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## Reading Article G1

### **Article #13: The Hardy Boys**

First introduced in 1927, The Hardy Boys Mystery Stories are a series of books about the adventures of brothers Frank and Joe Hardy, teenaged detectives who solve one baffling mystery after another. The Hardy Boys were so popular among young boys that in 1930 a similar series was created for girls featuring a sixteen-year-old detective named Nancy Drew.

The cover of each volume of The Hardy Boys states that the author of the series is Franklin W. Dixon; the Nancy Drew Mystery Stories are supposedly written by Carolyn Keene. Over the years, though, many fans of both series have been surprised to find out that Franklin

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The initial idea for both The Hardy Boys and the Nancy Drew series was developed by a man named Edward Stratemeyer, who owned a publishing company that specialized in children's books. Stratemeyer noticed the increasing popularity of mysteries among adults, and surmised that children would enjoy reading mysteries about younger detectives with whom they could identify. Stratemeyer first developed each book with an outline describing the plot and setting. Once he completed the outline, Stratemeyer then hired a ghostwriter to convert it into a book of slightly over 200 pages. After the ghostwriter had written a draft of a book, he or she would send it back to Stratemeyer, who would make a list of corrections and mail it back to the ghostwriter. The ghostwriter would revise the book according to Stratemeyer's instructions and then return it to him. Once Stratemeyer approved the book, it was ready for publication.

Because each series ran for so many years, Nancy Drew and The Hardy Boys both had a number of different ghostwriters producing books; however, the first ghostwriter for each series proved to be the most influential. The initial ghostwriter for The Hardy Boys was a Canadian journalist named Leslie McFarlane. A few years later, Mildred A. Wirt, a young writer from Iowa, began writing the Nancy Drew books. Although they were using prepared outlines as guides, both McFarlane and Wirt developed the characters themselves. The personalities of Frank and Joe Hardy and Nancy Drew arose directly from McFarlane's and Wirt's imaginations.

For example, Mildred Wirt had been a star college athlete and gave Nancy similar athletic abilities. The ghostwriters were also responsible for numerous plot and setting details. Leslie McFarlane used elements of his small Canadian town to create Bayport, the Hardy Boys' fictional hometown.

Although The Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew books were very popular with children, not

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Regardless of the debates about their literary merit, each series of books has exerted an undeniable influence on American and even global culture. Most Americans have never heard of Edward Stratemeyer, Leslie McFarlane, or Mildred Wirt, but people throughout the world are familiar with Nancy Drew and Frank and Joe Hardy.

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