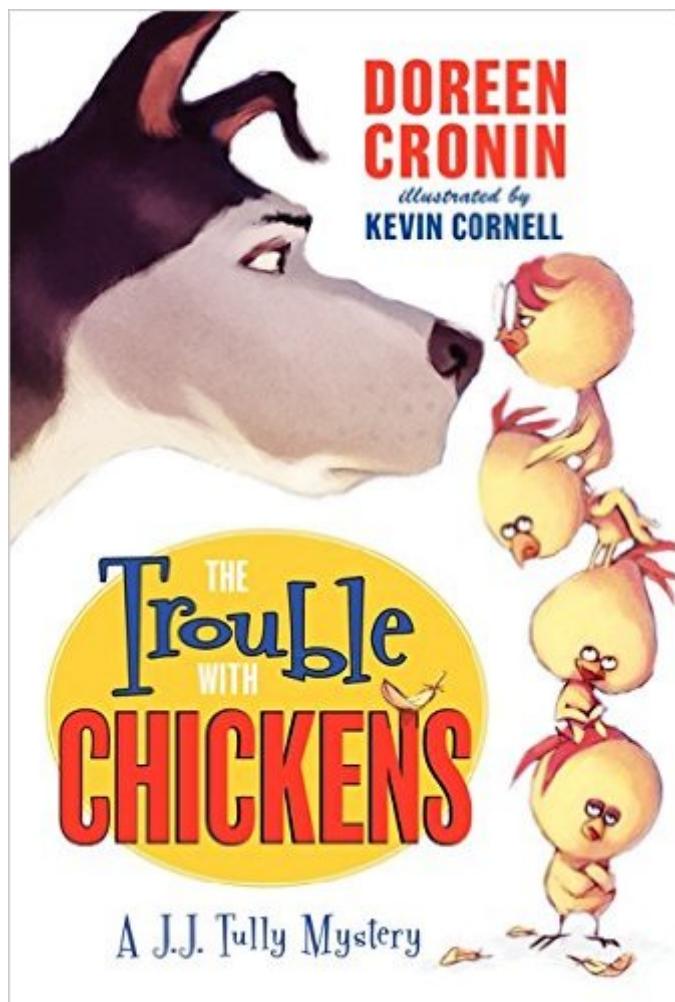


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# The Trouble With Chickens: A J.J. Tully Mystery (J. J. Tully Mysteries)



## Synopsis

J.J. Tully is a former search-and-rescue dog who is trying to enjoy his retirement after years of performing daring missions saving lives. So he's not terribly impressed when two chicks named Dirt and Sugar (who look like popcorn on legs) and their chicken mom show up demanding his help to find their missing siblings. Driven by the promise of a cheeseburger, J.J. begins to track down clues. Is Vince the Funnel hiding something? Are there dark forces at work or is J.J. not smelling the evidence that's right in front of him?

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 570 (What's this?)

Series: J. J. Tully Mysteries

Paperback: 144 pages

Publisher: Balzer + Bray; Reprint edition (January 24, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0061215341

ISBN-13: 978-0061215346

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 0.3 x 7.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 3.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars (See all reviews) (124 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #36,007 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #59 in Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Where We Live > Farm Life #117 in Books > Children's Books > Animals > Farm Animals #307 in Books > Children's Books > Animals > Dogs

Age Range: 6 - 10 years

Grade Level: 1 - 5

## Customer Reviews

For a book written at about a 2nd - 3rd grade reading level, I am very, VERY impressed. The story is narrated by J.J. Tully, a former search-and-rescue dog seeking some action in a boring retirement. He's a likable pooch that charmingly and humorously speaks in distinctively clipped 1940's overcoat-wearing, crusty, hardboiled, flatfoot speech. You halfway expect him to break into, "It was a dark and stormy night..." at any moment. He's like a retired gumshoe that gets wrapped up in a mystery with a couple of overeager chicks and their neurotic hen (er, mom). It's a funny set up that author Doreen Cronin gleefully runs with. The story is simple, as is the language, easily interpreted and enjoyed by a 2nd grader I know. The chapters are bite-sized episodes between 2 - 4

pages, keeping the action galloping along while giving the young reader manageable chunks of material. There are frequent and genuinely funny descriptions (mostly observations by J.J.) that will be enjoyed as much if not more by the adults reading along. The characters are strong and the dialogue is surprisingly sharp. As a professor of mine once said, "Good children's literature is GOOD LITERATURE." And "The Trouble with Chickens" is good literature that just happens to be written in simple english. This book comes highly recommended and I eagerly anticipate the next J.J. Tully mystery.

Children's noir might sound crazy but this book from Doreen Cronin and Kevin Cornell is a nifty little mystery great for reading out loud. To set the mood, I listened to Robert Mitchum's Philip Marlowe from *Farewell My Lovely* and adapted his gravelly delivery for the voice of J.J. Tully, the retired search and rescue dog. J.J. not only is the story's protagonist but also the laconic narrator through all but two of the 23 chapters. So, who narrates the other two chapters? Well, that would be Vince the Funnel, the villainous inside dog, described as "a cross between a dachshund and a lamp." For Vince, I initially considered a Peter Lorre impersonation but settled on Orson Welles' Harry Lime from *The Third Man*. With the narrative voices locked down, I added one more trick to keep my sons (ages 8 and 6) engaged in the story. We began each chapter with our own film noir soundtrack: da-dum-dum-ta-da-da-dum-dum with a cool finger snap for a beat with a single hi-hat. We read the book over three nights as the boys' bedtime reading. My sons focused mostly on Cornell's illustrations during the first night. My eldest son rolled his eyes as I led the film noir soundtrack into each new chapter. The noir style drew them in slowly. However, the night ended with a highlight, a silhouette of Vince the Funnel at the end of chapter eight. I had to hide the book for the second night, so my sons wouldn't read ahead before I got home from work. The eye rolling stopped. I had two enthusiastic finger snappers at the start of each chapter. They were critics, too. I mixed up a couple names only to be corrected by my six-year old, who flipped back to the book cover and named each chick. My boys woke up and searched the house for the book. They returned from school and searched again. By the time I returned home from work, they met me at the door. Fingers snapping, the third and last night was electric. The boys, sensing a double cross and a cliffhanger for J.J., pushed me through the last six chapters. I won't spoil the ending but, true to form, this whodunit ends with a (family-friendly) twist. Rating: Five stars. BTW: Parents looking for a noir treat of their own would enjoy *The Best American Noir of the Century*, a 39-story anthology I gave a five-star rating on in December 2010.

I once had the joy of reading "Click, Clack, Moo" to a group of first and second graders. They were rolling in the aisles! In Cronin's new chapter book, the laughs continue. JJ Tully is a retired search and rescue dog who is enlisted by a hare-brained hen to find her two missing chicks. Naturally, there is a villain and Vince the dog plays the part well. The story reads like a Bogart movie with dogs and chickens. JJ deduces that the chicks are held captive inside the house. He concocts a scheme to distract Vince and rescue the chicks. They discover, too late, that Vince has set a trap for JJ and has evil intentions for the chickens. Fortunately, in a surprising twist, the good guys win out and Vince is forced to face his punishment. The chapter book crowd will enjoy this book and laugh out loud when they encounter the crazy antics of the characters. Kevin Cornell's illustrations are delightful and comical.

I loved this book. It was one of those books that you pick up because you finally have kids and can now read it without explaining why you think it's humorous. I laughed the whole way through the book. The kids 7-14 enjoyed it. The story wasn't one to write about it's a typical kids mystery but the way it was written, well, let me say, if you have a dry sense of humor you'll love it. If you prefer slapstick probably not so much.

We are completely in love with Doreen Cronin books! We started with The Chicken Squad... and it was our spark. Our upcoming 2nd grader finally fell in love with reading, thanks to these adorable and mischievous chickens! In LOVE - find him under the covers with a booklight giggling about chickens - in love. We're anxiously awaiting the next Chicken Squad book, and in the meantime have started on the prequel JJ Tully Mysteries. Absolutely adorable, and just as enjoyable for parents as for the kids. Our son is working his way through the 2nd Chicken Squad independently, and we supplement by reading the JJ Tully books to him, which are a just a bit more advanced (i.e. less pictures, slightly smaller text than Chicken Squad, but still lots of great illustrations, and nice manageable chapter sizes).

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