



[Home](#) > [Topaz on Ice](#) | [Topaz Takes a Break](#) | [Topaz Takes the Stage](#)

Topaz on Ice | Topaz Takes a Break | Topaz Takes the Stage

Books Reviewed:

[Topaz on Ice](#) [1]

Books Reviewed:

[Topaz Takes a Break](#) [2]

Books Reviewed:

[Topaz Takes the Stage](#) [3]

Issue:

[163](#) [4]

Reviewer:

[Anne Faundez](#) [5]

News to Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

2

Aimed firmly at girls, as the sparkly covers make clear, here are stories about Topaz and her friends Sapphire and Ruby, all three pupils at Precious Gems Stage School.

Topaz Takes a Break finds the three girls at the end of their first year and ready to embark on their holidays at a water theme park. In **Topaz on Ice**, Topaz is determined to get a part in the Ice Spectacular even though she's never been near an ice rink in her life. In **Topaz Takes the Stage**, Sapphire's mum, a hugely egoistical film star with no redeeming qualities, writes a play about herself in which Topaz hopes for a star role. In all these books, Topaz is pitted against her arch enemy Octavia Quaver and her ghastly mum.

Yet, oddly, Topaz's own ambitions and cravings to be in the limelight are not far removed from those of Octavia and Mrs Quaver's. And this is the problem with the books: Topaz's values are just as questionable, and her concerns just as empty-headed, self-centred and trivial. Surely girls deserve better than this?

Running Order:

9

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Links:

[1] <http://typo3.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/topaz-on-ice>

[2] <http://typo3.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/topaz-takes-a-break>

[3] <http://typo3.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/topaz-takes-the-stage>

[4] <http://typo3.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/163>

[5] <http://typo3.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/anne-faundez>