

# Nancy Drew® Interview with a Game Designer

This month we managed to catch up with the designer of the [NancyDrew: Warnings at Waverly Academy](#), Cathy, for a short Q and A. She's got all the answers on the creation of Nancy's 21st PC adventure game, plus a little insight on the future. Check out the interview below.

## What was your main inspiration for *Warnings at Waverly Academy*, beyond the books?

That would have to be my own crazy schooling experience. Having moved around a lot growing up, I was always switching schools – though never to one as prestigious as Waverly! I met every personality and stereotype imaginable, from large schools with immutable cliques to smaller ones where students crossed social lines simply because there weren't enough of us otherwise. Add to that the unique experience of dorm life from college, and I had a world filled with unique characters and situations to draw from.



## Can you discuss the themes of the game and how you chose to incorporate them?

There were three main themes: Gossip & rumors run amuck, the all important issues to high school girls (such as social standing, grades, boyfriends, etc.) and the gothic styling of Edgar Allan Poe. A large portion of the story was driven by the girls' opinions of each other and the scandals that kept breaking – gossip and rumors – which were deliberately chosen by the Black Cat to cause the most damage to the intended victim's psyche – the important issues. Poe provided our link between the girls and Ms. Hollowell, as well as a grounding theme for the school. We used dozens of Poe references throughout, pulling from *The Black Cat* to *The Pit and the Pendulum* and beyond, to imbue the world with his gothic touch.



## How did you help shape the characters and environments to reinforce your concept?

During initial design, I worked up detailed character profiles, including what exactly everyone thought of each other. Although the high school stereotypes are present, Anne (our scriptwriter) and I wanted to make sure that each girl was more than just her social standing. The dorm rooms were designed with the intent of conveying additional insight to the girls' characters with decorations that really showed off their personalities. Public areas, such as the library and the foyer, were designed with a traditional gothic aesthetic. Plus, I brought back Nancy's phone with a vengeance, upgrading her to the latest cell phone technology. This allowed us to bring in texting and photos as an additional way to further the story and really give it the feel of being in school. I confess this was new to me – in college I only knew two people with cell phones, let alone high school!



## How do you tie all that up and still keep the "Nancy Drew" experience strong?

Even after 21 titles, that's still one of the greatest challenges facing design. To keep it strong, you have to keep it fresh. Each game needs its own flavor while still embracing the quintessential Nancy, and it's why we generally don't have back to back games with the same feel – spooky, adventure or mystery. Waverly was Nancy's first foray back to high school since her very first adventure in *Secrets Can Kill* and we wanted to create a completely different experience here. With its multi-layered design, gossiping cast, environmental changes and new tech toys, *Warnings at Waverly Academy* provides a rich sleuthing experience for everyone.



## Any spoilers for the future?

Well, as those following the Amateur Sleuth Blog and our Twitter have read, we recently chose our concepts for some future titles. All I can say about these games is this: they're exciting new mysteries in spectacular locations. I also know that our savvy message board users have caught some of our past hidden spoilers in games. *The Phantom of Venice* had Caribbean pamphlets to tease *Ransom of the Seven Ships*, *The Haunting of Castle Malloy* had a Waverly sign hinting at *Warnings at Waverly Academy*, *Ransom of the Seven Ships* contained a Wizard of Oz book alluding to *Trail of the Twister*. They all seem to be hinting at the game two titles from their release. Hmm, I wonder what hint we put into *Warnings at Waverly Academy* for ND23?

The holidays are just around the corner and we're going to kick it off with a coupon for one of our most beloved games starting on Thanksgiving. Check out the HI homepage for all the details on Wednesday 25th.

[Nancy Drew: Warnings at Waverly Academy](#) is available for digital download **exclusively** at [www.HerInteractive.com](#), or buy a physical boxed copy from our online store or at most major retailers!

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