

Literary Genres

General List

Fiction Genres:

Fairy Tales

Definition: Literary genre that is a story, usually for children, about elves, hobgoblins, dragons, fairies, or other magical creatures.

Examples: *Hansel and Gretel; Jack and the Beanstalk; The Ugly Duckling; The Shoemaker and the Elves; Goldilocks and the Three Bears.*

Fantasy

Definition: Literary genre that is an imaginative or fanciful work, esp. one dealing with supernatural or unnatural events or characters.

Examples: *The Book of Three, The Dark Is Rising, Five Children and It, Half Magic, The House with a Clock in Its Walls, A Wrinkle in Time*

Folk Tales

Definition: Literary genre that is a tale or legend originating and traditional among a people or folk, especially forming part of the oral tradition of the common people. Any belief or story passed on traditionally, especially one considered to be false or based on superstition.

Examples: *Cinderella; Little Red Riding Hood; Princess Furball; Why Mosquitos Buzz in People's Ear; How Many Spots Does a Leopard Have?*

Tall Tales

Definition: Literary genre that is an extravagantly and humorously exaggerated story of the backwoods exploits of an American frontiersman.

Examples: *Johnny Appleseed; Billy the Kid; Buffalo Bill; Paul Bunyan; Davy Crockett*

Fable

Definition: Literary genre that is a brief allegorical narrative, in verse or prose, illustrating a moral thesis or satirizing human beings. The characters of a fable are usually animals who talk and act like people while retaining their animal traits.

Examples: *The Boy Who Cried Wolf; The city Mouse and the Country Mouse; The Lion and the Mouse*

Adventure

Definition: Literary genre pertaining to an exciting or very unusual experience, participation in exciting undertakings or enterprises, a bold, usually risky undertaking, or hazardous action of uncertain outcome.

Examples: *Wild Timothy; Tracks in the Snow; The Incredible Journey; Island of the Blue Dolphins; Hatchet; The Whipping Boy; The Princess Bride*

Mystery

Definition: Literary genre whose plot involves a crime or other event that remains puzzlingly unsettled until the very end.

Examples: *Flatfoot Fox and the Case of the Missing Eye; Nate the Great and the Stolen Base; The Case of the Hungry Stranger;; Danger in Tibet*

Historical

Definition: Literary genre pertaining to, treating, or characteristic of history or past events, based on or reconstructed from an event, custom, or style, in the past, or having once existed or lived in the real world, as opposed to being part of legend or fiction or as distinguished from religious belief.

Examples: *Separate But Not Equal; The Dream and the Struggle; The Girl on the Outside; Number the Stars; More Than Anything Else*

Realistic

Definition: Literary genre interested in, concerned with, or based on what is real, practical, pertaining to, characterized by, or given to the representation in literature or art of things as they really are, or resembling or simulating life.

Examples: *Drawing Lessons; Journey; Sarah, Plain and Tall; Just One Tear; A Summery Saturday Morning; The Tricksters; After the Rain; Babyface; Junebug; Newfound*

Science

Definition: Literary genre in which a background of science or pseudoscience is an integral part of the story. Many of the events recounted in a science fiction story are within the realm of future possibility like robots, space travel, interplanetary war, or invasions from outer space.

Examples: *The Postman; The Gathering; The Homecoming; The Giver; Aliens: Earth Hive; House of Stairs; Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea; The Time Machine*

Nonfiction Genres:

Informational

Definition: Literary genre that is intended for teaching and related informational purposes primarily intended to educate rather than entertain.

Examples: *The Reasons for Seasons; Lightning; Animals Eat the Weirdest Things; Elephants; Safari; Snowflakes*

Biography

Definition: Literary genre that is a written account of another person's life or the reconstruction in print or on film, of the lives of real men and women.

Example: *Making Headlines: A Biography of Nellie Bly; Elizabeth Barrett Browning; The Legend of Jesse Owens; Robert Kennedy; Nelson Mandela: A Biography; The Life and Many Deaths of Harry Houdini*

Autobiography

Definition: Literary genre that is a history of a person's life written or told by that person or an individual's interpretation of his own life.

Examples: *Within Reach: My Everest Story; An Enemy Among Friends; Sky, A True Story of Resistance During World War II; The Cage*

Poetry Genres:

Mother Goose and Nursery Rhymes

Definition: Literary work in metrical form or verse, the art of rhythmical composition, written or spoken, for exciting pleasure by beautiful, imaginative, or elevated thoughts.

Form: Many different forms of verse are included in traditional nursery rhymes, such as stories and riddles.

Examples: *Hark! Hark! The Dogs do Bark!; Pease Porridge Hot; One, Two, Buckle My Shoe; Hush Little Baby; Pat-A-Cake*

Free Verse

Definition: Literary work of poetry that is written without proper rules about form, rhyme, rhythm, or meter.

Form: Lacks rhyme and has less predictable rhythm.

Examples: *Fog; Out of the Dust; Leaves of Grass; Seashells*

Concrete

Definition: Literary work in metrical form or verse in which the words and phrases are arranged on paper to capture and extend the meaning. Each line should be a complete unit of thought.

Form: The text itself forms a visible picture on the page.

Example: *summer*
 river
 murmurs
 leaves and breeze
 whisper
 bees and
 dreamy
 thoughts
 hum
 as summer
 winds
 on

Couplet

Definition: Literary work in metrical form or verse, which has a pair of lines of poetry that are usually rhymed.

Form: Many different forms to write different types of couplets that can also be used to build other poems.

Examples: *If turkeys gobble,*
 Do Pilgrims squabble?

 If cars go zoom,
 Exhaust smokes will plume!

Triplet

Definition: Literary work in metrical form or verse that has three lines. Most often the three lines rhyme. Some triplets have only two rhymed lines with different patterns.

Form: 3 rhyming lines or 2 rhyming lines.

Example: 3 rhyming lines triplet

***Football is the game for me
The stadium is a great place to be
Touchdowns are what I like to see.***

Example: 2 rhyming lines triplet

***Down by the lake
Grandpa and I drop a line
Then have lots of fish to take.***

Haiku

Definition: Literary work in metrical form or verse, that is an unrhymed Japanese poem with three lines and a specific syllable pattern. Haiku's theme is usually nature.

Form: Line #1: 5 syllables

Line #2: 7 syllables

Line #3: 5 syllables

Example:

***An old silent pond
From leaf to leaf hops a frog
Looking for a meal***

Cinquain

Definition: Literary work in metrical form or verse that has five lines.

Form: Line #1: Subject

Line #2: Two describing words

Line #3: -ing words about what the subject does

Line #4: A sentence about the subject

Line #5: Another name for the subject

Example:

Spider

Furry, black

Climbing, spinning, weaving

They make an intricate web

Turantula

Limericks

Definition: Literary work in metrical form or verse, the art of rhythmical composition, written or spoken, for exciting pleasure by beautiful, imaginative, or elevated thoughts. A limerick is a very short but funny poem. There is a rhyme and rhythm pattern that makes it flow smoothly.

Form: Lines 1,2 and 5: rhyme and have eight to ten syllables.

Lines 3 and 4: rhyme and have five to seven syllables.

Example:

There once was a tycoon from New York

Who thought he could eat all foods with a fork

Ice cream gave him some trouble

His problem seemed to double

When he tried sipping champagne from the cork.

Ballads

Definition: Literary works that are narrative poetry and tell a story.

Form: Many different forms to write different types of ballads.

Example: *Tom Dooley*

***Hang your head Tom Dooley hang your head and cry
Killed poor Laura Foster, you know you're bound to
die***

***Bury her on the hillside, make the people see
Put the coat over, tromp her with your feet.***

***Hang your head Tom Dooley hang your head and cry
Killed poor Laura Foster, don't you know you're
bound to die***

***Bury her on the hillside with other people's lives
Hang your head Tom Dooley hang your head and cry
Killed poor Laura Foster, don't you know you're
bound to die.***

***First time I went Courting, pretty brave of me
Just to sing from her old oak tree
Hang your mama with kindness blame it on this
morning.***

Diamante

Definition: Literary work in metrical form or verse, which has seven lines. The form is written about two opposite subjects and makes a comparison between them by moving from one to the other. Subjects might include war-peace, fire-ice, hot-cold, etc.

Form:

Line #1: 1 noun that names the first subject

Line #2: 2 adjectives that describe the first subject

Line #3: 3 -ing words that are related to the first subject

Line #4: 4 nouns: the first 2 related to the first subject (line 1) & the second 2 related to the second subject (line 7)

Line #5: 3 -ing words that are related to the second subject

Line #6: 2 adjectives that describe the second subject

Line #7: 1 noun that names the second subject

Example:

Dogs

playful, active

running, playing, growing

fast, fun, soft, nice

sleeping, meowing, eating

furry, whiskery

Cats