevor is determined to release the ShadowEaters and become one too. She has boyfriend troubles too. She is torn between Derek who is a wolf shifter and who is sweet, thoughtful, protective, quiet and intense but who likes Zoë more than she likes him and Jared who is older, a rebel, a member of a rock band, a spellsinger, and who blows hot and cold leaving Zoë confused about whatever sort of relationship they might have. Zoë is also just coming into her Wyvern powers and they seem more confusing than helpful right now.

This story is full of adventure and danger as Zoë and company have to find a way to defeat the ShadowEaters and destroy the NightBlade. Zoë also has to find a way to keep her alliance together when jealousy, secrets, and conflicting goals try to destroy it.

I really like Zoë's voice in this one. She is a pretty realistic sixteen-year-old with the added problem of learning to be the Wyvern for the dragon shifters. She is constantly switching between mundane problems like homework and exotic problems like the threat to wipe out all shifters. As the story is told in the first person, we really get to see all of Zoë. I enjoyed her quirky voice and her asides to the readers.

I think readers will love getting to know Zoë and will be rooting for her to solve all the problems. Because I think this series hasn't received as much publicity as many of the other paranormal series, this is one series that I will be promoting in my high school media center this fall.

Rusty's Ghost Engine (also known as..... Jinky Spring) says

Is this book really the last in the Dragon Diaries series? I will really miss Zoe she is one of the best narrators I've ever read.

Isamlq says

2.5/5

There's a lot of trusting and doubting in this one: trusting people you'd think to not to trust; then doubting

certain others who didn't deserve it. I could imagine just how frustrating things were going for her. Still, most of that was canceled out by how quick the story went. Going from one predicament to another certainly left the girl bagged. Imagine girl dragon, juggling time to save the world from power hungry mages and school work!

I suppose it is good that it wasn't all dragon shifter drama. The boy drama could get painfully contrived at times. Her having to choose between the predictably good one and the one who made her heart stutter: cute, but been there and done that. The school drama of bullies and mean girls, or of a guidance councilor who's too enthusiastic for her own good (and at times strangely blind to some aspects too,) livened things up some more. Then of course her parents' glaringly obvious absence in the picture: it's an absence that allowed for so many things to take place. It's also an absence that's in stark contrast to the goings on in the first two books. Plenty of things didn't add up on that end... BUT, the amount of excitement was not bad. Or how about those puzzles to solve? Yes, there's a lot of those too. Unsurprisingly, there's a lot more bumbling this time around.

I liked and liked this for the same reasons I liked/disliked the first two installments; even though a lot of the scenarios were painfully obvious and despite the fact that plenty of the solutions were a bit too easy to put together.(so easy in fact, it was a wonder why they'd not put it together sooner,) these were things I could let slide because this one like the first two were fun and easy reads.

Ferdy says

2.5 stars - Spoilers

Meh. The plot, action and secondary characters were okay but the romance was fucking awful.

-The heroine, Zoe, was mostly likeable — though there were parts of her personality that I disliked. I hated the amount of dumb things she did — like shifting into a dragon at school in front of loads of humans. She could have risked exposing her race but she did it anyway. It was idiotic and selfish.

-The worst thing about Zoe was her patheticness when it came to Jared. It was obvious that he was messing with her feelings but the silly cow kept thinking he had strong feelings for her. She had no self-respect whatsoever when it came to him. I rolled my eyes at her many embarrassing and naive assumptions — like her assuming that the reason Jared wasn't texting her was because he wanted to protect her. She didn't even pause to consider that maybe he just wasn't interested in her. Also, the idiot heard one of his songs and she instantly thought it was about her and for her. How she came to that conclusion, I don't know. It was all so cringey, and it seemed like Zoe was living in her own little fantasy land. There was no evidence whatsoever that supported her idiotic theories - Jared ignored her and didn't give a fuck about her but the silly cow was too much of a silly cow to notice that. Ugh.

-The love interest, Jared, was rubbish. I've never liked him, all he's ever done is string Zoe along. It was really off-putting that he was in his twenties and in college whilst Zoe was only 15/16. Why can't he find a girl his own age? Why does he prey on innocent schoolgirls? Jared actually seemed to fancy Zoe's BFF, Meghan, more than he did Zoe. He kept in contact with Meghan, helped her when she needed it, and took her on rides on his motorbike. He barely did anything for Zoe. When Jared left his band to help everyone fight the bad guys, the sly dick claimed he did it for Zoe. But that was bullshit — he never showed any concern for her, and he left her a number of times when she was in

danger, and he never once bothered to check up on her. He only came back to help because he wanted to act like a hero and a good guy — the bastard couldn't admit that though instead he had to fuck around with Zoe's feelings and act like a perv. Ugh.

What really pissed me off was that Jared told Zoe that she should put everyone else's life above her own, and risk her own life for her lame friends. And when she said no, he was disappointed in her because instead of stupidly sacrificing herself she wanted to work as a team. He was such a dick. What was so bad about a teenager not wanting to risk her life for her selfish friends? Not everyone wants to be a martyr. Why did Jared even say he cared about Zoe when all he cared about were her friends? Jared was a rubbish hero.

-The Disappearing Parent Syndrome was ridiculous. I didn't buy Zoe's parents going on holiday and leaving her without any protection. Her dad was meant to be this super protective alpha dragon, yet he just up and left his daughter when she was so recently attacked by a bunch of evil mages. He never would have swanned off on holiday after that. The author obviously just wanted the adults to disappear so the plot could play out a certain way but she could have at least written the parents out in a believable way!

-I HATED that Nick and Isabelle reunited. He chased after her and then dumped her and then fucked around with loads of other girls. WTF?! Why would Isabelle want him back after that? It was clear that she meant little to him, he couldn't even be bothered to fight for her. Why would she want such a loser?

-I liked Sigmund's character — his interactions with Zoe were quite sweet.

-Nick and the other dragons were lame — they were meant to be protecting Zoe but they were bloody useless. Maybe, it was because they just didn't give a shit about Zoe. No-one seemed to care about her at all.

-I was annoyed at Zoe's friends for not believing her whenever she told them something was off. She'd already proven herself a few times before but everyone kept dismissing her — it was irritating.

-Zoe's lists were boring. They just felt like convenient info-dumps.

-The thing that pissed me off most was that if Zoe should lose her virginity she would lose her unique dragon powers. Really? WTF?! The male dragons don't lose anything when they have sex. I hate it when authors write female characters who aren't able to lose their virginity without them becoming weaker or less somehow. It's fucked up.

-The ending was a little vague. I'm hoping Zoe gets some sense and dumps paedo Jared.

All in all, disappointing.

All Things Urban Fantasy says

Review courtesy of All Things Urban Fantasy

Dragons, teen drama, and an epic war against beings set on destroying all shifters. That's BLAZING THE TRAIL in a nutshell, the third book in Deborah Cooke's Dragon Diaries series (a YA spin-off of her adult PNR Dragonfire series). Led by a genuinely likable and for the most part levelheaded protagonist, this story flies along at a rapid if somewhat uninspired pace.

After a brief but comprehensive recap, Zoe and her friends are once again battling mages and shadoweaters. An interesting twist in this series is that Zoe literally has to go to school with some of her mortal enemies.

One night a mage tries to sacrifice Zoe in a spell and the next night they are rubbing shoulders in the hallway. It's an odd situation, and I couldn't help but wonder why Zoe wasn't more on guard around them. The other questionable decisions that Zoe made involved her love life, although I found this to me much more realistic.

The unobtainable Jared is off touring with his band and fellow shifter Derek is more than willing to fill the void in Zoe's heart. Zoe's thoughts and reasoning about both Jared and Derek were uncomfortably realistic at times as she wrestled with the 'love the one you're with' or pine for the one who got away conundrum.

I would have preferred a greater emphasis on Zoe's romantic entanglements than the generic thriller plot with the shadoweaters that made up the majority of BLAZING THE TRAIL, but Zoe is winning enough to still make this an enjoyable read. It's unclear whether or not there will be more books in this series or not, but either way the ending is satisfying.

Sexual Content:
Kissing

Gwynn White says

I have so enjoyed this series and am really sad it is over. Zoe is a great character and I just love her voice. She gives constant asides to the reader which make me laugh and her descriptions of her emotions - especially regarding Jared - leave me smiling. I am really going to miss her. I wish there were more in the series.

Mskyck says

Ugh, giving up. I just can't keep myself interested in this book- I've finished I think 4 others while I've been reading this. I pick it up and read a few chapters, but it's just not holding me. I'm going to stop and read something that interests me instead now, instead of continuing to slog through this.

Debbie says

Even though it's winter in the Windy City, Zoe Sorensson's life is about to heat up, she has a date to the Valentine's dance but it's not with the boy of her dreams and the Mages she thought she and her friends had triumphed over just turned a new and deadlier page in their spell book. And as if that's not enough for the sixteen year old and still in training spiritual leader of her dragon-shape shifting species the Pyr, the new threat the Mages are preparing for could mean the total annihilation of all the remaining shape-shifters left on earth. There is a fragile alliance between the shifters but there is also dissention and mistrust and the one thing they must do to survive is work together. As if things couldn't get more complicated when what Zoe needs is clarity, Jared the boy who does star in Zoe's dreams shows up to help with the new Mage war, but will his appearance help or hinder her efforts, will they overcome the obstacles to see what their future holds or will they even survive to find out.

Deborah Cooke's third book in her Dragon Diaries trilogy gives a whopper of an ending to her YA spin off of her adult paranormal romance series. In this we follow our fledgling Wyvern through more teenage angst, hormones and creepy villains that even give this lover of fantasy nightmares, as she has to solve more

problems and mature more into her powers. Ms. Cooke's novel would keep any YA reader on the edge of their seat but it's the slightly more grown up than most YA's that kept this adult reader happy. And it's her characters that kept me reading all of the instillations of Zoe's life and not because I know and love the parents from the adult series, which I do, but also because she gives these characters their own unique life-force that made me need to keep tabs. Something I loved about the novel is that she didn't completely map out the final stage so I'm hoping someday she'll reunite us with this tale. If you're a fan of fantasy, YA or adult you will find something to love about this novel. Ms. Cooke does a great job of background but it wouldn't be a trilogy if you weren't supposed to read them in order.

Thank you Deborah Cooke for the icing on my dragonsmoke cake and I look forward to your next novel in your DragonFire novels, Ember's Kiss coming in October of 2012.

Want to know a little more about the author, here's an interview we did previously

<http://bookclubs.barnesandnoble.com/t...>

K says

2.5 stars. I feel like there is a point where one should stop saying books are just okay or stop reading the series, and yet I am doing neither. So, points for making me care what happens -- a step up from book 2. Very authentic teenage voice, in that sometimes the narration over-explains and sometimes the narrator makes extremely stupid choices, but you generally understand where she's coming from.

Ntzee says

I've read the first two books in this series and loved it. So when I heard that Blazing the Trail will be the final installment in The Dragon Diaries Series, I couldn't wait to get my hands on it. After a long waiting, I finally read it and was a bit disappointed. To me, it felt like from the beginning to the middle was a slow drag. There wasn't much going on. I was hoping for more action, and romance but didn't really get it till the end of the book. Zoe's a strong character, but at times she can be really gullible and it gets annoying. Jared, the love interest, I really liked him since the first book, didn't show up until the end of the book. I was hoping he would show up more in this book since it was going to be the last one. Yeah, I mean, they mention him and stuff but he didn't have much of a presence until the end. The other love interest, Derek, the wolf shifter. I feel like the only reason Zoe liked him was because he was predictable and she knew she could rely on him. Her heart was never really there for him, because she was still pinning for Jared.

What I did like about this book is that Zoe has come a long way since the beginning of the series. I also like how the four wild cards were able to get together and destroy the Mages. The only way they could've have done this is if they can trust each other and keep up the alliance between the different shifters. I'm happy that Zoe's story as come to and end, but it wasn't really a satisfying ending I've been waiting for.
