

Fiction Genres

There are many different genres of fiction. Some books and short stories are clearly only dedicated to one genre, but there are some that are a mixture of genres. For example, a story could be both humorous and fantasy, so it could be considered a humorous fantasy fiction novel.

Read about fiction genres. As you read, see if you can think of any stories that fit the genres.

Realistic Fiction

Realistic fiction includes short stories and novels that feel like they could have happened in real life. The setting is in the present day or the very near past (usually within the last ten years), in the context of our real world, and follows all the “rules” of our existence.

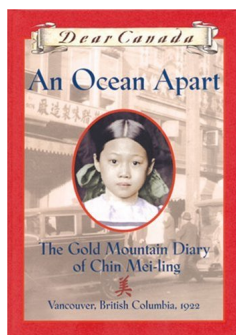
Realistic fiction has characters that are like real people. They encounter modern day problems and react to situations like real people would. These stories sound like they could be true. The conflicts dealt with are often common problems such as having trouble fitting in, bullying, moving to a new city, etc. Realistic fiction can help you learn about other parts of the world and how people of different social classes live.

An example is *Wanting Mor* by Canadian author Rukhsana Khan. It's a book about Jameela, a girl from a poor village in Afghanistan who is born with a birth defect on her face. Her mother always accepted her and told her to be proud of herself. Then her mother dies unexpectedly and Jameela's life changes. Her father moves the family, he remarries, and Jameela is deserted, left in a marketplace, and then taken into an orphanage. The book is about difficult times and how she overcomes them.



Historical Fiction

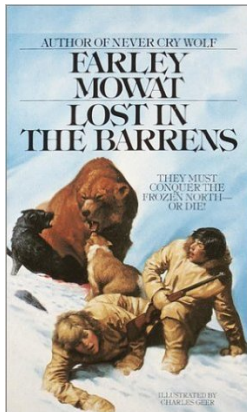
Historical fiction is a story set in the past and often around a specific event in time. The setting (the time and place) is a key component in historical fiction. Writers of historical fiction usually research to find out what things were like during the specific time period they are writing about. The characters can be based on real people who lived during that time period or the author can create their own characters. The plot often reflects real events that happened in history.



An example is *An Ocean Apart: The Gold Mountain Dairy of Chin Mei-Ling* by Canadian author Gillian Chan. This is a story set in Vancouver, BC in 1922. A real event in history was that Chinese were discriminated against and had to pay a head tax in order to enter Canada. Mei-ling is the main character of this story and the conflict her family faces is raising enough money to bring her mother and brother to Canada. She worries she may never see them again because the head tax is so high.

Adventure Fiction

Adventure stories are known for their fast-paced action. The main characters often have a goal they are trying to reach or a task they must complete. The plot often revolves around an exciting journey and visiting interesting places. The events that happen are more extraordinary compared to everyday life. The story can be set in the past, present, or future. It can be in a realistic or fantasy setting.



Good adventure fiction will have a main character that changes or sees the world in a new light by the end of their journey. The hero is easily identified right away in adventure fiction.

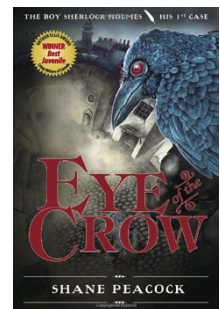
An example is *Lost in the Barrens* by [Farley Mowat](#). The book is about two boys, Awasin and Jamie, who are enamoured by the great Arctic wastes. They set out for a wilderness adventure together, not realizing how much danger they are getting themselves into. Farley Mowat is a well-known Canadian writer, activist, and environmentalist.

Mystery Fiction

Mystery fiction involves a suspenseful event or crime that needs to be solved. The main character is focused on finding clues and solving the problem or mystery. By the end of the story, the mystery is usually solved.

The main character is often a detective or someone who takes on that roll. Other characters are often possible suspects. The crime or problem that needs solving usually happens near the start of the short story or book. Suspense and danger can often crop up as the main character gets closer to finding the truth.

An example is *Eye of the Crow* by Canadian author [Shane Peacock](#). It's about thirteen-year-old Sherlock Holmes, before he became a famous detective. As a youth, he was an outcast due to his mother being upper class English and his father being a poor Jew. His keen eye for details was evident at a young age, and to keep himself busy he worked on solving a well-known murder case. Things get dicey when he is accused of the crime – at a time when a thirteen-year-old could be hanged in London, England.



Fantasy Fiction

The fantasy genre has fantastic characters or settings that don't exist in real life. Both imaginary creatures and talking animals are often part of fantasy. The settings could be magical or on another world.

Fantasy may involves a made-up world that is mostly based on the author's imagination. An example is *The Hobbit*. Fantasy may also involves a real world setting with magical or supernatural elements such as the *Twilight* series. All

fantasy books and short stories involve characters and events outside the boundaries of the real world.

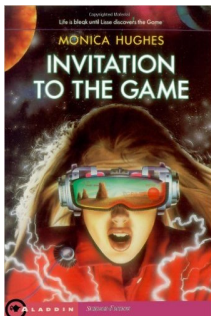
An example is *Brigitta of the White Forest* by Canadian author Danika Dinsmore. It's about two young faeries who discover that everyone in the White Forest has been turned to stone. Brigitta and her sister Himalette go on a journey to find an exiled faerie to see if she knows how to help lift the magical curse.



Science Fiction

Science fiction is about imagined innovations in science or technology. It may include ideas and inventions that do not exist, but there is a basis in real scientific principles or theories. Authors may research a specific branch of science and then make predictions about what it could lead to in the future – and how it could impact society. The plot often revolves around events or problems that have not happened before.

The setting is often in the future, and it can also be in another universe or even another dimension.



An example is *Invitation to the Game* by Canadian author Monica Hughes. It's set in 2154 where machines do most of the jobs and humans are mostly unemployed. Lisse and her friends have graduated and are put in special housing by the government. They start playing “The Game” that is supposed to be a computer simulation, but they find out they have actually been transported to another planet.

Humour Fiction

Humour fiction includes books or short stories that seek to amuse the reader. The setting is often in the present day and the main character is often the one who is the target or at the center of the hijinks.

The goal of humour fiction, also known as comedy fiction, is to make you laugh. The main character could stay the same throughout or learn and change by the end of the story. Some humour fiction can have a serious side, and also have a strong theme.

An example is *This Can't Be Happening at Macdonald Hall* by Gordon Korman. Bruno and Boots are roommates who go to a boarding school called Macdonald Hall. They get into so much trouble together that the school headmaster splits them up. But Bruno and Boots will do whatever it takes to get back together and funny situations ensue.



Folktales / Traditional Stories

Picture yourself living long ago, before electricity, computers, or television; maybe even before books were printed. It grows dark. After supper, you sit with your family around the fire. Soon it will be bedtime, but right now, you want to relax. Sitting together in the firelight, someone begins to tell a story he or she heard from another storyteller. Everyone listens until eyes grow heavy and it is time for bed. This is where folktales come from.

Like First Nations legends, folktales are stories passed down through generations, mainly by oral storytelling. Fairy tales, tall tales, trickster tales, and myths are all kinds of folktales. Around the globe, storytelling has always been an integral part of every society. For centuries, stories have been shared by elders, families and friends. From ancient times to today, the oral tradition of passing on information through story and song continues.

Stories are told to help younger generations carry on traditions, to share knowledge about the world, and to learn how to be a positive and contributing member of a community.

Summary:

On the following page, there is a chart that summarizes the genres. You may wish to keep this chart for your reference.

Fiction Genres		
Genre	Definition	Examples
Realistic	Stories that could be true, but aren't	Wonder, Each Kindness, Bridge to Terabithia
Science	Has aliens, advanced technology, or is set in the future	The Hunger Games, The Giver, Ready Player One
Historical	A made up story around a real event, time, or person from history	Number the Stars, Anne of Green Gables
Fantasy	Has monsters, magic, ghosts, or super powers; often in a place that does not exist and/or events that could not actually happen	Harry Potter, Percy Jackson
Mystery	Usually involves a mysterious death or a crime to be solved	Nancy Drew, The Mysterious Benedict Society
Adventure	Exciting – happens outside of ordinary life, a conflict, risk, or challenge, usually an element of danger, often a journey or quest	Treasure Island, Journey to the Center of the Earth
Humour	Funny – the goal is to make you laugh. May or may not have a serious side and/or an strong theme.	Diary of a Wimpy Kid, This Can't Be Happening at MacDonald Hall
Folktales / Traditional	<p>Passed down. There are various sub-genres in this category:</p> <p>Fable – short, talking animals, moral/lesson</p> <p>Myth – gods/goddesses, may explain behaviour or something in nature</p> <p>Tall Tale – funny story, skills of main character exaggerated</p> <p>Fairy Tale – old story that has magic and/or talking animals; has happy ending</p> <p>Legend – exaggerated story with historical basis, often has a hero</p>	<p>Fable – Tortoise and the Hare</p> <p>Myth – The Battle of Hercules</p> <p>Tall Tale – Paul Bunyan, Pecos Bill</p> <p>Fairy Tale – Snow White, Frozen, Three Little Pigs</p> <p>Legend – Robin Hood</p>