

Enola Holmes and Nancy Drew: A Comparative Study

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Abstract. Enola Holmes and Nancy Drew are well-known personalities in the world of detective fiction. They are teen detectives. Nancy Springer created Enola's character and Edward Stratemeyer is the creator of Nancy Drew. Enola is presented as the sister of world-famous detective Sherlock Holmes. She belonged to the Victorian era. Nancy Drew initially belonged to the first half of the twentieth century. They have different personalities but they have some qualities in common. Both the characters are intelligent, witty, and brave. And what really unites them is their love for solving mysteries. They are amateur detectives. One thing that's also common between them is the effect they provide. Detective work needs some qualities such as observation, logic, deduction, etc. Both of them belonged to a time when women were not considered as intelligent creature. Thus, these characters prove that detective works can be done by women as well. The aim of this paper is to highlight the similarities and dissimilarities lie in their characters and how they are presented as an inspiration for women.

Keywords : Enola Holmes; Nancy Drew; teen detectives; detective fiction; amateur detectives.

Enola is the sister of Sherlock Holmes. They didn't live together because Sherlock left the house when Enola was a kid. They didn't get any chance to know each other. Sherlock came back when his and Enola's mother got disappeared one day all of a sudden. According to his speculation their mother left on purpose. Nobody kidnapped her. Both Enola and Sherlock are siblings but that's not the reason they are equally intelligent. In the story, what I have learnt is human intelligence depends on so many things especially the things that life teaches us. But it's impossible for one person specially at a very young age to experience all the shades of life. But at the same time there is another way to experience it- one can experience it if they can be able to see the world with somebody else's eyes. In the modern world, there are a lot of exposure for learners like movies, internet, TV shows, web series etc. But in the nineteenth century it was 'books' that could do something like that. And it was something that made Enola a genius detective like her brother- the one and only Mr. Sherlock Holmes.

Enola's mother brought Enola up in a very different way. She didn't give her a life that was common for girls during that time. No, she nurtured her differently. She introduced her to science, sports, and most importantly- books. She made her read so many books such as Shakespeare, Locke, Thackeray, Mary Wollstonecraft and other writers. Even Enola was interested in reading. She didn't do anything under pressure. She enjoyed everything and she learned a lot of things. She in fact learned from her mother too. Enola's mother wanted her to make her future the way

she wanted to and not the way people will want it for her. The things that Enola experienced in her childhood and her adolescence weren't common and usual for girls of that era. That's the reason they didn't get a chance to sharpen their brain. They didn't get any opportunity to know the world. The road that leads to knowledge was blocked for them. This world is a great teacher and one can learn plenty of things by knowing about it but women were not allowed to know this world as much as men did. The cheapest way to know the world is books. And that's what Enola's mother gave her. She opened the world of books for her. Enola is a character that shows women could have done a lot better if they were provided equal opportunities to gain knowledge.

Enola's mother Eudoria named her Enola which will be 'alone' if inverted. Eudoria was going to leave Enola in the future. May be that's why she named her that. Eudoria was trying to change the world for good. A world that would be better for women. A non-patriarchal world where women would be allowed to do whatever they want to do without having the 'fake ethical and moral burden' on their shoulders. She wanted to provide Enola this world. She had been indulged in a plan for this with few of her friends who had the same purpose. The name Enola is an example of cipher. Enola remarks about her name, "I WOULD VERY MUCH LIKE TO KNOW WHY my mother named me 'Enola,' which, backwards, spells 'alone'. Mum was, or perhaps still is, fond of ciphers, and she must have had something in mind, whether foreboding or a sort of left-handed blessing or, already, plans, even though my father had not yet passed away"(Springer, 12). Enola was taught to decipher from her mother. The other connotation of the word 'alone' can be the circumstance of Enola. She was a different girl and that can lead her to a different life- a life with no friends and husband. After all who would marry a girl like Enola in the nineteenth-century? A century where a girl who challenges the society cannot be accepted. It would be a disrespect for the 'superior patriarchal society.'

The debut novel of Enola Holmes is *The Case of the Missing Marquess*. It's a novel in the series of detective novels- *The Enola Holmes Mysteries* by Nancy Springer. It's a 'young adult fiction' series. This series was written from 2006- 2010. In total, there are six novels in this series. *The Case of the Missing Marquess*, *The Case of the Left-Handed Lady*, *The Case of the Bizarre Bouquets*, *The Case of the Peculiar Pink Fan*, *The Case of the Cryptic Crinoline*, and *The Case of the Gypsy Goodbye*. *The Case of the Missing Marquess* starts with the first mystery, i.e., the disappearance of Enola's mother which seems like the ultimate mystery of the story but later on the main mystery revealed as the disappearance of a marquess- a British Viscount.

Eudoria was a clever woman. She chose the perfect day to disappear. It was Enola's birthday. A day when people get gifts. Enola knew that her mother must have left something for her- a clue in form of a gift. She found it and it was a

cipher. It read ALO NEK OOL NIY MSM UME HTN ASYRHC. She decoded it in ALONEKOOLNIYMSMUMEHTN ASYRHC, which reads backward like this- CHRYSANTHEMUMSMYINLOOKENOLA. And finally Enola was able to read the note correctly. A note that has the real message from her mother- ENOLA LOOK IN MY CHRYSANTHEMUMS. And she found the 'real gift' in the chrysanthemums painting of her mother's. The one that her mother painted. The backside of the frame had some money- 'the real gift'. Eudoria left it to Enola because an alone girl would definitely need it for survival.

Enola's elder brother Mycroft and Sherlock wanted to send her to a boarding school where girls learn all the social etiquettes like- how to talk, how to walk, how to laugh, how to think etc. Enola knew it wasn't a place for her. She told her brothers :

Mum had sent me to school with the village children, and after I had learned all I could there, she had told me I would do quite well on my own, and I considered that I had. I'd read every book in Ferndell Hall's library, from *A Child's Garden of Verses* to the entire *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.(35)

"I have read Shakespeare", I replied, "and Aristotle, and Locke and the novels of Thackeray, and the essays of Mary Wollstonecraft". (36) But Mycroft was rigid to send her there as she was 'barbaric' according to him and should be taught girly things and mostly things that make a woman a lady. Enola wasn't a corset girl. Enola was an embodiment of a 'modern woman' in the Victorian society. A woman whom the society wasn't ready to accept. The creator of Enola Holmes, Nancy Springer's description of the Victorian period in the story is remarkable. It shows her well- understanding of the era. She's an American writer but the way she described British culture is amazing. She herself got the knowledge through historical documentation and coloring books. She studied Victorian literature also that helped her out with the perfect and vivid description. Enola didn't want the life that was decided for the girls of this era- the life that Mycroft was trying to create for her. she knew that she only had one option which is to run away. So, she ran away in the disguise of a boy with the money her mum left to her. While Enola was trying to cope up with the situation of her disappeared mother, she got another case to solve, the mystery related to the Viscount Tewksbury, Marquess of Basilwether. His life was in danger because of his part of vote. There were people who were trying to kill him for the same reason his father was killed. He was a titular marquess. Enola solved the mystery and in the end readers got to know that Tewksbury's grandmother was the real culprit. It was who hired an assassin to kill Tewksbury. According to her it was a sacrifice for England. It wasn't like she didn't love her son and grandson but her love for England was greater. In the end of the story everything was sorted except the mystery of her mother. Netflix made a movie on this story that was released in September 2020. Millie Bobby Brown played the

character of Enola Holmes.

Enola Holmes's character reminds me of another teen detective – Nancy Drew. She is the female teen detective character created by Edward Stratemeyer. He belonged to the last half of the nineteenth-century and first quarter of the twentieth-century. He is considered to be one of the most prolific American writers particularly in the field of Children's Fiction. Some of his well-known books are *The Rover Boys*, *The Bobbsey Twins*, *Tom Swift*, *The Hardy Boys*, and *Nancy Drew series*. Nancy Drew series' original span ran from 1930 to 2003. Nancy Drew played the main character in Nancy Drew, Girl Detective series that started in 2004 and ended in 2012. In this series, Nancy Drew was presented as a modern character. It was different from her portrayal in her debut story- "The Secret of the Old Clock" that came in 1930. It was quite different from Enola Holmes as well since Enola belonged to the Victorian era- the era her brother, Sherlock Holmes belonged to. Though Nancy Springer created Enola's character approximately in the same time period but she set the background in the Victorian era. But Nancy belonged to the contemporary world in this series. She used modern techniques like mobile phones, hybrid electric vehicles etc. though many readers couldn't digest this modern version of Nancy Drew. Sometimes change is not a good thing and that's what happened to this series. But that doesn't effect the popularity of the character.

Since the debut of Nancy Drew, she has been one of the most likeable and popular characters. Nancy Drew solved the first case in "The Secret of the Old Clock". It was the first volume in the series- *Nancy Drew Mystery Stories*. The authors who wrote these stories used the pseudonym- Carolyn Keene. Harriet Stratemeyer, the daughter of Edmund Stratemeyer, rewrite it in 1959. She increased her age from 16 to 18 in her stories. In "The Secret of the Old Clock", she is a sixteen year old girl with an extraordinary wits and observance power. Carson Drew, her father, is a famous criminal defence lawyer. The background of the story is set in River Heights. The story revolves around Nancy's efforts and bravery in terms of getting justice to the Turners whom she met coincidentally through a little girl, Judy, whom she saved. Mary and Edna Turner are Judy's aunt and caretaker but because of some financial issues they were quite worried about the future. Nancy got to know that Josiah Crowley who happens to be their cousin has died recently and he had left some fortune for them but the other cousins- the Tophams are the barrier. They are rich people and are known in the town for the rich arrogance. The new will was supposedly in the old clock. Josiah put it in there. And Nancy was looking for that clock so that the other heirs of the will who are extremely needy will be helped and will get what they deserve. Nancy ultimately finds the clock but it wasn't an easy task. She had to fight some thieves in order to get it. Nancy knows how to use a clue in a correct manner. When Nancy found Josiah's note in the clock she instantly understood that there was another will made by Josiah. The note reads, "To whom it may concern: My last will and testament will be found in safety deposit box number 148 in the Masonville National Bank. The box is under

the name of Josiah Harkston”(Keene, 179). The clue that Nancy’s active brain caught here was the ink. It was used recently and it was more fresh and clear in comparison to the earlier entries in the note book. Because of Nancy’s detective work, this story ends on a happy note where justice was served. And all the rightful heirs got their part of money that was sufficient. These heirs were the Turners, the Hoovers, Abby and the Mathews brothers.

Overall Nancy Drew's stories revolve around a small town mysteries, a small town with a lot of secrets. One of the most famous adaptations of Nancy Drew stories is Nancy Drew- a 2019 TV series. This series came for the very first time on 9 October 2019. It got mixed reviews but profit was definitely there and that’s why the other two seasons followed back to back. Kennedy McMann fits into Nancy’s character quite well.

Both Enola Holmes and Nancy Drew are teen detectives. They both belonged to the time when women’s intelligence was a ‘next to impossible’ thing. The creation of these characters was a hope in the world of detective fiction. A hope that women can be the heroes in this novel genre. They were also a ‘hope’ for those women who wanted to acquire knowledge, those women who wanted to be real detectives and those women who dreamt of doing new things in their lives. There are some differences in both of their characters such as Enola was trained by her mother but Nancy lost her mother when she was just a baby. Books plays a very important role in Enola’s life but that kind of reference isn’t there in the description of Nancy’s character. But the source of their intelligence doesn’t matter, what matters is that they both are inspiration for a lot of girls and women. They are amateur detectives. They solve mysteries because they like to do it. They didn’t take any training for what they do but who needs training when they have will power and determination to work hard to achieve what they want.

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