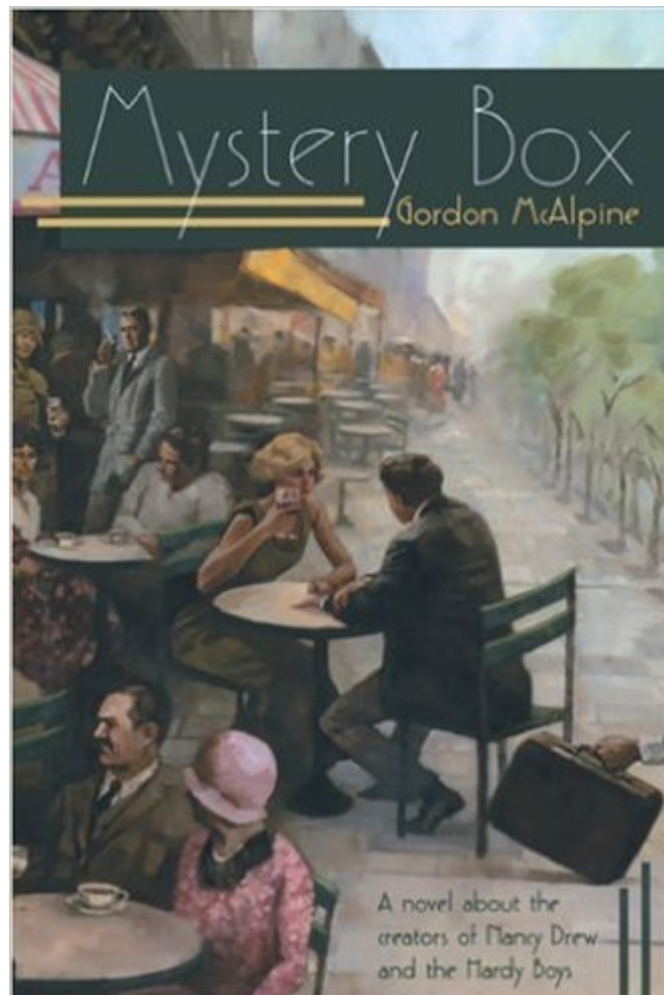


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# Mystery Box



## Synopsis

Mystery Box is the story of Franklin Dixon and Carolyn Keene, authors of the Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew mysteries. It's true that these two never actually lived in the real world, but the mystery of their identities has intrigued readers for years. Gordon McAlpine here imagines the lives behind these two well-loved American names. Following parallel escapes from awkward situations at home, Frank and Carolyn both find themselves in Paris in the 1920s, among the glittering expatriate literary circles. Frank, who initially made the trip overseas in search of his lost brother Joe, now runs his own detective agency and frequents the parlor of Gertrude Stein. Carolyn, who left River Heights when her young stepmother made her feel unneeded, has befriended Hemingway and Fitzgerald is trying to craft her own writing style. At the same time, though, Frank and Carolyn each pursue personal mysteries, deeper than those ever undertaken by their youthful characters. The world is full of betrayal and disillusionment. To find themselves, they must find each other—and the truths contained in their soon-to-be written fictions.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This novel presents many of the regular characters from the Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew series (Chet, Tony, Fenton, Laura, Bess and George among others) as friends of the fictional Frank Dixon and Carolyn Keene. The tale begins with two threads: Joe Dixon, Frank's brother, goes off to become a World War One aviator and is killed (or is he?) and Frank, already an amateur detective, goes to Europe to investigate. Meanwhile, Carson Keene, Carolyn's father, is about to marry a woman young enough to be Carolyn's sister and Carolyn, thinking only of Carson's happiness, flees

to Paris. In the course of their European adventures, both Frank and Carolyn meet up with and befriend some of the famous literati of the "Lost Generation", such as Gertrude Stein, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway. Frank discovers that Joe had married a French woman while overseas and sets about tracking her down, while Carolyn discovers that her step-mother had a somewhat shady past. Eventually Frank and Carolyn meet and, gasp, fall in love! Unfortunately, the course of true love never runs smooth and that, along with Carson's death, break the loving couple up, as Carolyn leaves Paris to return to River Heights. Never one to mope, Frank puts his time to good use in tracking down clues about his brother's long-lost wife - a trail which leads him to England. I don't want to give away the story here, I'm sure you'd rather find out for yourselves how this all turns out in the end. I enjoyed *Mystery Box* despite the somewhat improbable nature of the plot. I just find the premise of both Frank and Carolyn hobnobbing with some of the most famous writers of the 20th century a bit hard to swallow but if one suspends disbelief, it shouldn't bother you too much! The dialog rings fairly true, despite some lapses into sappy romanticism. Some of the action would not out of place in any one of your favorite series books. All in all, this is an enjoyable read for lovers of Nancy or the brothers Hardy.

This charming book provides the back story of Carolyn Keene and Fred Dixon 'authors' of the Nancy Drew and Hardy Boy series. Certainly not the story I have dreamed up all my childhood but a very intriguing story. Did you see the movie "Midnight in Paris?" if yes, then you will recognize many of the characters, their lives and how they all cross paths. Once I started, I did not want to put this book down. If you are a fan of Nancy Drew or the Hardy Boys- read "Mystery Box" - you will enjoy this story.

I have been a fan of the Hardy Boys since 1949 and eagerly read this book. I was Not disappointed. The author did a wonderful job weaving his story with Franklin and Carolyn among the literati of 1920's Paris. I hope that Mr. McAlpine sees it in his future to continue this interesting story as Joe's leaving his brother gives an opportunity to develop this adventure in another book.

Who is this book written for? It doesn't seem likely that the young adult crowd is far enough removed from such kid stuff as the Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew to appreciate a fictionalized back story of the "authors." On the other hand, the simplistic writing--especially the lumbering dialogue--is ill-suited to a nostalgic adult audience. With a less than compelling plot, this ends up a pale shadow of the books it pays homage to, and seems to exist primarily as a labored exercise in

name-dropping. There's plenty of alcohol and some oblique sex--more casual "realism" for our young adults--although none of it is necessary, and little of it rings true. Based on the premise, I hoped that this might be a good read for middle-schoolers. Unfortunately, it's not a good read for anybody.

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