



Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories

S. S. Van Dine

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S. S. Van Dine (also styled S.S. Van Dine) is the pseudonym used by American art critic Willard Huntington Wright (1888–1939) when he wrote detective novels. Wright was an important figure in avant-garde cultural circles in pre-WWI New York, and under the pseudonym (which he originally used to conceal his identity) he created the once immensely popular fictional detective Philo Vance, a sleuth and aesthete who first appeared in books in the 1920s, then in movies and on the radio.

In addition to his success as a writer of fiction, Wright's lengthy introduction and notes to the anthology *The World's Great Detective Stories* (1928) are important in the history of the critical study of detective fiction. Although dated by the passage of time, this essay is still a core around which many other such commentaries have been constructed. He also wrote an article, "Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories", in 1928 for *The American Magazine*. It has been frequently reprinted and compared to "Knox's (Ten) Commandments" by Ronald Knox.

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