

## Keene Novels That Had Major Themes in ‘Nancy Drew’

By Rebecca Carlyle | Last modified: August 29, 2023



The original 56 Nancy Drew novels were the best. (Image: Harbinger Publications)

If, like me, you were obsessed with the original 56 “Nancy Drew Mystery” novels, then you may be taking the [CW show](#) as a completely separate entity. If you’re paying close attention, however, you’ll notice all the nods and themes from the novels.

Some of my favorite Easter eggs include the color representation of the Claw and the uniforms, which feature blue, green, yellow, and red taken from the 1950s Nancy Drew board game; Keene High School, named after the books’ author, Carolyn Keene; Nancy’s classic blue roadster, which she always drives in the books; and my personal favorite — the Tandy’s in Season One, which refers to Russell H. Tandy, the artist who did the covers for the original books.

Those are just a handful of Easter eggs, but what about the plotlines from the novels? You might miss them if you’re not looking, so I rounded them all up.

### The Newspaper Wall



Nancy’s bulletin board is covered with newspaper clippings. (Image: CBS Television Studios)

If you blinked, you probably missed the shot of Nancy’s bulletin board with all the newspaper clippings from cases she’s solved. Even if you saw it, you’d need to pause the episode to read all the titles. Don’t worry about zooming in on the photo, since I’ve collected all the titles and paired them with the corresponding books.

- 📰 “Daughter of Local Attorney Discovers Client’s Missing Will in Antique Clock” → Book No. 1, “The Secret of the Old Clock”
- 📰 “Wooden Lady Missing From Ship; Young Detective Investigates Hidden Relic” → Book No. 27, “The Secret of the Wooden Lady”
- 📰 “Girl Detective Uncovers Secrets of Pine Hill” → Book No. 42, “The Phantom of Pine Hill”
- 📰 “Girl Detective Aids Police; Hollow Oak Mystery Solved” → Book No. 12, “Message in the Hollow Oak”
- 📰 “Kidnapping Plot Uncovered — Ivory Charm Key Evidence” → Book No. 13, “The Mystery of the Ivory Charm”
- 📰 “Precious Sapphire Still Missing” → Book No. 45, “The Spider Sapphire Mystery”
- 📰 “Missing Girl Found Alive Behind Hidden Staircase by 7th Grade Honor Student” → Book No. 2, “The Hidden Staircase”
- 📰 “Keene High Sophomore Exposes Poor Treatment of Elderly Residents at Larkspur Lane Nursing Home, Prompting State Authorities to Shut Facility Down” → Book No. 10, “The Password to Larkspur Lane”
- 📰 “Girl Finds Missing Keys; Treasure Discovered” → Book No. 28, “The Clue of the Black Keys”
- 📰 “Nancy Drew, ‘Girl Detective,’ Uncovers Cache of Gilded Age Stolen Jewelry at Lilac Inn, Solving One of Horseshoe Bay’s Longest-Running Cold Cases” → Book No. 4, “The Mystery at Lilac Inn”

### ‘The Secret in the Old Attic’



The show replicated the book cover image in the episode. (Image: CBS Television Studios)

The first season is an ode to the Nancy Drew Mystery Stories. Some are obscure, but this one is pretty blatant. The artwork on the cover of “The Secret in the Old Attic” depicts Nancy opening a trunk in a dark attic with a flashlight in hand. When Nancy (Kennedy McMann) finds Lucy Sable’s (Lizzie Boys/Stephanie Van Dyck) dress in her family’s attic, the show painstakingly replicates the book’s cover image so fans won’t miss the reference. In both the novel and the TV show, the contents of the trunk lead to revealing secrets that ultimately solve a case.

### ‘The Secret of the Old Clock’



Ned (Nuri Kazim) and Nancy discuss the importance of an old clock. (Image: CBS Television Studios)

This plotline is also fairly easy to spot, since the old clock is designed to look like the one in the book’s cover art. The clock contains a hidden compartment that conceals a clue that unravels a mystery. In the novel, the clock held Josiah Crowley’s will, whereas in the show, it has a thumb drive that belonged to a dead girl, Tiffany Hudson (Sinead Curry). In both mediums, the contents inform Nancy about the deceased’s wishes.

### ‘The Mystery of the Lilac Inn’



The Lilac Inn is only featured in a few episodes. (Image: CBS Television Studios)

The Lilac Inn is referenced in one of the newspaper clippings about mysteries Nancy has already solved, referring to the original plotline about jewelry theft. But the storyline doesn’t end there. Nancy discovers that Tiffany, the recently murdered woman Nancy is investigating, has purchased and been renovating the Lilac Inn. The show couldn’t just leave it there, of course, and included a scene or two of Nancy exploring and discovering secrets inside the inn.

### ‘The Secret of Shadow Ranch’



Bess (Maddison Jaizani) and Nancy gaze at an old painted portrait. (Image: CBS Television Studios)

This one took some thinking, so it was probably missed by many Nancy Drew fans. Shadow Ranch isn’t featured in the show’s second season — nor is there a ghost horse — but the backstory of the haunting is what caught my attention. The novel features a twisted backstory of love, betrayal, and long-held grudges. If you’ve seen the show, your alarm bells should go off. The legend of the Algacea is derived from the untimely murder of Odette Lamar (Anja Savcic) by Marvin and Hudson’s ancestors, separating Odette from her true love. She now haunts the town as the Algacea.

### ‘The Mystery of the Brass-Bound Trunk’



Diana Marvin (Judith Maeland) and Bess Marvin spend quality time together. (Image: CBS Television Studios)

The episode is named after “The Spider Sapphire Mystery,” the 45th novel in the series, but I believe it has elements of the 17th, “The Mystery of the Brass-Bound Trunk.” In the episode, Bess Marvin (Maddison Jaizani) steals a spider sapphire from the elder Diana Marvin (Judith Maeland). She only does it because an ex-boyfriend reappears in her life, causing havoc, threatening her, and forcing her to steal the bracelet off Diana’s wrist. This boyfriend turns out to be an international jewel thief — as is the perpetrator in the “The Mystery of the Brass-Bound Trunk.”

### ‘The Clue of the Tapping Heels’



Nancy is an expert at decoding. (Image: CBS Television Studios)

Nancy proves time again that she can decode pretty much anything, so it shouldn’t be a surprise that she understands Morse code. In book No. 16, “The Clue of the Tapping Heels,” she investigates the mysterious tapping sounds that occur at night in the home of a retired actress. During her investigation, Nancy is kidnapped and uses Morse code to tap the walls to communicate. In the TV series, Ace (Alex Saxon) is being held in an alternate space and uses Morse code on Nancy’s shoulder to alert her to his whereabouts. Even though he’s lost in the ether, she feels it and understands.

### ‘The Mystery of the Moss-Covered Mansion’



The moss-covered mansion is an ongoing theme. (Image: CBS Television Studios)

In Season 3, Nancy investigates a supposedly haunted moss-covered mansion that’s abandoned deep in the woods. That’s the exact plotline from book No. 18, “The Mystery of the Moss-Covered Mansion.” The person inhabiting the house on the show is one of Nancy’s ancestors on the Hudson side, which is part of a season-long arc that features Nancy sneaking into the building and scouting out clues. The mystery of the moss-covered mansion is ultimately solved, but the house itself continues to be featured on the show into Season 4 as the headquarters for Drew Private Investigations.

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