

## • Reading Comprehension 2 Level 9

**Directions:** Read the passage. Then answer the questions below.

First introduced in 1927, The Hardy Boys Mystery Stories are a series of books about the adventures of brothers Frank and Joe Hardy, teenaged detectives who solve one baffling mystery after another. The Hardy Boys were so popular among young boys that in 1930 a similar series was created for girls featuring a sixteen-year-old detective named Nancy Drew. The cover of each volume of The Hardy Boys states that the author of the series is Franklin W. Dixon; the Nancy Drew Mystery Stories are supposedly written by Carolyn Keene. Over the years, though, many fans of both series have been surprised to find out that Franklin W. Dixon and Carolyn Keene are not real people. If Franklin W. Dixon and Carolyn Keene never existed, then who wrote The Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew mysteries?

The Hardy Boys and the Nancy Drew books were written through a process called ghostwriting. A ghostwriter writes a book according to a specific formula. While ghostwriters are paid for writing the books, their authorship is not acknowledged, and their names do not appear on the published books. Ghostwriters can write books for children or adults, the content of which is unspecific. Sometimes they work on book series with a lot of individual titles, such as The Hardy Boys and the Nancy Drew series.

The initial idea for both The Hardy Boys and the Nancy Drew series was developed by a man named Edward Stratemeyer, who owned a publishing company that specialized in children's books. Stratemeyer noticed the increasing popularity of mysteries among adults, and **surmised** that children would enjoy reading mysteries about younger detectives with whom they could identify. Stratemeyer first developed each book with an outline describing the plot and setting. Once he completed the outline, Stratemeyer then hired a ghostwriter to convert it into a book of slightly over 200 pages. After the ghostwriter had written a draft of a book, he or she would send it back to Stratemeyer, who would make a list of corrections and mail it back to the ghostwriter. The ghostwriter would revise the book according to Stratemeyer's instructions and then return it to him. Once Stratemeyer approved the book, it was ready for publication.

Because each series ran for so many years, Nancy Drew and The Hardy Boys both had a number of different ghostwriters producing books; however, the first ghostwriter for each series proved to be the most influential. The initial ghostwriter for The Hardy Boys was a Canadian journalist named Leslie McFarlane. A few years later, Mildred A. Wirt, a young writer from Iowa, began writing the Nancy Drew books. Although they were using prepared outlines as guides, both McFarlane and Wirt developed the characters themselves. The personalities of Frank and Joe Hardy and Nancy Drew arose directly from McFarlane's and Wirt's imaginations. For example, Mildred Wirt had been a star college athlete and gave Nancy similar athletic abilities. The ghostwriters were also responsible for numerous plot and setting details. Leslie McFarlane used elements of his small Canadian town to create Bayport, the Hardy Boys' fictional hometown.

Although The Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew books were very popular with children, not everyone approved of them. Critics thought their plots were unrealistic and even far-fetched, since most teenagers did not experience the adventures Frank and Joe Hardy or Nancy Drew did. The way the books were written also attracted criticism. Many teachers and librarians objected to the ghostwriting process, claiming it was designed to produce books quickly rather than create quality literature. Some libraries—including the New York Public Library—even refused to include the books in their children's collections. Ironically, this decision actually helped sales of the books, because children simply purchased them when they were unavailable in local libraries.

Regardless of the debates about their literary merit, each series of books has exerted an undeniable influence on American and even global culture. Most Americans have never heard of Edward Stratemeyer, Leslie McFarlane, or Mildred Wirt, but people throughout the world are familiar with Nancy Drew and Frank and Joe Hardy.

## Questions

- 1) According to the passage, the Nancy Drew mystery series was introduced in
- A. 1925
  - B. 1927
  - C. 1929
  - D. 1930
- 2) Which of the following would be the best title for this passage?
- A. Ghostwriting: A Way of Life
  - B. Who Were Leslie McFarlane and Mildred A. Wirt?
  - C. The Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew: Ghostwriting a Series
  - D. The Dubious yet Profitable Practice of Ghostwriting
- 3) According to the passage, which of the following people was a real writer?
- A. Carolyn Keene
  - B. Franklin W. Dixon
  - C. Leslie McFarlane
  - D. Tom Hardy
- 4) According to the passage, a ghostwriter is someone who
- I. writes about mysterious or strange events
  - II. does not receive credit as the author
  - III. bases his or her books on predetermined guidelines
- A. I only
  - B. I and II only
  - C. II and III only
  - D. I, II, and III
- 5) As used in paragraph 3, which is the best definition for **surmised**?
- A. guessed
  - B. questioned
  - C. knew
  - D. proved
- 6) According to the passage, The Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew books were created based on the idea that
- I. mystery books for adults are popular
  - II. children enjoy reading about characters they can relate to
  - III. girls and boys are not interested in the same things
- A. I only
  - B. I and II only (CORRECT)
  - C. II and III only
  - D. I, II, and III

- 7) Based on information in the passage, it can be inferred that Leslie McFarlane and Mildred Wirt
- A. disliked writing according to a specific formul
  - B. respected the art of ghostwriting
  - C. were unsuccessful in their previous occupations
  - D. found it helpful to write from personal experience
- 8) According to the passage, some teachers and librarians objected to ghostwritten books such as The Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew Mystery Stories because they
- A. disapproved of mystery stories
  - B. thought the books were too expensive
  - C. believed the books were not quality literature
  - D. disliked Edward Stratemeyer's questionable business practices
- 9) Which of the following best describes the author's attitude toward The Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew book series?
- A. balanced and respectful
  - B. doubtful and critical
  - C. hostile but forgiving
  - D. overwhelmingly praising
- 10) Which of the following best describes the structure of this passage?
- A. introduction, explanation, history, controversy, conclusion
  - B. introduction, history, controversy, explanation, conclusion
  - C. history, explanation, summary, conclusion, controversy
  - D. history, controversy, explanation, summary, conclusion

## Answers and Explanations

1) **D**

In paragraph 1, the author writes, "The Hardy Boys were so popular among young boys that in 1930 a similar series was created for girls featuring a sixteen-year-old detective named Nancy Drew." Using this information, we can understand that this "similar series...for girls" was the Nancy Drew mystery series. Therefore **(D)** is correct. In paragraph 1, the author states, "First introduced in 1927, The Hardy Boys Mystery Stories are a series of books about the adventures of brothers Frank and Joe Hardy, teenaged detectives who solve one baffling mystery after another." This means that it was the Hardy Boys mystery series that was introduced in 1927, not the Nancy Drew mystery stories. Since the question asks about the Nancy Drew books, **(B)** is incorrect. The passage does not contain information to support answer choices **(A)** and **(C)**. Therefore they are incorrect.

2) **C**

A good title summarizes the main idea of a passage and lets readers know what to expect should they continue reading. In paragraph 1, the author introduces the subject of this passage: The Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew book series. However, the author only briefly discusses the content of these books. At the beginning of paragraph 2, the author states, "The Hardy Boys and the Nancy Drew books were written through a process called ghostwriting." This sentence further narrows the author's subject to a discussion of how the Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew books were created. In the following paragraphs, the author continues to describe the process of ghostwriting in general and the specific role it played in the creation of the Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew series. Since the author uses the examples of the Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew to explain the process of ghostwriting a series, a good title would be "The Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew: Ghostwriting a Series." Therefore **(C)** is correct. The passage focuses not just on ghostwriting, but specifically on its role in the creation of the Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew series. Because it is too general, **(A)** is incorrect. The passage does answer the question, "Who Were Leslie McFarlane and Mildred A. Wirt?" However, this is a detail in the passage, not the main idea. The main idea is the process of ghostwriting a series, not the lives of the ghostwriters themselves. This means **(B)** is incorrect. In paragraph 5 the author states, "Many teachers and librarians objected to the ghostwriting process, claiming it was designed to produce books quickly rather than create quality literature." But the rest of the passage is devoted to explaining ghostwriting, not to criticizing it. Since the title "The Dubious yet Profitable Practice of Ghostwriting" is critical of ghostwriting, it does not fit the neutral tone of the passage. Therefore **(D)** is incorrect.

3) **C**

In paragraph 2, the author defines a ghostwriter as a person who "writes a book according to a specific formula." This means that a ghostwriter is an actual writer. In paragraph 4, the author discusses the ghostwriters behind the Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew series. The author states, "The initial ghostwriter for the Hardy Boys was a Canadian journalist named Leslie McFarlane." Since we know that a ghostwriter is a writer, Leslie McFarlane was a real writer. Therefore **(C)** is correct. In paragraph 1, we learn that Carolyn Keene and Franklin W. Dixon "are not real people," but rather phony names created in place of the actual authors. Since they are not real people, they cannot be real writers, so **(A)** and **(B)** are incorrect. Tom Hardy is not a real writer either, as he is a character used in the Hardy Boys series. This means **(D)** is incorrect.

4) **C**

The process of ghostwriting is primarily discussed in paragraph 2. Although the ghostwriters for the Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew books did write about mysterious or strange events, this does not necessarily mean that all ghostwriters do this. The author states, "While ghostwriters are paid for writing the books, their authorship is not acknowledged, and their names do not appear on the published books. Ghostwriters can write books for children or adults, the content of which is unspecified." Being a ghostwriter is defined as not being acknowledged for authoring a book. It is not defined by the content of the book written. This eliminates **option (I)**. In paragraph 2, the author says that "ghostwriters are paid for writing the books, but their authorship is not acknowledged, and their names do not appear on the published books." Since ghostwriters write the books, but are not recognized as authors, then it can be understood that a ghostwriter does not receive credit as the author. This supports **option (II)**. In paragraph 2, the author states that a ghostwriter writes a book "according to a specific formula." This is another way of saying that ghostwriters write books based on predetermined guidelines. This supports **option (III)**. Therefore **(C)** is correct.

5) **A**

**surmise** (*verb*): to think or infer based on incomplete evidence; to guess.

In paragraph 3, the author states, "Stratemeyer noticed the increasing popularity of mysteries among adults, and he surmised that children would enjoy reading mysteries about younger detectives with whom they could identify." Using this information, we can understand that Stratemeyer saw that adults liked mysteries and then *surmised*, or *guessed*, that children might also enjoy reading about characters they could relate to. Therefore **(A)** is correct. Stratemeyer did not merely *question* whether children would enjoy reading mysteries; he guessed that they would. This means **(B)** is incorrect. While Stratemeyer did rely on good reasoning, he did not arrive at a determination, but rather at a guess, which is less substantial. Stratemeyer did not *know* for certain, he merely guessed. In addition, he didn't *prove* anything with his initial idea. Because they are too strong, answer choices **(C)** and **(D)** are both incorrect.

6) **B**

In paragraph 4, the author discusses the "initial idea" for The Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew books: "Stratemeyer noticed the increasing popularity of mysteries among adults, and he surmised that children would enjoy reading mysteries about younger detectives with whom they could identify." In other words, Stratemeyer saw that mystery books for adults were popular and guessed that they might also be popular for children. This supports **option (I)**. The reason why Stratemeyer thought that this would be the case is that he believed children would enjoy reading about characters "with whom they could identify," meaning characters they could relate to. This supports **option (II)**. Although The Hardy Boys books are generally presumed to be oriented towards boys, and the Nancy Drew books towards girls, it is not necessarily true that only boys read The Hardy Boys and only girls read Nancy Drew. Moreover, the passage never indicates that Stratemeyer's decision to create these books was based on the idea that girls and boys

are not interested in the same things. In fact, in some ways Nancy Drew and The Hardy Boys books are the same thing, because they are both mystery series. This eliminates **option (III)**. Therefore **(B)** is correct.

7) **D**

In the second half of paragraph 4, the author writes, "The personalities of Frank and Joe Hardy and Nancy Drew arose directly from McFarlane's and Wirt's imaginations. For example, Mildred Wirt had been a star college athlete and gave Nancy similar athletic abilities. The ghostwriters were also responsible for numerous plot and setting details. Leslie McFarlane used elements of his small Canadian town to create Bayport, the Hardy Boys' fictional hometown." Using this information, we can understand that Leslie McFarlane and Mildred Wirt used their personal experiences (being an athlete for Wirt, and living in a small Canadian town for McFarlane) to provide character development and setting details in their stories. Therefore we can infer that they must have found writing from personal experience to be helpful. This means **(D)** is correct. Although it may have been difficult to write according to a formula at times, the author does not mention that either of the writers disliked this aspect of ghostwriting. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. The author also does not mention Leslie McFarlane and Mildred Wirt's respect for the "art of ghostwriting," so **(B)** is incorrect. While the author does mention the previous occupations of both writers in paragraph 4, it is never stated that the writers were unsuccessful in these occupations. There are many reasons why people might switch jobs other than a lack of success. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect.

8) **C**

In paragraph 5, we learn, "Many teachers and librarians objected to the ghostwriting process, claiming it was designed to produce books quickly rather than create quality literature." Since The Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew series were ghostwritten books, we can understand that many teachers and librarians thought they were not "quality literature." Therefore **(C)** is correct. Although in paragraph 5, the author states that "not everyone approved of them," the specific reason why teachers and librarians disapproved is given later in the paragraph. They did not disapprove of mystery stories, but rather of ghostwritten stories. Therefore **(A)** is incorrect. The passage does not contain information to support answer choices **(B)** and **(D)**. Therefore they are incorrect.

9) **A**

In order to identify the author's attitude, meaning how the author generally feels about the subject of his or her writing, it is helpful to look at the introduction and the conclusion. In this passage, the conclusion is especially helpful in this regard. In the conclusion, the author states that the influence of The Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew books is "undeniable," "regardless of the debates about their literary merit". This shows that the author is balanced, or unbiased, in his or her feeling toward the literature because he or she acknowledges both the criticism of the books and their popularity. Furthermore, the author states that "even though most Americans have not heard of Edward Stratemeyer, Leslie McFarlane, or Mildred Wirt, people throughout the world are familiar with Nancy Drew and Frank and Joe Hardy." This statement tells us that the author is willing to look past the controversy involved in the books' production and concentrate instead on the impact of the books at large. The author writes respectfully of the books' "undeniable influence on American and even global culture." Using this information, we can understand that the author's attitude is balanced and respectful towards The Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew book series. Therefore **(A)** is correct. Answer choices **(B)** and **(C)** imply too much negativity on behalf of the author by using words such as "critical," "hostile," and "reluctant." Since the author never expresses any personal negative feeling towards the books, they are incorrect. Conversely, choice **(D)** implies too much positivity on behalf of the author. Although the author approves of the books and notes their success, he or she does not overwhelmingly praise them. Since the author never expresses such strong positive feelings towards the books, this choice is incorrect.

10) **A**

In formal writing, the first sentence in each paragraph usually introduces the topic to be addressed that paragraph. Therefore, to identify the structure and function of each paragraph, it is helpful to examine its first sentence. In paragraph 1, the opening sentence is: "First introduced in 1927, The Hardy Boys Mystery Stories are a series of books about the adventures of brothers Frank and Joe Hardy, teenaged detectives who solve one baffling mystery after another." This sentence, along with the paragraph that follows, introduces the topic. So, we can infer that paragraph 1 is the *introduction*. The first sentence of paragraph 2 reads: "The Hardy Boys and the Nancy Drew books were written through a process called ghostwriting." Paragraph 2 goes on to explain this process, so we can understand that this paragraph is an *explanation*. The first sentence of paragraph 3 is: "The initial idea for both the Hardy Boys and the Nancy Drew series was developed by a man named Edward Stratemeyer, who owned a publishing company that specialized in children's books." This identifies how the series was created. Then, in paragraph 4, the author continues: "Because each series ran for so many years, Nancy Drew and The Hardy Boys both had a number of different ghostwriters producing books; however, the first ghostwriter for each series proved to be the most influential." Paragraph 4 continues to explore the series over the years. Therefore we can understand that paragraphs 3 and 4 contain *history* about the series. The first sentence of paragraph 5 reads: "Although The Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew books were very popular with children, not everyone approved of them." Paragraph 5 goes on to describe the controversy surrounding these books, so we can say that paragraph 5 contains *controversy*. The first sentence of paragraph 6 reads: "Regardless of the debates about their literary merit, each series of books has exerted an undeniable influence on American and even global culture." Because this paragraph offers a concluding statement about the impact of the two series, we can say that paragraph 6 contains the *conclusion*. The order as outlined above is introduction, explanation, history, controversy, conclusion. Therefore **(A)** is correct. Answer choices **(B)**, **(C)**, and **(D)** either include parts which are not in the passage, such as *summary*, or else they list the parts in the wrong order. Therefore they are incorrect.