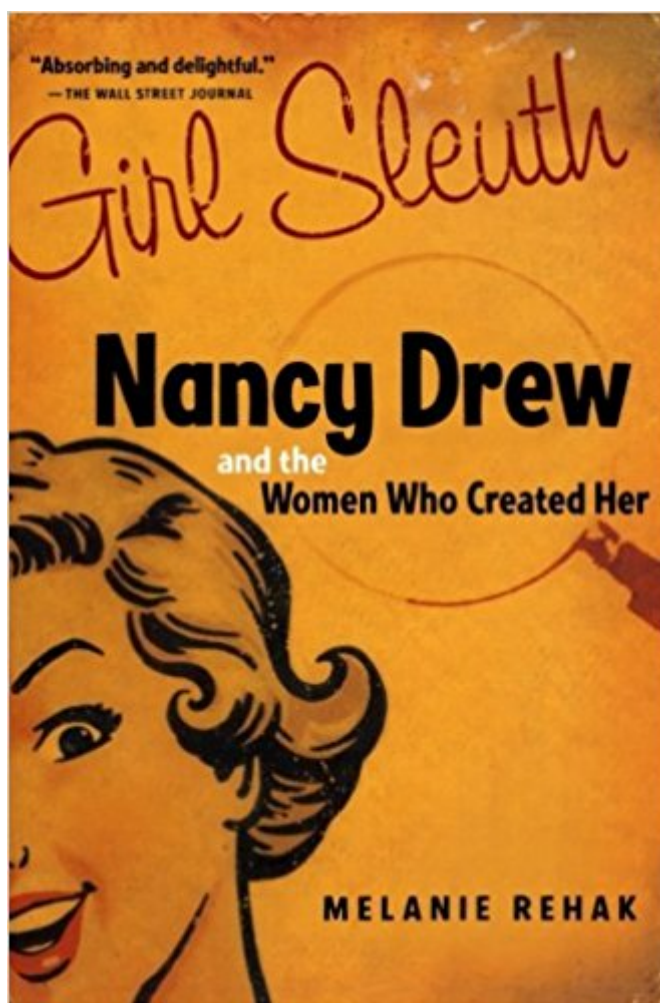




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Girl Sleuth: Nancy Drew And The Women Who Created Her



Synopsis

A plucky, red-haired sleuth solved her first mystery in 1930. Eighty million books later, Nancy Drew has survived the Depression, World War II, and the sixties (when she was taken up with a vengeance by women's libbers) to enter the pantheon of American girlhood. As beloved by girls today as she was by their grandmothers, Nancy Drew has both inspired and reflected the changes in her readers' lives. Here, in a narrative with all the vivid energy and page-turning pace of Nancy's adventures, Melanie Rehak solves an enduring literary mystery: Who created Nancy Drew? And how did she go from pulp heroine to icon? The brainchild of children's book mogul Edward Stratemeyer, Nancy was brought to life by two women: Mildred Wirt Benson, a pioneering journalist from Iowa, and Harriet Stratemeyer Adams, a well-bred wife and mother who took over as CEO after her father died. In this century-spanning story, Rehak traces their roles and Nancy's in forging the modern American woman.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The intrepid Nancy Drew has given girls a sense of their own power since she was born, Athena-like, from the mind of Edward Stratemeyer in 1929 and raised after his death in 1930 by his daughter Harriet Stratemeyer Adams and Mildred Wirt Benson, a journalist who was the first to write the novels under the pen name Carolyn Keene. Poet and critic Rehak invigorates all the players in the Drew story, and it's truly fun to see behind the scenes of the girl sleuth's creation, her

transformation as different writers took on the series, and the publishing phenomenon – the highly productive Stratemeyer Syndicate machine – that made her possible. Rehak's most ambitious choice is to reflect on how Nancy Drew mirrors girls' lives and the ups and downs of the women's movement. This approach is compelling, but not particularly well executed. Rehak's breathless prose doesn't do justice to the complexity of the large social trends she describes, and tangents into Feminism 101 derail the story that really works – the life of a publishing juggernaut. All the same, Stratemeyer himself would undoubtedly say that the story is worth telling. Drew fans are likely to agree. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Adult/High School-As much a social history of the times as a book about the popular series, this is a fun title that will appeal to older teens who remember the series fondly. In 1930, she arrived in her shiny blue roadster and she has remained a part of the children's book scene ever since. While Nancy may have been the brainchild of Edward Stratemeyer, creator of the successful Stratemeyer Syndicate, it was the devotion of Harriet, his daughter, and syndicate writer Mildred Wirt Benson who brought her to life. The series succeeded beyond anyone's wildest dreams but things were not always peaceful in River Heights. Rehak does a good job of explaining the intricacies of the Stratemeyer Syndicate and the sometimes-rocky relationship between these two strong women, each of whom felt a sense of ownership of the girl detective. Those who followed the many adventures of Nancy Drew and her friends will be fascinated with the behind-the-scene stories of just who Carolyn Keene really was.-Peggy Bercher, Fairfax County Public Library, VA Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

This book gives a very accurate history of Nancy Drew novels. Being fortunate to have started reading with Very old Bobbsey Twin books of my Grandmother, then some that were my Mothers and my own series, I also inherited the Outdoor Girls, Rover Boys, Marjorie books, The Blythe Girls, Patty Fairfield series(which I still have every pre war edition) my brother's 1950' Hardy Boys as well as a few Honey Bunch, Cherry Ames and the later Sue Barton books, I can actually state my great love for reading came from these series books. Fortunately, I had teachers who agreed with my parents that as long as I read what I liked, I would love to read! I still have some of the early editions , pre revisions that have dialect for the Black characters, usually servants; I didn't understand that children carried their own drinking cups as I always had paper cups at water fountains. My Mother explained how this was not the case in the 30's and I actually saw a water barrel with a ladle in

Alabama in the late 50's and knew from my Bobbsey book, not to drink! What a great read for a Nancy Drew fan!

When I was pre-teen and my mom would drag me to the grocery store for the weekly shopping, I would sit on the floor right by the book rack, surreptitiously reading the latest adventures of Nancy Drew and her 'chums' I just couldn't wait for Carolyn Keene to write another one! We didn't have money to buy books, but that didn't matter -- I had a library card! As I got older, I started to hear rumors that there was no such person as Carolyn Keene -- NO!!! How could that be? Of course she existed -- how could she write about Nancy if she didn't? A MAN? Absolutely not! More than one person? Who is making up these lies? Eventually it started to make sense, but I was never quite sure what to believe. Now I know the truth! One man's vision not only entertained young girls, but reinforced the mores of the day and made being 'nice' a good thing. I enjoyed every word written by Carolyn Keene, and re-read the books I have collected over the years. Now I chuckle at the writing style, and knowing there were several writers involved, am amazed at the continuity of the style itself and the characters involved. Rehak's book will enlighten and entertain you.

The history was really interesting and easy to follow. Enjoyed showing all the detail about the creator's lives before, during, and after the Nancy Drew series.

This is hands down one of my favorite books. It is an insightful look into my favorite childhood series. It is also an insightful look into American history. I just wish a little more respectful attention was paid to the end of the book about the Nancy Drew Case Files series.

Totally fascinating read for those of us who loved the original Nancy Drew books and have been searching for more background information on "the real Carolyn Keene". I've shared this book with many others who also enjoyed it.

As a long-time Nancy Drew fan, I had high hopes for this book. Yes, I knew as an adult the books were ghost-written. Of course, I didn't know that when I read the books as a child. Here are my problems with this book: loads of research about the founder of the Syndicate, almost too much. It was as if the author had all of this research and she felt obligated to use it. Then, in the middle of the book, after the World War II years were covered, the amount of detail dropped off. It was a bit unbalanced. And, as a non-fiction book, how about providing some pictures of the people involved

with this Syndicate: the founder, his two daughters, his wife, some of the ghost-writers and their spouses, etc. Maybe even some pictures of the book covers so the reader can visually see how Nancy Drew's image changed over the years. It wasn't that it was that bad; I was hoping for more. As a Nancy Drew fan (who still has all of the books from her childhood), I wanted more. I guess I'm greedy that way. Not bad if you can get it at a good price. I have the Kindle version. Perhaps the print version has pictures? I don't know.

This is a good biography and a nice overview of the publishing world of Nancy Drew and pulpdom at large. Gives great peeks behind the scenes into the creation of this most popular girl sleuth phenomenon. Goes hand in glove with *The Secret of the Stratemeyer Syndicate*. Handles a mountain of information quite well. Does not bog down and is a fun read. Melanie Rehak did a fantastic job. My mother would have loved this book as she was a lifelong Drew (and Bobbsey Twins, etc.) fan and introduced Nancy and the Hardy Boys to me as a child. Glad to see more studies like this appearing.

As an avid Nancy Drew fan, this book did not disappoint! I had known about the Stratemeyer Syn., Harriet S. Adams, and Mildred Wirt Benson, but to be able to take the journey back into history and see how the Nancy Drew books came to be, as well as many others that the Syn. wrote, was priceless. The incredible amount of time and effort that author Melanie Rehak took to research this book shows and *Girl Sleuth* a definite MUST for any Nancy Drew fan. I only have one question for the author . . . where is Mildred Wirt Benson's only daughter, Peggy Wirt, now?

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