

Dear Readers,

Thank you so much for choosing *Trail Ride Rescue* for your book club. Having this story out in the world is truly a dream come true, and I'm so grateful you've chosen to spend time with these characters and their journey.

This book was inspired by the many years I spent at the barn, at showgrounds, and traveling with my daughter's equestrian team. Those experiences gave me a deep appreciation for the bond between horses and riders, and many of those emotions and memories found their way into this story. At the same time, *Trail Ride Rescue* is also a work of imagination, where real-life inspiration and storytelling came together to create something I hope feels both authentic and heartfelt.

I hope this story sparked lively conversation in your group, whether about friendship, courage, perseverance, or the special connection we can share with animals. One of the greatest joys of being an author is hearing how readers connect with a story in their own unique ways.

I would love to hear your thoughts, reflections, and questions. Knowing how readers respond to my books means so much to me and helps bring these stories to life in new ways.

Thank you again for reading *Trail Ride Rescue* and for supporting books that celebrate adventure, heart, and the love of horses.

Happy reading,  
Rae

**Bio:** I am an award-winning children's book author from Northern California with a passion for reading and writing. I finally followed my dream and published my first book in 2017. Since then, I have published nine books, with another horse book in development. My books are clean, beautifully illustrated rhyming books for kids ages 2 to 8. *Trail Ride Rescue* is my first book aimed at middle school readers from 7 to 14.

Download the Book  
Club Discussion  
pack for free



*Trail Ride*  
**RESCUE**

# A Note from Rae

[www.RaeRankin.com](http://www.RaeRankin.com)

# A conversation with the author

## What inspired you to write this particular book?

After publishing several picture books, I found myself drawn to the idea of writing a novel. The turning point came at an equestrian event, when some of the kids who had grown up reading my books asked for something that matched where they were now as readers. It hit me, my audience is growing up.

I felt a real pull to create a story they could see themselves in. My thoughts kept circling back to my daughter's equestrian team, the mix of older teens and younger riders, the camaraderie, the quiet tensions, and the ever-shifting dynamics of belonging. It also brought me back to my own middle school years, remembering what it felt like to want to be popular, to lead, and to have those hopes sometimes fall short.

And then there were the horses. I thought about how much being at the barn meant during the COVID lockdown, not just for the kids, but for me, too. In so many ways, the horses became a source of steadiness and healing. That feeling that they carried us through something hard became the heart of the story I wanted to tell.

## Tell us a little bit about the main character.

Charlie is a complicated, beautifully flawed character. From the start, it's clear she's carrying a weight; her anxiety can be overwhelming at times, shaping how she sees herself and the world around her. Like so many teens, she's trying to navigate clashing personalities, social pressures, and the challenge of figuring out who she is without losing herself in the process.

It would have been easy to make her perfect, but that's not real life. Even when you're doing your best, you're still going to stumble. That's part of being human and part of growing up. What matters is that Charlie doesn't face it alone. She's getting help to manage her anxiety, and that piece of her story felt especially important to tell. Because asking for help isn't a weakness, it's a step toward strength.



# A conversation with the author

## Talk to us about your writing process. Do you use an outline or are you a pantser?

My writing process falls somewhere between plotting and pantser. When I first set out to write this book, all I had was a simple idea: to tell an equestrian story set here in Northern California, reflecting the mix of riding styles I see every day, both Western and English. So many horse stories focus on a single discipline like jumping or eventing, but that's never been my experience. I grew up riding Western, and when my daughter started, she did too. That blend of backgrounds felt important to capture.

Honestly, the story began with a single line: "The team captain isn't me." It held so much emotion, expectation, and disappointment all wrapped into one moment. From there, I dove into the first chapters completely by the seat of my pants, just following where the story wanted to go.

Eventually, I reached a point where I could see a rough path forward and pulled together a loose outline. But even then, the characters had their own ideas. They'd veer off in directions I never planned, surprising me at every turn. I remember going to work and telling my coworkers, "They just went off, and I'm over here like, what are you doing?!" It's one of the most unexpected (and fun) parts of the process. That moment when you realize your story has a life of its own.

## Tell us about the cover.

I've always loved silhouettes on book covers, they feel timeless and a little bit magical. One of my favorite examples is *The Penderwicks* series, which really inspired this direction. I gathered a few covers I admired and shared them with my illustrator, J-San, who brings my picture books to life.

For this cover, I wanted to capture the spirit of the story with silhouettes of the main characters set against the iconic black oak trees of Northern California. Another meaningful detail is the color of the word Rescue, it's inspired by the vibrant hue of the California Golden Poppy, tying the whole design back to the heart of the setting.



Trail Ride  
**RESCUE**

# A conversation with the author

## What's next? What are you working on now?

I have another picture book coming out in May 2026. Next up is the sequel to *Trail Ride Rescue*. It will feature the same characters. I feel Charlie has more to learn. While *Trail Ride Rescue* took place in a day, the next book will cover more time.

## Sneak peak

*Shadow Ridge Ranch Book 2: Untitled Draft*

Chapter 1

It's just me and this horse and the dressage court I'm on. I've blocked out the sounds of the showgrounds around me, the birds, the voices, the Arabians calling to each other in the stalls. I'm focused, looking ahead to the next letter and pulling the next movement from my memory. I can hear Rio breathing as he pushes into the next movement from a working jog to a working lope into the first 20-meter circle. I follow the footprints the rider before me left, a perfect map to round to the next move.

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## Can readers contact you?

Absolutely! I love hearing from readers. You can email me at [raerankinauthor@gmail.com](mailto:raerankinauthor@gmail.com). Or on social media Facebook/Instagram @raerankinauthor.



*Trail Ride*  
**RESCUE**

### First Impressions

- What was your first reaction to the book?
- Did it grab your attention right away, or take time to get into?
- What would you rate it out of 5 stars? Why?

### Characters

- Which character did you like the most? Why?
- Which character did you relate to (or not relate to)?
- Did any character change a lot during the story? How?
- If you could give one character advice, what would it be?

### Setting

- Where and when does the story take place?
- How did the setting affect what happened in the story?
- Would the story be different in another place or time?

### Plot & Conflict

- What was the main problem in the story?
- What was your favorite part? Least favorite?
- Was there a moment that surprised you?
- Did the ending feel satisfying? Why or why not?

### Themes & Messages

- What do you think the main message or lesson of the book is?
- Did the book teach you anything new?
- Are there any real-life connections you can make?

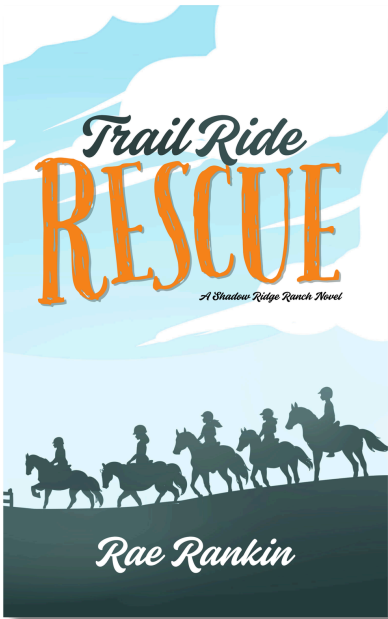
### Thinking Deeper

- Why do you think the author wrote this story?
- What would you change about the book if you could?
- What questions do you still have after finishing?
- If this book had a sequel, what should happen next?

### Creative & Fun Questions

- If this book were a movie, who would you cast?
- What song reminds you of this story or a character?
- Would you want to live in this story's world? Why or why not?
- Create a new title for the book—what would it be?
- If you could ask the author one question, what would it be?





# BOOK REVIEW

TITLE: TRAIL RIDE RESCUE

AUTHOR: RAE RANKIN

GENRE: EQUESTRIAN/MIDDLE GRADE

BRIEFLY SUMMARIZE THE BOOK

## RATING

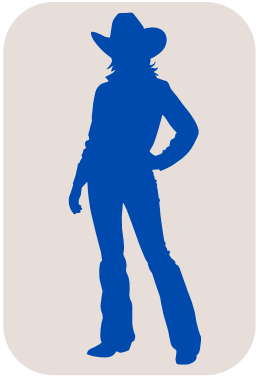


MY FAVORITE CHARACTER

MY FAVORITE PART

DOODLE SPOT

MY FAVORITE QUOTE



# CHARLIE

**Age:** 14

**Appearance:** Long brown hair and green eyes

**Style:** Jeans, cowboy boots, and hoodies

**Personality traits:** Curious, loyal, and a rule-follower

**Horse:** Rio

**Discipline:** Western Dressage

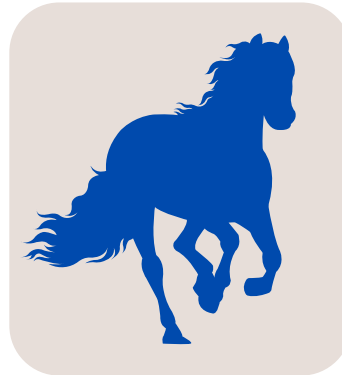
**Best Friend:** Piper

**Growing Skill:** Learning that true leadership takes heart

## *Fun facts about Charlie*

- Charlie is short for Charlotte
- An only child
- Barn color - blue

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# RIO

*Rios Sand Dancer*

**Breed:** Arabian

**Color:** Dark bay

**Age:** 15 years old

**Main discipline:** Western Dressage

**Personality:** Curious, willing, and full of potential

**Fun fact:** He is named after the Duran Duran song Rio

**Special note:** *Arabian Registrations don't allow punctuation in registered names.*

## *Fun facts about Rio*

- Rio is Charlie's second horse
- Loves the barn cats, Peaches and Hunter
- Favorite snack - carrots

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# PIPER

**Age:** Almost 14

**Appearance:** Freckles, bright blue eyes, fiery red hair

**Style:** Loves dresses, leggings, and hoodies

**Personality Traits:** Kind, sensitive, and thoughtful

**Horse:** Ben

**Discipline:** Dressage (English)

**Interests:** Cats, reading, and quiet moments

**Best Friend:** Charlie

## *Fun facts about Piper*

- Has two sisters, Wren and Lark
- Loves to read
- Barn color - green

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# BEN

*Spark the Revolution*

**Breed:** Arabian

**Age:** 18 years old

**Color:** Chestnut

**Main discipline:** Sport horse, dressage

**Personality:** Energetic and mischievous

**Fun fact:** If you don't watch out, he will slip out of his halter and take himself for a stroll down the barn aisle

## *Fun facts about Ben*

- Named for Benjamin Franklin
- Knows how to bow
- Favorite snack - apples

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# TANNER

**Age:** 14

**Appearance:** Tall with dark brown hair and blue eyes. He wears glasses.

**Style:** Jeans, button-down shirts when he isn't in breeches

**Horse:** Darcy

**Personality traits:** Friendly, peace-maker, learning to be a leader

**Discipline:** Classical dressage

## *Fun facts about Tanner*

- Hasn't shown at a rated show
- Barn color - is orange

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# DARCY

*Highland Dark One SRR*

**Breed:** Arabian

**Color:** Dark bay

**Age:** 15 years old

**Main discipline:** Sport horse, dressage

**Personality:** Athletic and graceful

**Fun fact:** Darcy can trace her roots back to an Irish Arabian stud farm

## *Fun facts about Darcy*

- Belongs to Vanessa
- Father is Balmoral
- Favorite snack - banana peel

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# ANNIE

**Age:** Almost 14

**Appearance:** Brown hair and eyes

**Style:** Casual, including t-shirts and jeans

**Personality Traits:** Friendly and helpful

**Horse:** Sunny

**Discipline:** Western Dressage

**Interests:** Watching TV, riding her horse

**Best Friends:** Charlie and Piper

## *Fun facts about Annie*

- Is the middle child
- Has four siblings
- Barn color - purple

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# SUNNY

*Sunny Daze Ahead*

**Breed:** Arabian

**Color:** Chestnut with a white blaze

**Age:** 15 years old

**Main discipline:** Western Dressage

**Personality:** Steady and sturdy

## *Fun facts about Sunny*

- Doesn't like water
- Favorite snack - oatmeal cookies

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# HARLOW

**Age:** 14

**Appearance:** Long blonde hair, blue eyes

**Style:** Anything as long as it's a brand name and expensive

**Horses:** Raven and Desdemona

**Personality traits:** Confident, self-assured, aloof

**Discipline:** Western Dressage, Sport Horse, and Classical dressage

## *Fun facts about Harlow*

- Rumor has it that her dad is looking for a third horse for her
- Parents are divorced
- Barn color - red

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# RAVEN

*Ghurab Alriyah*

**Breed:** Arabian

**Color:** Black

**Age:** 20 years old

**Main discipline:** Western Dressage

**Personality:** Fiesty, strong-willed

## *Fun facts about Raven*

- Name is Arabic for Wind Raven
- Favorite snack - horse cookies

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# DESDEMONA

*Desdemona of Bear Lake Farm*

**Breed:** Freisian/Arabian

**Color:** Black

**Age:** 19 years old

**Main discipline:** Classical dressage

**Personality:** Graceful, powerful

**Fun fact:** Desdemona has a National Championship win in dressage at Arabian Sport Horse Nationals

## *Fun facts about Desdemona*

- Named after Othello's wife
- Born at a Freisian Farm in Utah
- Favorite snack - watermelon

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# MAISIE

**Age:** 8

**Appearance:** Brown hair and hazel eyes

**Style:** Casual, including t-shirts and jeans

**Personality traits:** Friendly and outgoing

**Lesson Horse:** Bean

**Discipline:** Classical Dressage

**Interests:** Taking selfies with friends, horseback riding

**Best Friend:** Alina

## *Fun facts about Maisie*

- Wants to be like the big kids
- Has a younger brother
- Barn color - chocolate (because brown is too plain of a word)

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# BEAN

*Kraki from Sierra View Farm*

**Breed:** Icelandic Horse

**Color:** Pinto, brown and white

**Age:** 19 years old

**Main discipline:** English/Western

**Personality:** Small lesson horse, big attitude

**Fun fact:** Bean is known to test girls' balance while being steady for boy riders

## *Fun facts about Bean*

- Is an Icelandic Horse
- Name Kraki is Icelandic for bean stalk
- Favorite snack - horse treats

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# ALINA

**Age:** 8

**Appearance:** Dark brown hair, brown eyes

**Style:** Loves dresses, skirts, and Converse

**Personality Traits:** Friendly and outgoing

**Horse:** Chance

**Discipline:** Classical Dressage

**Interests:** Reading, horseback riding

**Best Friend:** Maisie

## *Fun facts about Alina*

- Has an older sister
- Barn color - teal

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# CHANCE

**Breed:** Welsh/Arabian cross

**Color:** Black

**Age:** 18 years old

**Main discipline:** English

**Personality:** Sturdy, responsive to his riders

## *Fun facts about Chance*

- Great first pony for new riders
- Loves carrots

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# Trail Ride RESCUE



1. Shadow Ridge Ranch
2. Shadow Ridge Vineyard
3. Moss Creek Trail
4. Oak Creek
5. Moss Creek
6. Moss Creek Falls
7. Trail to Cronan Ranch
8. Shadow Ridge
9. Shadow Ridge Ranch East Gate

# HORSE COOKIES

- 1 large apple
- 1 or 2 carrots
- 1 cup of molasses
- 2 1/2 cups of old-fashioned oats
- 9 x 13 baking sheet
- Parchment paper
- Optional - round peppermint candy (if wrapped be sure to unwrap first)

Get a parent's help with the oven.

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees
2. Grate the apple and carrots into a bowl. Add the old-fashioned oats and molasses. Mix well. Cover the baking sheet with parchment paper. Turn out mix on sheet and flatten out. Bake at 400 degrees until golden brown about 30-40 minutes. Keep an eye on it so it doesn't burn!
3. Optional. Scoop out mixture with a cookie dough scoop. Add a peppermint into the middle. You may need to roll in your hands. Sticky and fun!
4. Bake as directed above.

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# HAY BALE RICE TREATS

- 6 cups of crispy rice cereal
- 3 tablespoons of butter
- 1 10 oz package of marshmallows
- 9 x 13 pan well greased or lined with wax paper
- Optional - Color string licorice.

Get a parent's help with melting the butter.

In a saucepan, melt the butter over low heat. Add the marshmallows and stir until they have melted. Take the saucepan off the stove. Add the rice cereal and mix well. Turn out into the 9 x 13 pan and let cool.

When cool, cut into rectangles. For added fun, wrap the "hay" with a string licorice to act like baling twine!

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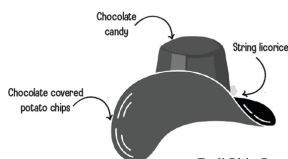
# CANDY COWBOY HATS

- Chocolate caramel candy
- Potato chips from a tube
- Chocolate candy melts
- 9 x 13 sheet lined with parchment paper
- Color string licorice

Get a parent's help to use the stove.

Melt the chocolate candy melt according to package directions. Dip the potato chip in chocolate and before it dries put a chocolate caramel candy on top. Wrap a piece of color string around the "brim" of the hat. Use a bit of melting chocolate to get it to stick.

Bonus - add candy stars to the front of the hat.

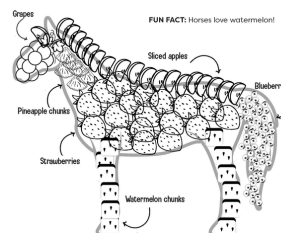


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# HORSE FRUIT PLATTER

- Cake board or serving platter
- Grapes
- Sliced apples, peaches or nectarines
- Watermelon, cantaloupe, or honey dew melon cut into squares
- Blueberries
- Pineapple chunks
- Strawberries

Get a parent's help to clean and cut the fruit. Layout the fruit in the shape of a horse using the guide below. Try it with vegetables instead! A perfect way to get involved with a summer family bbq or other event.



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