

# 28 Genres

## Fiction and Nonfiction

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from a selection of sources both on and off the Internet

### In the Beginning:

There was story.

And then there was...

Prose, Poetry, Drama.

And then, in Shakespeare's time, the genres expanded...

Tragedy, History, Comedy, Pastoral, Pastoral-Comical, Historical-Pastoral, Tragical-Historical, Tragical-Comical-Historical-Pastoral. Still a bit limiting for our modern times and plethora of imagination.

And therefore, behold the current state of genre. As it is now and, I'm sure, will change yet again with tomorrow's light...

But before we begin, a few definitions...

### Some Basic Definitions:

**Genre:** *Categories (and subcategories) of books that have similar technique, style, form, and/or content. Used in the broadest sense the division would be—Fiction and Nonfiction.*

**Fiction** - *Involves characters and plots which have not happened, although they may be based upon a real event or occur in a real place. They may run the spectrum from a full length novel to a short story or a collection of short stories.*

**Nonfiction** - *Covers a broad range of factual subjects/topics that may range from how-to books, such as recipe collections, or travel subjects, to history books about past event in the real world.*

**Story Format:** *The fabric/pattern/composition of the story as it is presented to the reading public. Formats include: Novel/prose, picture book, play, graphic novel.*

**Media Delivery Constructions:** *Includes mass market paperback, trade-size paperback, hard cover, oversized hard cover, e-book (several digital editions), audio book.*

#### Story Length:

**Flash Fiction:** May range from 100 to 2,000 words.

**Short Story:** May range from 2,000 to 7,500 words.

**Novelette:** May range from 7,500 to 15,000 words.

**Novella:** May range from 15,000 to 40,000 words.

**Novel:** May range from 41,000 to 100,000 words.

**Epic Novel:** May range from 101,000 to 200,000 words.

*Gratitude is given to the reference documents listed at the end of this article for helping to expand and identify the genres and subgenres of fiction and non-fiction defined and included in this document. Google.com is a marvelous tool in the world of research. So many genres, so many interpretations, so little time. I have endeavored to consolidate and define the genres—at least for today. This is a living document and will be expanded as information becomes available.*

*At first created for my personal use, I thought it was a substantially encompassing listing and worth sharing. If you can add to it, correct a definition, or otherwise provide additional information, please email me at [adrianna@adriannadane.com](mailto:adrianna@adriannadane.com).*

*Thus, we begin with my personal primer of attempting to identify genre and subgenre. May it help us all to create stories of passion and imagination to entertain our dear readers. And help to make our editors, agents, and publishers happier for our insight.*

# The Genres and Subgenres

## 1. Action/Adventure

Action/Adventure stories include lots of activity, and high-concept effects. Historically aimed at male readers. But no longer the case. Fast paced and designed for pure audience escapism. Primarily plot driven. Elements may include, a quest, lots of physical action, exotic locales, etc. Themes for action may include: revenge (hero wants revenge against wrongs done to him); Savior (hero will save the day in the form of a protector); superhero (larger than life protector with exceptional powers and prowess as well); the underdog (a misjudged, perhaps underestimated hero, who may have no realized exceptional power). Themes for Adventure may include discovery (the hero finds something thought impossible to prove the existence of); Expeditions (the hero is venturing into the unknown); Treasure Hunts (the hero is searching for something, a fortune in gold or an rare icon). Adventures are filled with risk and the unknown. It is outside the ordinary experience and may be hazardous. (Ex. Indiana Jones, James Bond.). Today's action/adventure might also include such heroine-focused adventurers as Lara Croft).

## 2. Children

There are mystery children's stories, journey children's stories, etc. Stories geared toward a specific audience, at a specific reading and comprehension level. Themes include: accomplishment (the hero or heroine did something all by him or herself); animals (many or all of the characters may be animals as in, for example, "Charlotte's Web"); special beings (as the Main Character may meet up with a wolf, a faerie, Santa Claus, or any other type of unusual character). Categories include: Picture Books (pre-readers, ages infant-5); Early Reader Books (ages 5-7); Chapter Books (short chapter books, ages 7-9; longer chapter

books, ages 9-12) overall for ages 7-11; and Young-Adult Fiction (ages 13-18).

Subgenres include:

**Picture Books:** Concept books, pattern books, board books. Few words, or wordless.

**Traditional Literature:** The majority of this subgenre includes folktales/fairytales. One-dimensional, meant to convey a life lesson in story form, some cultural, passed down through time and retelling. Further breakdown of this genre would include: myths, legends (similar to the Folktale/Fairy Tale Genre listed below).

**Fiction:** Includes most genres of fiction (such as fantasy and science fiction, contemporary and historical, etc.). One subgenre peculiar to Children's Fiction is the School Story. This subgenre typically involves a plot where the locale is a school/boarding school setting.

**Nonfiction:** Self-explanatory, written in a manner for the age-appropriate reader.

**Biography/Autobiography:** Self-explanatory. Written in a manner for the age-appropriate reader.

**Poetry and Verse:** Self-explanatory. Subject matter age-appropriate.

### 3. Comedy

Usually exaggerate situations, language, and characters for effect.

Subgenres include:

**Dark Comedy:** A story with disturbing elements and morbid or grimly satiric humor.

**Farce:** A work in which improbable plot situations and exaggerated characters are used for humorous effect.

**Parody:** A mockery or work that imitates the style of another for comic effect or ridicule.

**Satire:** Irony, sarcasm, or caustic wit used to attack or expose.

**Screwball:** Impulsively whimsical or foolish or a totally unsound crazy scheme.

**Slapstick:** Comedy of physical action; i.e., hero steps on the end of a rake and gets hit in the head.

### 4. Crime

Centered on characters that have done something wrong or are at least accused of doing so as the real criminal gets away. The criminals feel they operate outside the law and are entitled to what they have stolen or justified in what they have done.

### 5. Diary/Journal

First-person POV accounts given in diary entries written by the main character. These accounts are presented as being the true thoughts of the main character. The diary can take up the entire story or just be small entries sprinkled throughout the story.

### 6. Drama

Serious stories that portray realistic characters in realistic settings. Can also be over-the-top, exaggerating the seriousness of the problem and the character's reactions to those problems.

Subgenres include:

**Over-the-Top:** Exaggerated problems and reactions to them are presented; characters may be “drama queens.”

**Realistic:** The drama is a very real and everyday type.

## 7. Erotica

Adult fantasy fiction which includes frank language and sexual situations. Fully realized plot, sensual, yet explicit language. Written primarily for heterosexual women.

Associated genres include:

Lesbian Erotica

M/M or Gay Erotica

## 8. Experimental

Innovative in subject matter and style; avant-garde, non-formulaic, usually literary material.

## 9. Fantasy

Transcend the bounds of human possibility and physical laws, moving into the magical realms and otherworld dimensions. Magic, myth, and impossibilities abound. Other worlds are explored, characters may have supernatural powers, and the laws of physics are challenged. Anything is possible.

Subgenres include:

**Celtic Fantasy:** Many fantasy settings have been in, or inspired by, Dark Age Celtic cultures, thus having been led to the specific subgenre of "Celtic fantasy."

**Contemporary Fantasy:** This fantasy involves stories set in the modern real world or a parallel/alternate reality in contemporary times, in which the story reveals magic or magical creatures exist, such as vampires or werewolves, faeries or elves, etc.

**Dark Fantasy:** Stories that focus on elements usually found in the horror genre but which take place in a setting similar to those used in sword and sorcery or high fantasy. Dark fantasy includes "grittier" fantasy, rooted in settings which represent the brutality of the medieval period more realistically than the traditionally idealized representations of conventional fantasy, generally with a dash of supernatural horror. It may or may not take place in its own fantasy world.

**Dying Earth:** A whole sub-genre of science fiction that using an entropically dying earth as the setting. Subgenre based on a series by American author, Jack Vance. The stories of the Dying Earth series are set in the distant future, at a point when the sun is almost exhausted and magic has reasserted itself as a dominant force. The various civilizations of the Earth have collapsed for the large part into decadence. The Earth itself is mostly barren and cold, and has become infested with various predatory monsters (possibly created by a magician in a former age). The Moon has disappeared and the Sun is in danger of burning out at any time. A certain fatalism characterizes many of the inhabitants as a consequence.

**Fairytales Fantasy.** See Folktales/Fairytales Genre.

**Heroic Fantasy:** Touching on high fantasy with one hand and with sword-and-sorcery on the other. A hero or heroine is the main character, and is usually on a quest, and often is in possession of one or more magical items.

**High Fantasy:** The term high fantasy (also epic fantasy) generally refers to fantasy that calls for a

larger-than-life struggle between good and evil in a fantasy world, parallel to ours. The moral concepts in such tales take on absolute status. There tends to be few shades of grey; the heroes and/or heroines are unambiguously good and the villains are unambiguously evil. The moral tone and high stakes — usually world-shaking — separates this genre from sword and sorcery, while the degree to which the world is not based on a real-world history separates it from historical fantasy. (Ex. Lord of the Rings.)

**Historical Fantasy:** Stories set in the historical past but with fantasy elements introduced, much as contemporary fantasy is set in the present. The other is set in a created fantasy world that closely parallels our own, with recognizable definition for countries, historical events, or historical personages.

**Low Fantasy:** Can encompass fantasy that tries not to emphasize magic; fantasy set in the real world; fantasy that contains realism and a more cynical world view; and Dark fantasy.

**Mannerpunk:** Fantasy genre's pocket for the comedy of manners. Its worlds involve elaborately complex social hierarchies, and its plots revolve around its characters' interactions within those hierarchies in the traditions of Jane Austen or Anthony Hope. Many fantasy of manners could, by the setting, be classified as alternate history, high fantasy, or historical fantasy. The subgenre is marked out by tone and plot, and the centrality of etiquette to the characters' negotiations.

**Medieval Fantasy:** A subgenre of fantasy that encompasses medieval era high fantasy and sometimes may represent fictitious versions of historic events. This subgenre is often seen in role-playing games, text-based roleplaying, and high-fantasy literature. Medieval Fantasy are nonexistent myths that are believed to have happened during the medieval era, and contain topics such as Magic (fantasy), Black Magic, Shapeshifters and also creatures such as unicorns, orcs, goblins, etc.

**Mythic Fantasy:** Rooted in, inspired by, or that in some way draws from the tropes, themes and symbolism of myth, folklore, and fairy tales. Mythic fiction overlaps with urban fantasy and the terms are sometimes used interchangeably, but mythic fiction also includes contemporary works in non-urban settings. Mythic fiction refers to works of contemporary literature that often cross the divide between literary and fantasy fiction.

**Prehistoric Fantasy:** The characteristics of stories being set in prehistoric times and describe the lives of prehistoric people.

**Romantic Fantasy:** See Romance Genre.

**Science Fantasy:** Fantasy and science fiction jointly share the subgenre called science fantasy, which has many of the trappings of science fiction, such as space travel and laser guns, but also contains significant elements that bear more resemblance to magic than science or in some other way draw more from fantasy than from science fiction.

**Superhero:** Superhero fantasy began in American comic books, and evolved into a combination of science fantasy and contemporary fantasy. That is, it is a genre that is typically set in the contemporary world in where all fantastic concepts from extraterrestrials and futuristic technology to magic and classic mythological beings potentially co-exist. The feature characters, however, are costumed heroes often endowed with fantastic abilities, skills or equipment.

**Sword and Planet:** A subgenre of science fantasy, it focuses on swashbuckling adventures on other planets and features very little of the scientific rigor that would classify it as science fiction proper.

**Sword and Sorcery:** sword and sorcery is more concerned with immediate physical threats and action than high fantasy, distinguishing the two genres. Further, sword and sorcery, in contrast to high fantasy, tends to portray amoral protagonists and/or worlds--there are rarely objective values, or any sort of cosmic justice. Even when the protagonists act morally and do incidental good deeds along the way, the usual protagonist's motivation is self-interest.

**Urban Fantasy:** Most contemporary fantasy takes place in an urban setting. Fantasy that takes magical characters such as elves, fairies, vampires or wizards and places them in modern-day settings, often in the inner city. (Subgenre division of Urban Fantasy include: Urban Paranormal Fantasy, Urban

Faerie Fantasy.)

**Wuxia:** Literally meaning "martial (arts) heroes", is a sub-genre of the quasi-fantasy and martial arts genre in literature, television and cinema. The wu(xiá genre is a blend of the philosophy of xiá (? , "honor code", "an ethical person", "a hero"), and China's long history in wu(shù ("kung fu" (pronounced gong fu, despite popular misconceptions) or "martial arts"). A martial artist who follows the code of xiá is called a swordsman, or xiákè (literally "chivalrous guest"). Japan's samurai bushido- traditions, England's knight chivalry traditions, and America's gunslinger Western traditions all share some aspects with China's swordsman xiá traditions. The swordsman, however, need not serve a lord or hold any military power and they are not required to be from an aristocratic class.

## 10. Folk Tales/Fairy Tales

Stories that have been passed down to us over the years by real people. There are many types of folk tales, including fables, tall tales, myths, and fairy tales.

Subgenres include:

**Fables:** Brief stories that teach a lesson or moral. The characters are usually animals, but they are given human characteristics. Ex.: Aesop's Fables.

**Fairy Tales:** Usually have magical elements with characters that could be fairies, giants, or elves. Many times magical deeds are performed. Ex. Beauty and the Beast.

**Legend:** Traditional story sometimes popularly regarded as historical but unauthenticated.

**Myths:** Stories created to explain some phenomenon of nature. Many incorporate gods and goddesses. The story of King Midas is a myth.

**Parable:** A simple story used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson, as told by Jesus in the Gospels.

**Proverb:** A short, generally accepted cultural idea containing elements of wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional values, relayed in a metaphorical manner. Styles include: alliteration (forgive and forget), parallelism (nothing ventured, nothing gained), rhyme (when the cat is away, the mice will play), ellipsis (once bitten, twice shy).

**Tall Tales:** Folk tales that have a key element of exaggeration, such as Paul Bunyan.

## 11. Gothic

Stories of the macabre that invoke terror. Feature terrifying experiences in ancient locations such as castles, crypts, and dungeons. Often examine gender roles. Combines elements of both horror and romance. Prominent features of Gothic fiction include terror (both psychological and physical), mystery, the supernatural, ghosts, haunted houses and Gothic architecture, castles, darkness, death, decay, doubles, madness, secrets, and hereditary curses. The stock characters of Gothic fiction include tyrants, villains, bandits, maniacs, Byronic heroes, persecuted maidens, femmes fatales, madwomen, magicians, vampires, werewolves, monsters, demons, revenants, ghosts, perambulating skeletons, the Wandering Jew, and the Devil himself.

## 12. Graphic Novel

A book (original or adapted) that takes the form of a long comic strip or heavily illustrated story of 40 pages or more, produced in paperback. Though called a novel, these can also be works of nonfiction.

Related genres include:

**Comic:**

**Anime:** Japanese animation.

**Manga:** Japanese Comics.

**Yaoi:** Popular term used for fictional stories that focus on homoerotic or homoromantic male relationships. It is a subgenre of comics primarily created for female readers.

### 13. Historical/Epic

Mixes detailed historical research with imagined characters. Epics are often historical in nature and cover a large expanse of time set against a rich, vast setting. Think *Gone With The Wind*.

### 14. Horror

Meant to frighten the audience. Challenging common fears works best because people can relate to them, such as being left alone in the dark, having a car break down in the middle of the night on a deserted street, or getting into an elevator with a scary-looking man. Themes may include: Dark Aspects of Life (other types of horror expose the darker, more sinister aspects of human nature); Psychological (this type of horror plays with the reader's mind. Think *Dial M for Murder*. It is the helpless situation that evokes fear); Violence (many horror stories have violence or the threat of violence).

Subgenres include:

**Creepy Kids:** (Ex. *Children of the Corn*, *The Village of the Damned*, *The Omen*.)

**Cross Genre:** Horror with over-riding elements of another major genre.

**Cutting Edge:** Nontraditional archetypal aspects of the supernatural.

**Dark Fantasy:** See Fantasy Genre Category. Including gargoyles, witches, warlocks, vampires, werewolves and zombies, etc. (Ex. *Gargoyles*, *Dracula*, *Frankenstein*.)

**Dark Fiction:** Apparently a catch-all for contemporary horror, dark fantasy, and dark suspense.

**Dark Suspense:** No supernatural elements, constant threat from outside menace.

**Erotic Horror:** Sensual explicit content necessary to the story.

**Extreme:** Goes right to blood, guts, and gore with an aim for the gross. Splatterpunk.

**Fabulist:** Emphasizes a different tone and/or setting. Sometimes old-fashioned (atmospheric) voice and location.

**Gothic (including haunted houses):** English Gothic (haunted castles, crypts, mansions, convents). (Ex. Edgar Allen Poe.) American Gothic (American settings). Gothic or "Goth" subculture. (Ex. *Rose Red*, *The Shining*, *The Haunting*.)

**Humor:** (Ex. *The Adams Family*, *The Munsters*.)

**Lovecraftian:** Based on the H.P. Lovecraft mythos of the world once having been inhabited by a race with dark powers.

**Noir:** Usually set in dark urban world of crime and immorality.

**Psychological Horror:** Plot focused on disturbed psychological psyche. (Ex. *Psycho*, *Seven*.)

**Quiet (soft) Horror:** Subtle, moody, atmospheric.

**Supernatural and the Occult:** Involving supernatural elements such as ghosts, spectres, etc. (Ex. *Poltergeist*, *The Fog*, *The Amityville Horror*.)

**Surreal:** Irrational imagery. Bizarre. Or tied to surrealist movement.

## 15. Inspirational

Spiritually-themed books meant to inspire readers into a new way of thinking, acting, or feeling. Inspirational books may include some of the following themes: apocalyptic fiction (see also Science Fiction and Fantasy Genres), Bible or other religious study, book of hours, ministerial novel, concordance, commentary, devotionals, illuminated manuscripts, martyrology, angelology, spiritual thrillers, prayer books, etc.

Subgenres include:

**Fiction:** Fiction with spiritual themes prevalent.

**Motivational:** This motivates a reader without religious or spiritual elements. A factual representation of possibilities.

**Religious:** This leans toward a particular faith and the teachings of that faith in order to inspire others.

**Spiritual:** This is a neutral support of a person's spirituality without the use of specific religious elements or icons, without dogma attached.

## 16. Literary

A category of fiction which employs more sophisticated technique, driven predominantly by character development rather than action in the plot. Eloquent expression and philosophical tones.

## 17. Military/War Fiction

A novel in which the primary theme/action/focus of the plot takes place in a field of armed combat, or in a domestic setting (or home front) where the characters are engaged with the preparations for, or recovery from, war.

## 18. Musical

Usually films and plays that use song and dance to convey significant parts of the story.

## 19. Mystery

Includes a crime, detective(s) and/or private investigators, an investigation process to uncover the crime, and finally the identification of the culprit.

Subgenres include:

**Amateur Detective:** Nosy neighbors and inquisitive civilians get involved in an Amateur Detective story. Sometimes they are meddlers.

**Caper Novel:** Centered on commission of crime or scam. [Ex. Oceans Eleven]

**Cozy:** country houses and villages, with peaceful and genteel exteriors, are usually the setting. There is minimal violence and everything is nicely wrapped up by the conclusion.

**Detective:** The protagonist is usually a licensed private investigator or ex-cop who works alone or with a larger agency.

**Hard-Boiled:** These are gritty “noir” stories with grim details and tough, hard-nosed detectives.

**Police Procedural:** The protagonist is usually on the police force and the crime is solved by using the forces’ resources and procedures.

**Soft-Boiled:** Hard-boiled infused with a sense of optimism and light humor.

**Suspense:** Emphasis is on action and anticipation. May be more of a psychological-based drama. Also see elements of Thrillers as well.

**Thrillers:** Intense excitement and anticipation. Audience left in the dark most of the time, figuring things out as the characters do. Who is just around the corner? A tendency more toward physical danger, as opposed to psychological danger.

**Whodunit.** A traditional or “classic” mystery, often thought of as “noir” mystery—including the classics of the thirties and forties style of writing.

## 20. Mainstream

Fiction which appeals to a more general reading audience, versus literary or genre fiction. Mainstream is more plot-driven than literary fiction and less formulaic than genre fiction. Often novels of ordinary life directed toward the broadest possible audience, written in easily recognized and understood language.

## 21. Nonfiction

Nonfiction writing includes the following subgenres:

**Autobiographies:** The history of an individual’s life and accomplishments. May be limited to specific event, time, and/or place, or more all-encompassing. The difference is that these stories are written by the person who experienced the event. Possibly written with the assistance of a second party. Self-portraits.

**Biographies.** Books about a person’s life, or a segment of a person’s life. A biography would be written by a secondary party, not the person who experienced the event. Could relate to contemporary or historical events.

**Cookbooks:** Related to cooking, with recipes detailed, creating menus. On the subjects of cooking, baking, mixing ingredients, in a variety of ways.

**Crafts:** Creating craft items, designing projects, such as embroidery, woodcrafts, ceramics, etc.

**Creative Nonfiction:** Hybrid of literature and nonfiction that is based on true-life events. True story dramatization. The nonfiction elements are based on facts, and the fiction elements are based on setting, scene, place, and bringing out characterization. Typically this subgenre might include Biographies, Autobiographies, Journalistic reporting. See below for definitions.

**Essays:** Short prose that makes a point, states an opinion, or describes an event. A **Persuasive** Essay may be one-sided and directed at converting the reader to a certain belief or idea. A **Political** essay might make a statement regarding social or political views. The primary focus would be to support and explore the social or political view, and/or to possibly consider it’s short-falling as well.

**History:** Books focused on historical events, both world and local. American history would focus on historical events taking place in the United States; British history would focus on historical events which took place specifically related to England; World history would include books related to cultures around the world.

**How-to:** Self-explanatory. These books described how to do something.

**Journalistic Reporting:** Reports the news through creative retelling of the events as they happened rather than giving just the bare, minimum facts; a more first-hand, personal look into the events.

**Memoirs:** Limited autobiographies. Many times speaking of a specific event in their lives.

**Music/Art/Architecture:** Covering present as well as historical information on these subjects, including examples.

**Persuasive.** May be one-sided and directed at converting the reader to a personal POV/belief or concept.

**Political:** Also considered social writing,. Makes a statement regarding social or political views or ways of being. Primary focus of the work supports a social or political view or critiques it. There is an element of exploration within them.

**Religion:** Books within the nonfiction genre of religion will look at modern religions as well as ancient religions.

**Science and Technology:** A gamut of subjects withing these genres, going from natural science, to astronomy, to Internet technologies.

**Self-help/Psychology/Sociology:** Self-help books usually describe how to improve your life in some way, either by raising your self-esteem, increasing your health, or learning a new skill. Psychology and sociology books describe how people behave and interact.

**Travel/Geography.** Would include description of the terrain, the sights, the locale and customs of individual places, countries, cities, town, rural destinations, cultures, etc. Travel books would be geared toward people planning to travel, possibly with details about restaurants, hotels, local attractions. Geography would be more limited in scope in discussing terrain, relevant statistics about an area, etc.–it would not include travel planning.

**True Crime:** Narrative that follows the criminal's or the detective's perspective. A re-telling of events surrounding the nature of the crime.

## 22. Poetry/Prose

Have a rhythm and meter. Poems create imagery. May be humorous, serious, lyrical, or narrative (tells a story - referred to as prose). Meter, rhyme, and intonation are prevalent tools of poetry. Styles of rhyme may include ballads, sonnets, rhyming couplets. The form of a poem may include: Sonnet, Jintishi, Sestina, Villanelle, Pantoum, Rondeau, Tanka, Haiku, Ruba'i, Sijo, Ode, Ghazal, etc.

Subgenres include:

**Dramatic:** A drama written in verse.

**Elegy:** Mournful and melancholy.

**Epic:** Lengthy poems involving heroic adventures, or a subject of great import to a particular culture or mythos.

**Lytic:** Shorter poetry that is melodic in nature. Often of a more personal nature.

**Narrative:** Tells a story (see also Epic).

**Prose Poetry:** Hybrid using attributes of both prose and poetry.

**Satirical:** Historically often involving a political or societal theme.

**Verse Fable:** Prose, often set in verse. See Folk Tales/Fairy Tales above. Involving anthropomorphized (animals, plants, inanimate objects, natural forces, infused with human characteristics and attributes) illustrating a moral lesson.

## 23. Pornography

Adult explicit, sexual fantasy fiction. Gritty, frank language. Written primarily for heterosexual men.

## 24. Romance

A romance centers around the romantic relationship of the main characters. Traditional romances include a “happily ever after” (HEA) ending. Not all romances are traditional romances—some may include HEA, HEA-for-now, opened-ended possibilities. Some non-traditional romances may be referred to as “dark romances.”

Subgenres include:

**Contemporary:** Stories are set in the present day. Usually after the World Wars.

**Dark Romance:** Nontraditional love stories. Possibly without HEA.]

**Dark Fantasy:** May include fantasy/paranormal elements of a darker nature, including vampires, demons, satyrs, witches, warlocks, etc.

**Erotic Romance:** Stories written about the development of a romantic relationship through sexual interaction.

**Fantasy:** Stories that take place in other realms, other worlds. often including magic. May include magical creatures, elements of mythology, etc. Includes faeries, warlocks, witches, werewolves, etc.

**GLBT:** Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Trans-sexual. GLBT romantic relationships are central to the plot and may encompass any of the subgenres of romance..

**Gothic:** See Gothic Genre.

**Historical:** Stories take place during a specific time period in history with all the clothing, etiquette, and events of that period. Usually before WWII. See Nostalgic Historical for events fifty to one hundred years in the past.

**Inspirational:** Stories inspire the reader and evoke hope for love. [Often contain religious beliefs context.]

**Multicultural:** Characters of different cultures are brought together, or characters from a nondominant culture are explored in depth.

**Nostalgic Historical:** Usually taking place in recent past. Approximately fifty years in the past, including the World War II era up to and possibly including the 1950's and 1960's, etc.

**Paranormal:** Other world elements, such as ghosts, spectres, ESP abilities, unexplained phenomenon, etc..

**Regency:** A time period that encompasses a particular set of morals, manners, and societal structure of the early 1800's. Often set in England.

**Religious:** The love story is governed by religious rules and customs. [See Inspirational above]

**Romantic Suspense:** Elements of suspense and intrigue drive the romance forward. In romance, this would be character/relationship driven as opposed to plot driven.

**Time Travel:** A romance that spans across two or more time periods.

**Urban Fantasy:** See Urban Fantasy included within Fantasy.

**Western Historical:** Usually the background is set as the American “old west.”

## 25. Speculative Fiction

All-inclusive term for science fiction, fantasy and horror.

## 26. Science Fiction/Futuristic

Based on newly emerging or futuristic technological, and/or environmental or biological advances. Related to science, technology, space, and the future. (Ex. Minority Report, Star Trek.) Science Fiction has been specifically identified as those stories with plots rooted in science and technology. Note Futuristic may not necessarily contain the same degree of technological aspects/elements as Science Fiction, but it would take place at a future time.

Subgenres include:

**Alternate History:** Based on the premise of what if actions taken were different and historical events had turned out differently. These stories may include elements of time travel to change the past, or may simply set a story in a universe with a different, or alternate history to that of our own.

**Apocalyptic and Post-apocalyptic:** Apocalyptic fiction is slanted toward with the premise of the end of civilization through nuclear war, plague, environmental disaster, or some other global disaster and the aftermath of a world or civilization beyond the catastrophic event. Apocalyptic fiction generally will involve the disaster itself and the direct aftermath. Post-apocalyptic may involve situations from the near aftermath to hundreds or thousands of years into the future

**Biopunk:** Elements usually include those aspects similar to a hard-boiled detective novel, film noir, Japanese anime, and post-modernist prose to describe the nihilistic, underbelly side of the biotech society.

**Cyberpunk:** Usually near-future and the settings are often dystopian. Dealing with information age, Internet, etc. Often darker, noir, stories.

**Military SF:** Military science fiction is created in the context of an aspect of conflict that takes place between national, international, interplanetary, or possibly interstellar armed forces. The story will usually be relayed from a soldier's viewpoint as the main character. Stories include intricate detail about military technology, procedure, the ritual of military life, and history. Military stories may use parallels with historical military conflicts.

**Space Opera:** Space opera emphasizes romantic, often melodramatic adventure. These stories are set mainly or entirely in space, and will generally involve a conflict between opponents possessing powerful (and sometimes quite extraordinary) technologies and abilities. A significant trait of the space opera is that settings, characters, battles, powers, and themes tend to be very large-scale. Often these stories will follow the Homeric tradition, in which a small band of adventurers are cast against larger-than-life backdrops of powerful warring factions.

**Space Western:** Space Westerns might be considered a sub-genre of Space Opera that transposes themes of the American Western stories and film to a setting of futuristic space frontiers. These stories typically involve "frontier" colony worlds (colonies that have only recently been colonized and/or settled) serving as stand-ins for the frontiers of lawlessness and economic expansion that were typical of the early American west.

**Steampunk:** A mix of scifi and fantasy with themes based on 19<sup>th</sup> century society and steam-operated machines. See also, Fantasy genre.

**Superhuman:** Deal with the emergence of humans who have abilities beyond the norm. This can stem either from natural causes or be the result of intentional augmentation. These stories usually focus on the alienation that these beings feel as well as society's reaction to them.

**Time Travel:** Travel through time. Ex. The Time Machine by H. G. Wells (also an example of steampunk).

[Also visit, <http://www.listology.com/bertie/story/sub-genres-science-fiction-map-ideas-literary-list>, for expansive listings that including settings, themes for Science Fiction subgenres.]

## 27. Western

Involve settings in the American West, with a feeling of the open range. Westerns have themes of honor, redemption, revenge, and finding one's identity or place in life.

Subgenres may include:

**Contemporary:** Modern-day settings.

**Historical:** Historical settings

## 28. Women's Fiction

As Action/Adventure may be primarily geared toward the male readership, Women's Fiction would be primarily targeted to the female readership. The relationships, situations, etc., are about women, and told from a woman's point of view. Women's fiction may encompass a broad-ranging array of themes and genre elements, including women detectives/mysteries, inspirational, mainstream fiction, etc. (Consider, Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood.) Two subgenres are specifically noted as follows:

Subgenres may include:

**Romantic Fiction:** See Romance Genre above, with the clarification that a Women's Fiction Romance may or may not include an HEA.

**Chick Lit:** Light-hearted if not a bit caustic story. The Main Character is usually someone in their mid-twenties/early thirties. Often told in First Person POV. (Ex. Bridget Jones' Diary.)

## References

Check out these reference sources for more information.

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