

# Children

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Children



## Mysterious girl

Ahead of this week's release of the **Nancy Drew** movie, **Kate McAuley** reminisces on the books that engendered her with a life-long love of reading.

Long before Hogwarts and Harry Potter, when life seemed a whole lot simpler and I was what people now nauseatingly call a 'teenie', I was drawn into the world of ace detective Nancy Drew. At least once a week, I'd skulk into the school library during lunch, leaving my contemporaries behind in the playground to practice their prowess on the monkey bars or run squealing from the boys in fast-paced games of 'catch and kiss', to get my next mystery/adventure fix.

I just couldn't get enough of the stories, which transported me out of the dreary northern Sydney suburbs of my youth to the exotic sounding (to my young ears anyway) fictitious town of River Heights, USA. At night, I would hide under my blanket, long after lights out, with a torch that I had stolen from

my father's tool shed, and read well into the early hours. From the comfort of my bedroom, I escaped into a world of intrigue, where Nancy used her intelligence and ingenuity to solve mystery after mystery.

As a shy and relatively sheltered child, I lived vicariously through Nancy with each case she solved. Where she was outrageously adventurous and independent, exploring hidden passages and walking through the woods at night, I was afraid of my own shadow. Where she was fashionable, wearing the intriguingly named penny loafers (whatever they are) and driving a sporty blue roadster, I was seen riding about town on a beaten up old bicycle dressed in my blue tartan school uniform or something my mother had

constructed. Where she was popular and had a boyfriend, I only had a few close friends and boys were still alien to me.

I also took comfort in the fact that I wasn't alone in my love of the books. In my clandestine trips to the library, I'd often spy other bleary-eyed devotees scanning the shelves for *The Double Jinx Mystery* or *The Invisible Intruder*. There was an unspoken rule between us – reading wasn't cool, and we steadfastly kept each other's secret. We weren't, however, the first to discover the addictive adventures of the teenage detective. It was the mid-80s and the copies on the library shelves were well-thumbed with index cards that had entries dating back to before I was born.

In fact, Nancy had been around since the 1930s, when Edward Stratemeyer of the Stratemeyer Syndicate conceived the idea for the series and several women and a few men wrote the novels under the pseudonym of Carolyn Keene. The books were a hit with young girls for decades selling, to date, around 200 million copies. But today, 20 years after I first discovered Nancy, the books seem to have lost their appeal, replaced on the library shelves by more sophisticated books, such as JK Rowling's magical tomes and the fantastical *Princess Diaries* series, by Meg Cabot. 'I've tried to get my 10-year-old daughter Lily to read them,' says Jennifer Watson, a friend and fellow Nancy fan. 'But she's just not interested. There's not much in the stories that she can relate to, and they really do seem so dated now.'

So, with the books' popularity waning, it comes as quite a surprise that Hollywood has made Nancy Drew, the movie, albeit with a few necessary changes to bring it up to date. Starring Emma Roberts (daughter of sitcom star Eric and niece of *Pretty Woman* Julia) as Nancy, our young hero is forced to move from River Heights to California, where she attends the rather pathetically named Hollywood High School. After reading some of the reviews, however, I'm reassured that not everything has changed. The super sleuth is still the brave, true-to-herself young heroine of the books, keen on solving mysteries.

For the film version, she's investigating the unexplained death of Dehlia Draycott, a famous actress. I'm also relieved that her sense of fashion hasn't changed either (well it's called vintage nowadays, isn't it?), and that Nancy dons a pair of penny loafers in the movie.

So come Thursday, when the film is released, it looks as though another mystery will be solved. And who knows, perhaps the movie will encourage young girls to discover the books for themselves, creating a whole new generation of fans. I'll keep my fingers crossed. ● *Nancy Drew hits cinema screens across Dubai on August 23.*

## Listings

### Advice for readers

Activities are listed alphabetically. Company and venue names are listed alphabetically under each activity. If you have any comments or suggestions, please ring *Time Out Dubai* on 04 210 8149.

### Advice for contributors

Listings must arrive by the Sunday of each week. Include the name of the activity/event, venue, contact details and website, taxi landmark, cost, start and end times, and a short description. Email information to [marcus.webb@itp.com](mailto:marcus.webb@itp.com). Listings are free, but as space is limited, inclusion is not guaranteed.

## Arts and crafts

### Café Céramique (04 344 7331)

Taxi: *Jumeirah Beach Road*. [www.cafe-ceramique.com](http://www.cafe-ceramique.com); [info@cafe-ceramique.com](mailto:info@cafe-ceramique.com). Enjoy a cup of coffee while the kids get creative, painting a range of pottery.

**Crafters Home** (04 343 3045) *Shop M-67, mezzanine floor, Mazaya Centre, Sheikh Zayed Road*. Taxi: *Mazaya Centre*. [c\\_home@emirates.net.ae](mailto:c_home@emirates.net.ae). Sat-Thu 9am-9pm; Fri 4pm-9pm. In-shop studio where kids can get decorative with ceramic painting, sand art and jewellery making.

**Elves & Fairies** (04 344 9485) Taxi: *Jumeirah Centre on Beach Road*. Email [jmeadows@emirates.net.ae](mailto:jmeadows@emirates.net.ae). Art store that runs a variety of workshops.

**The Original & Unique Art Gallery** (04 394 8808) Taxi: *Al Wasl Road, Jumeirah*. Creative classes where children explore arts through drawing, painting, sculpture, pottery and creative collage. Experienced European artists are on hand to help guide children and answer their art queries.

## Cookery

**Minichefs** (04 361 6117) *Dubai Media City, Loft 3, Entrance B*. [www.cooking-sense.com](http://www.cooking-sense.com). One-off classes are Dhs60, monthly Dhs200 and quarterly Dhs480. A wide variety of meals, packed lunches and snack recipes are taught in easy-to-follow steps by the centre's expert chefs.

## Equipment

**Rent-A-Crib** (050 253 2535) [www.rentacrib.ae](http://www.rentacrib.ae), [info@rentacrib.ae](mailto:info@rentacrib.ae). Equipment from Dhs30 per week (car seats, cots, high chairs and buggies from Dhs90 per week). Rent baby and toddler equipment. Hire car seats, cots, strollers, high chairs, toys, safety equipment, beds, wheelchairs etc. Hygiene and quality control. Free delivery and collection.

## Fencing

**Fencing Club** (04 343 0000 / 050 626 7440) Taxi: *The Metropolitan, Dimension Club, Sheikh Zayed Road*. [www.dubaifencing.com](http://www.dubaifencing.com). Sat, Mon and Wed 7pm-8pm. The Fencing Club at the Metropolitan Hotel invites all levels of fencers to join them for training and to take part in their competitions. They will also provide you with all the right equipment, ensuring a safe and active time.

**The Quay Health Club** (04 366 6821) Taxi: *Mina A' Salam, Madinat Jumeirah*.