



# The Origins of the American Detective Story

*LeRoy Lad Panek*

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## **The Origins of the American Detective Story** LeRoy Lad Panek

Edgar Allan Poe essentially invented the detective story in 1841 with *Murders in the Rue Morgue*. In the years that followed, however, detective fiction in America saw no significant progress as a literary genre. Much to the dismay of moral crusaders like Anthony Comstock, dime novels and other sensationalist publications satisfied the public's hunger for a yarn.

Things changed as the century waned, and eventually the detective was reborn as a figure of American literature. In part these changes were due to a combination of social conditions, including the rise and decline of the police as an institution; the parallel development of private detectives; the birth of the crusading newspaper reporter; and the beginnings of forensic science. Influential, too, was the new role model offered by a wildly popular British import named Sherlock Holmes.

Focusing on the late 19th century and early 20th, this volume covers the formative years of American detective fiction.

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