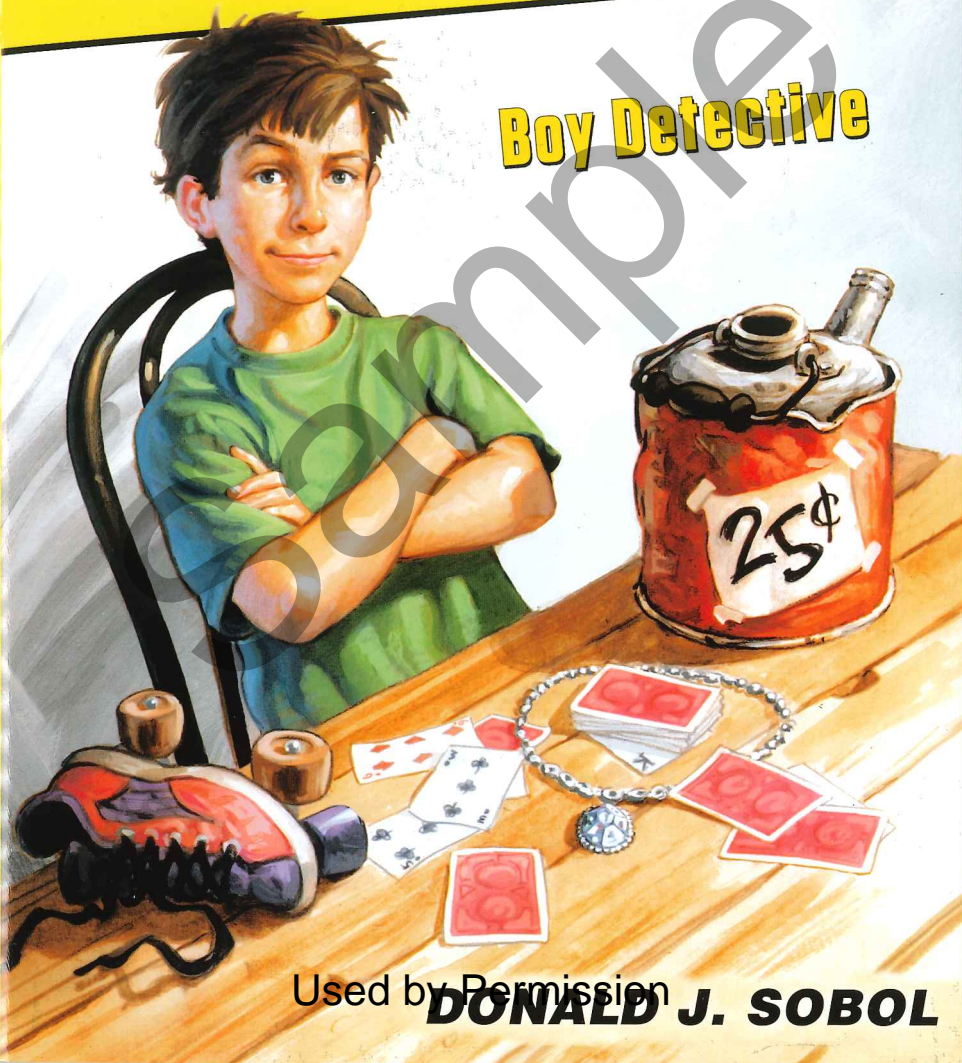


Encyclopedia Brown

EVERYONE'S
FAVORITE
BOY DETECTIVE

Boy Detective



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DONALD J. SOBOL

Encyclopedia Brown

No. 1

Boy Detective

By DONALD J. SOBOL

illustrated by Leonard Shortall

PUFFIN BOOKS
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The Case of Natty Nat

Mr. and Mrs. Brown had one child. They called him Leroy, and so did his teachers.

Everyone else in Idaville called him Encyclopedia.

An encyclopedia is a book or a set of books giving information, arranged alphabetically, on all branches of knowledge.

Leroy Brown's head was like an encyclopedia. It was filled with facts he had learned from books. He was like a complete library walking around in sneakers.

Old ladies who did crossword puzzles were always stopping him on the street to ask him questions.

Just last Sunday, after church, Mrs. Conway, the butcher's wife, had asked him: "What is a three-letter word for a Swiss river beginning with A?"

"Aar," Encyclopedia answered after a moment.

He always waited a moment. He wanted to be helpful. But he was afraid that people might not like him if he answered their questions too quickly and sounded *too* smart.

His father asked him more questions than anyone else. Mr. Brown was the chief of police of Idaville.

The town had four banks, three movie theaters, and a Little League. It had the usual number of gasoline stations, churches, schools, stores, and comfortable houses on shady streets. It even had a mansion or two, and some dingy sections. And it had the average number of crimes for a community of its size.

Idaville, however, only *looked* like the usual American town. It was, really, most *unusual*.

For nearly a whole year no criminal had escaped arrest and no boy or girl had got away with breaking a single law in Idaville.

This was partly because the town's policemen were clever and brave. But mostly it was because Chief Brown was Encyclopedia's father.

His hardest cases were solved by Encyclopedia during dinner in the Browns' red brick house on Rover Avenue.

Everyone in the state thought that Idaville had about the smartest policemen in the world.

Of course, nobody knew a boy was the mastermind behind the town's police force.

You wouldn't guess it by looking at Encyclopedia. He looked like almost any fifth-grade boy and acted like one, too—except that he never talked about himself.

Mr. Brown never said a word about the advice his son gave him. Who would believe that his best detective was only ten years old?

This is how it began:

One evening at dinner, Mr. Brown said,

"Natty Nat has struck again. He has held up another store—and right here in Idaville."

"What store, Dad?" asked Encyclopedia.

"The Men's Shop, owned by Mr. Dillon and Mr. Jones," answered Mr. Brown. "That makes six stores Natty Nat has held up in the state this month."

"Are you sure the robber was Natty Nat?" asked Encyclopedia.

"Mr. Dillon himself said it was Natty Nat," replied Mr. Brown.

He pulled a notebook from his pocket and put it beside his plate. "I wrote down everything Mr. Dillon told me about the holdup. I'll read it to you."

Encyclopedia closed his eyes. He always closed his eyes when he was getting ready to think hard.

His father began to read what Mr. Dillon, the storekeeper, had told him about the holdup:

I was alone in the store. I did not know anyone had come in. Suddenly a man's voice told me

to raise my hands. I looked up then. I was face to face with the man the newspapers call Natty Nat. He had on a gray coat with a belt in the back, just as the newspapers said. He told me to turn and face the wall. Since he had a gun, I did as he said. When I turned around again, he was gone—with all the money.

Chief Brown finished reading and closed his notebook.

Encyclopedia asked only one question: "Did the newspapers ever print a picture of Natty Nat?"

"No," answered his father. "He never stands still long enough for a picture to be taken. Remember, he's never been caught. But every policeman in the state knows he always wears that gray coat with the belt in the back."

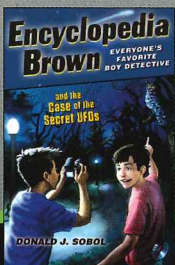
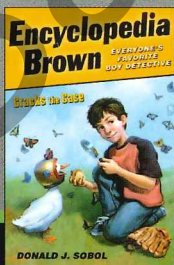
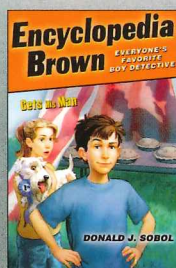
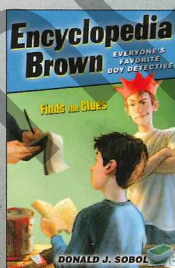
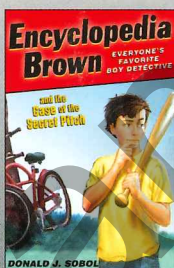
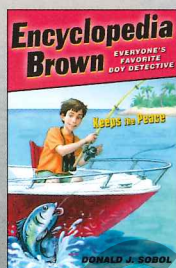
"Nobody even knows his real name," said Encyclopedia, half to himself. "Natty Nat is just what the newspapers call him."

Suddenly he opened his eyes. "Say, the only reason Mr. Dillon thought it was Natty Nat was

Encyclopedia Brown, Idaville's star detective!

With a knack for trivia, Encyclopedia solves mysteries for the neighborhood kids through his detective agency. But his dad is also the chief of police, and every night, Encyclopedia helps him solve his most baffling crimes. Join Encyclopedia Brown as he solves ten confounding mysteries, including the theft of a diamond necklace, a bank robbery that happened in broad daylight, the case of the missing roller skates, and more. And with the clues given in each case, readers will have a chance to solve the mystery themselves!

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