

Literary genres

- **Historical:** A story about a real person or event. Often, they are written in a text book format, which may or may not focus on solely that person or event.
- **Biography:** The details of the life story of a real person, told by someone else.
- **Autobiography:** Essentially the same as a biography, with the exception that the story is written by the person who is the subject of the story.
- **Memoir:** Similar to autobiography, with the exception that it is told more "from memory", i.e. it is how the person personally remembers and feels about their life or a stage in their life, more than the exact, recorded details of that period. Though memoirs are often more subjective than autobiography works, memoirs are generally still considered to be nonfiction works. There are also some fiction works that purport to be the "memoirs" of fictional characters as well, done in a similar style, however, these are in a separate genre from their nonfiction counterparts.
- **Historical fiction:** A story that takes place in the real world, with real world people, but with several fictionalized or dramatized elements. This may or may not crossover with other genres; for example, fantasy fiction or science fiction may play a part, as is the case for instance with the novel *George Washington's Socks*, which includes time travel elements.
- **Alternate history:** A more extreme variant of historical fiction which posits a "what if" scenario in which some historical event occurs differently (or not at all), thus altering the course of history; for instance, "What if the South won the American Civil War?" is an alternate history concept that has had treatment in fiction. Alternate History is sometimes (though not universally) referred to as a subgenre of science fiction or speculative fiction, and like historical fiction, may include more fantastical elements (for instance, the *Temeraire series* uses the fantasy element of dragons to create an Alternate History plot set during the Napoleonic Era).
- **Period piece:** This type features historical places, people, or events that may or not be crucial to the story. Because history is merely used as a backdrop, it may be fictionalized to various degrees, but the story itself may be regarded as "outside" history. Genres within this category are often regarded as significant categories in themselves.
- **Costume drama:** A type of drama that especially relies on lavish costumes and designs. This type crosses over with many other genres.
- **Jidaigeki:** A story usually set in the Edo period of Japanese history, from 1603 to 1868.
- **Adventure:** A story about a protagonist who journeys to epic or distant places to accomplish something. It can have many other genre elements included within it, because it is a very open genre.
- **Action:** A story, similar to Adventure, but the protagonist usually takes a risky turn, which leads to desperate situations (including explosions, fight scenes, daring escapes, etc.). Action and Adventure are usually categorized together (sometimes even as "action-adventure") because they have much in common, and many stories fall under both genres simultaneously (for instance, the James Bond series can be classified as both).
- **Superhero:** A modern story about a person or creature who possesses supernatural or superhuman abilities. Often, they use their abilities to protect or avenge others; hence the "hero" portion of the term. It should be noted that while the genre is reasonably common and broadly-definable (it can include science fiction, fantasy or both for instance), the term "superhero" is in fact technically a trademark (owned jointly) of DC Comics and Marvel Comics, who between them coined the term; thus, many games and stories that are not owned in part by either company often refer in-story and often in-title to their characters as "heroes" or other stand-in terms meant to imply their superhuman nature (examples of the former usage include the television series *Heroes* and the video game *City of Heroes*; an example of the latter is *The Incredibles*, which refers to its superheroic characters as

"supers"). The genre should not be confused with heroic mythology or folkloric tales, as older, traditional folk characters such as Hercules or Robin Hood generally are not considered to fall under the "superhero" genre.

- **Lost world:** Stories chiefly from the nineteenth and early twentieth century when there were still large blank spaces on the maps of the world. The classic story that gives the genre its name is Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Lost World* featuring the hero Professor Challenger. Other stories that qualify are Sir Henry Rider Haggard's *She*, and perhaps *King Solomon's Mines*; C. J. Cutcliffe-Hyne's *The Lost Continent*; and Jules Verne's *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*.
- **Military:** A story about a war or battle that can either be historical or fictional. It usually follows the events a certain warrior goes through during the battle's events.
- **Spy fiction:** A story about a secret agent (spy) or military personnel member who is sent on a secret espionage mission. Usually, they are equipped with special gadgets that prove useful during the mission, and they have special training in things such as unarmed combat or computer hacking. They may or may not work for a specific government.
- **Swashbuckler:** A story about a protagonist who gets into risky situations. In the story, the protagonist is usually in fights against villains, using weapons. The single-handed sword is most commonly used by the protagonists in this genre.
- **Western:** A story talking place in the American Old West. Westerns commonly feature gunfighters and/or cowboys.
- **Martial arts film:** A story characterized by extensive fighting scenes employing various types of martial arts.
- **Kung fu:** An action story set in China or associated with Chinese martial arts.
- **Science fiction:** A story about technology or the future. It generally includes or is centered on the presumed effects or ramifications of computers or machines, travel through space, time or alternate universes, alien life-forms, genetic engineering, or other such things. The science or technology used may or may not be very thoroughly elaborated on; stories whose scientific elements are reasonably detailed, well-researched and considered to be relatively plausible given current knowledge and technology are often referred to as hard science fiction. Owing to the wide breadth of the genre, it very commonly has elements from other genres, such as action, comedy, alternate history, military or spy fiction, and fantasy mixed in, with such combinations often forming new major subgenres in their own right (see below).
- **Military science fiction:** Science fiction told from the point of view of the military, or a main character who is a soldier in the military. It usually has technology far superior to today's, but not necessarily implausible. Military science fiction essentially is the addition of science fiction elements into a military fiction story.
- **Space opera:** A story characterized by the extent of space travel and distinguished by the amount of time that protagonists spend in an active, spacefaring lifestyle. *Star Trek*, *Star Blazers* and *Star Wars* have often been categorized as such.
- **Punk:** An umbrella term, and suffix, for several Science Fiction subgenres, normally categorized by distinct technologies and sciences. The themes tend to be cynical or dystopian, and a person, or group of people, fighting the corruption of the government.
- **Cyberpunk:** A futuristic storyline dealing with people who have been physically or mentally enhanced with cybernetic components, often featuring cyborgs or the singularity as a major theme, and generally somewhat cynical or dystopian (hence the "punk" portion of the name). This is often confused or placed with Techno-thriller, which is actually a separate and less specialized genre.
- **Postcyberpunk:** a subgenre of science fiction which some critics suggest has evolved from cyberpunk. Like its predecessor, postcyberpunk focuses on technological developments in near-future societies, typically examining the social effects of a ubiquitous datasphere of computerized information,

genetic engineering, modification of the human body, and the continued impact of perpetual technological change. Unlike "pure" cyberpunk, however, the works in this category feature characters who act to improve social conditions or at least protect the status quo from further decay.

- **Dieselpunk:** Initially proposed as a genre by the creators of the role-playing game *Children of the Sun*, [12] dieselpunk refers to fiction inspired by mid-century pulp stories and set in a world similar to steampunk though specifically characterized by the rise of petroleum power and technocratic perception, incorporating neo-noir elements and sharing themes more clearly with cyberpunk than steampunk. Though the notability of dieselpunk as a genre is not entirely uncontested, installments ranging from the retro-futuristic film *Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow* to the 2001 Activision video game *Return to Castle Wolfenstein* have been suggested as quintessential dieselpunk works of fiction.
- **Steampunk:** A story that takes place around the time steam power was first coming into use. The industrial revolution is a common time frame which steam punk stories take place in, and the steam technology is often actually more advanced than the real technology of time (for instance, *Steam Detectives* features steam-powered robots).
- **Clockpunk:** It has been occasionally used to refer to a subgenre of speculative fiction which is similar to steampunk, but deviates in its technology. As with steampunk, it portrays advanced technology based on pre-modern designs, but rather than the steam power of the Industrial Age, the technology used is based on springs, clockwork and similar. Clockpunk is based very intensively on the works of Leonardo da Vinci and as such, it is typically set during the Renaissance. It is regarded as being a type of Steampunk.
- **Biopunk:** A story that is about genetics and biological research (often falling under the horror category). It focuses on some harmful effects characters have created when they change an animal's code to (unintentionally) create a violent monster.
- **Fantasy:** A story about magic and supernatural forces, rather than technology, though it often is made to include elements of other genres, such as science fiction elements, for instance computers or DNA, if it happens to take place in a modern or future era. Depending on the extent of these other elements, the story may or may not be considered to be a "hybrid genre" series; for instance, even though the Harry Potter series canon includes the requirement of a particular gene to be a wizard, it is referred to only as a fantasy series.
- **Science fantasy:** A story with mystical elements that are scientifically explainable, or which combines science fiction elements with fantasy elements. It should be noted that science fiction was once actually referred to under this name, but that it is no longer used to denote that genre, and has somewhat fallen out of favor as a genre descriptor.
- **Sword and sorcery:** A blend of heroic fantasy, adventure, and frequent elements of the horrific in which a mighty barbaric warrior hero is pitted against both human and supernatural adversaries. Robert E. Howard, creator of Conan the Cimmerian, Kull of Atlantis, the Pictish king Bran Mak Morn, etc. is generally acknowledged as the founder of the genre, chiefly through his writings for *Weird Tales* and other 1920s and 30s pulp magazines.
- **High fantasy:** A story that takes place in a completely different world or universe, having different races, traditions and even religions. Often, there aren't any real world events that tie into the story. The best known example of high fantasy is probably *The Lord of the Rings*.
- **Wuxia:** A distinct quasi-fantasy sub-genre of the martial arts genre.
- **Romance:** A story about character's relationships, or engagements. It's a story about character

development, rather than adventures.

- **Crime fiction:** A story about a crime that is being committed or was committed. It can also be an account of a criminal's life. It often falls into the Action or Adventure genres.
- **Mystery:** A story about a detective or person who has to solve a crime that was committed. They must figure out who committed the crime and why. Sometimes, the detective must figure out 'how' the criminal committed the crime if it seems impossible.
- **Murder mystery:** A mystery story which focuses on one type of criminal case: homicide. Usually, there are one or more murder victims, and the detective must figure out who killed them, the same way he or she solves other crimes. They may or may not find themselves or loved ones in danger because of this investigation; the genre often includes elements of the suspense story genre, or of the action and adventure genres.
- **Comedy:** A story that tells about a series of funny or comical events, intended to make the audience laugh. It is a very open genre, and thus crosses over with many other genres on a frequent basis.
- **Comedy of manners:** A film satirizes the manners and affectations of a social class, often represented by stock characters. The plot of the comedy is often concerned with an illicit love affair or some other scandal, but is generally less important than its witty dialogue. This form of comedy has a long ancestry, dating back at least as far as Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing*.
- **Parody:** A story that mocks or satirizes other genres, people, fictional characters or works. Such works employ sarcasm, stereotyping, mockery of scenes, symbols or lines from other works, and the obviousness of meaning in a character's actions. Such stories may be "affectionate parodies" which merely mean to entertain those familiar with the source of the parody... or they may well be intended to undercut the respectability of the original inspiration for the parody by pointing out its flaws (the latter being closer to satire).
- **Black comedy:** A parody or satirical story that is based around normally tragic or taboo subjects, including death, murder, suicide, illicit drugs and war. So-called "Dead Baby Comedy" sometimes falls under this genre.
- **Romantic comedy:** A subgenre which combines the romance genre with comedy, focusing on two or more individuals as they discover and attempt to deal with their romantic attractions to each other. The stereotypical plot line follows the "boy-gets-girl", "boy-loses-girl", "boy gets girl back again" sequence. Naturally, there are innumerable variants to this plot (as well as new twists, such as reversing the gender roles in the story), and much of the generally light-hearted comedy lies in the social interactions and sexual tension between the characters, who very often either refuse to admit they are attracted to one another, or must deal with others' meddling in their affairs.
- **Comic science fiction:** A comedy that uses science fiction elements or settings, often as a light-hearted (or occasionally vicious) parody of the latter genre.
- **Documentary:** A story that re-tells events rather than create them. Usually, it is about true historic events.
- **Mockumentary:** A story that employs the style of the documentary to present fictional, and generally humorous, events or characters. Very common in film and television, both as a full film or series, or as a brief sequence or episode within a larger work. Examples include *This Is Spinal Tap*, *Best In Show* and *The Office*.
- **Horror:** A story that is told to deliberately scare or frighten the audience, through suspense, violence or shock. H. P. Lovecraft distinguishes two primary varieties in the "Introduction" to *Supernatural Horror in Literature*: 1) Physical Fear or the "mundanely gruesome" and 2) the true Supernatural Horror story or the "Weird Tale." The supernatural variety is occasionally termed "Dark Fantasy," since the laws of nature must be violated in some way, thus qualifying the story as "fantastic."
- **Ghost story:** A story about the intrusion of the spirits of the dead into the realm of the living. There are sub-genres: The Traditional Haunting, Poltergeists, The Haunted Place or

Object (i.e. the hotel in Stephen King's *The Shining*), or the etching in M. R. James' "The Mezzotint", etc. Some would include stories of Revenants such as W. W. Jacobs' "The Monkey's Paw."

- **Monster:** A story about a monster, creature or mutant that terrorizes people. Usually, it fits into the horror genre, for instance, Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein*. Although Shelley's *Frankenstein* is often also considered the first science fiction story (biological science reanimating the dead), it does present a monstrous "creature." Other clear Monster stories are of the creatures of folklore and fable: the Vampire, the Werewolf, the Zombie, etc. Beings such as that depicted in Karloff's *The Mummy* would also qualify.
- **Giant monster:** A story about a giant monster, similar to the monster genre. However, giant monster stories are generally about a monster big enough to destroy buildings. Some such stories are about two giant monsters fighting each other, a genre known as *kaiju* in Japan, which is famous for such works after the success of such films and franchises as *Godzilla*.
- **Occult stories:** Stories that touch upon the adversaries of Good, especially the "Enemies" of the forces of righteousness as expressed in any given religious philosophy. Hence, stories of devils, demons, demonic possession, dark witchcraft, evil sorcerers or warlocks, and figures like the Antichrist would qualify. The nature of such stories presupposes the existence of the side of Good and the existence of a deity to be opposed to the forces of Evil.
- **Slasher:** A story (generally in film) that usually has an antagonist, who is a serial killer or simply insane. The "slasher" stereotypically kills his victims in the movie by slowly creeping up to them, and then quickly killing them with a sharp object, such as a Chef's knife. The genre led to the creation of the Final girl theory.
- **Survival horror:** A horror story about a protagonist who is put in a risky and life threatening situation that he or she must endure, often as a result of things such as zombies or other monsters, and the rest of the plot is how the hero or heroes overcome this.
- **Thriller:** A story that is usually a mix of fear and excitement. It has traits from the suspense genre and often from the action, adventure or mystery genres, but the level of terror makes it borderline horror fiction at times as well. It generally has a dark or serious theme, which also makes it similar to drama.
- **Disaster-thriller:** A thriller story about mass peril, where the protagonist's job is to both survive, and to save many other people from a grim fate, often a natural disaster such as a storm or volcanic eruption, but which may also be a terrorist attack or epidemic of some sort.
- **Psychological thriller:** A thriller that emphasizes the psychological condition of the hero that presents obstacles to his objective, rather than the action. Some psychological thrillers are also about complicated stories that try to deliberately confuse the audience, often by showing them only the same confusing or seemingly nonsensical information that the hero gains.
- **Crime thriller:** A thriller story that revolves around the life of detectives, mobs, or other groups associated with criminal events in the story.
- **Techno-thriller:** A thriller story whose theme is usually technology, or the danger behind the technology people use, including the threat of cyber terrorism.
- **Western:** A story that usually takes place in the Old West.