



"Of course we can solve mysteries as well as grown-up detectives!" This was Nancy Drew's answer to a question from a group gathered in her living room in River Heights. "How would you like to form a Detective Club and have meetings at my house? Later we can solve some mysteries. What do you say?" Cheers and applause greeted this remark. Nancy suggests that you readers work along with the club and learn how to become amateur detectives.

Thus stated the introduction to the *Nancy Drew Sleuth Book* published by Grosset & Dunlap in 1979. This book was the Nancy Drew companion to the Hardy Boys' *Detective Handbook*, which had already been in print for some time.

This little collectible book, with cover art by Rudy Nappi, is not one of the easiest books to find at a reasonable price. Looking at the prices on AbeBooks, Amazon, and E-Bay, the prices range anywhere from \$25 to \$100, depending on the condition! *Farah's Guide* (11th printing) lists this book, in good condition, at \$20. The book has a yellow spine, like the other Nancy Drew books at the time, but the spine lacks the picture of Nancy in an oval, black frame. The book also stands nearly ¾" taller than the regular yellow-spined books.

The book has 10 chapters, with 152 pages. The chapters discuss various techniques for solving mysteries, such as handwriting, fingerprints, identification, codes, shoe prints, observation, lost and found, reading palms, listening to testimony, and hunting ghosts. Each chapter is a self-contained story in which Nancy's "Detective Club" ventures out to solve a mystery and for which Nancy explains how to use the technique for that chapter. While these may seem like some interesting topics, unfortunately, the book is not exactly consistent with the way they are "taught."

For example, the end of chapter one gives an explicit list of different styles of handwriting and what they mean so that the reader can compare handwritings to this list, yet chapter four on codes gives us nothing more than cryptograms to solve (and surely there are more codes out there than simple cryptograms, where each letter represents a different letter in the code). Then chapter six on observation really makes you stop and think about what you notice and don't notice when you are looking at people, while chapter eight on reading palms really doesn't assist at all in solving any mysteries (unless you plan to solve it by telling a fortune!).

Does this mean the book is not worth picking up and reading? Far from it! Some of the chapters are very informative, and most of the mysteries are actually rather cute (particularly chapter two – "The Strange Thumbprint" which leads Nancy and the Club to

discover the identity of the person who altered Peg's grandfather's will!).

The back of the book advertises that “[e]very reader of NANCY DREW MYSTERY STORIES has wished at some time that she, too, could solve a mystery. This is now possible with the few basic rules about sleuthing that Nancy teaches her Detective Club,” but it’s doubtful that this is the reason it has become such a hot commodity and has such a high collectibility factor. It is probably more to do with the fact that it was published at the end of Grosset & Dunlap’s run of Nancy Drew and the fact that it has never seen later editions or printings like the Hardy Boys’ *Detective Handbook*, which is still in print today. Who knows – with the news that *The Nancy Drew Cookbook* is coming back, maybe we will see a revival of this little collectible as well!