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BACKGROUND

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THE UNLIKELY BOND OF A BOY AND A BEAR

The Winnie the Pooh story began on August 23, 1914, when Winnipeg veterinarian, Harry Colebourn, bought a bear on his way to Britain during World War I. He named the \$20 bear cub “Winnie” after his hometown of Winnipeg in Central Canada.

Colebourn smuggled Winnie over the border, and she quickly became the unofficial mascot of his regiment (the Second Canadian Infantry Brigade). When called to the front lines in France, Colebourn gave Winnie over to the London Zoo for safe keeping. Enter Christopher Robin.

Christopher Robin Milne was born on August 21, 1920, to Dorothy and Alan Alexander Milne. On his first birthday, Christopher’s father gave him a toy bear named “Edward” that would later become the inspiration for a beloved icon of children’s literature.

After visits to the London Zoo years later, Christopher Robin became enthralled with the sweet, black bear. Winnie was accustomed to humans, having spent so much time with Colebourn from an early age. Christopher Robin was even allowed into her cage to feed her. Promptly, a teddy that was once named Edward, forever became known as Winnie.

Christopher Robin frequented a pond at a local park where he fed a swan he named "Pooh". His reason was "if you call him and he doesn't come, then you can pretend you were just saying 'Pooh!'" Between these two animal inspirations, the name "Winnie the Pooh" was born.

The name change of his teddy bear sparked a series of children's poems by A. A. Milne that formed a compilation called *When We Were Very Young*. As Christopher played with his toys, his father found inspiration for new characters and adventures.

On October 14, 1926, A. A. Milne published his first children's book, simply titled *Winnie-the-Pooh*. It followed the adventures of the bear and his friends and was a huge success, selling 150,000 copies by the end of the year. Milne penned two more successful children's works entitled *Now We Are Six* and *The House at Pooh Corner*.

The characters of the *Winnie the Pooh* stories continue to inspire generations of children. The most recent book, *Return to Hundred Acre Wood*, was published in 2009 by David Benedictus.