



Understanding Genres



Genre (jawn-ruh)

Texts can be divided into genres (types) in two main ways—by form (the structure or style) or by content (the subject).

Examples of Genres Organized by Form

Biography – the story of a person's life written by someone else

Autobiography – the story of a person's life written by that person

Drama – a piece of writing intended to be performed (e.g., play scripts, screenplays)

Essay – a short composition on a specific topic

Novel – a long piece of writing that describes imaginary events and characters

Short Story – a short piece of writing that describes imaginary events and characters

Poetry – short, artistic writing that has rhythm and sometimes rhymes

Periodical – writing produced daily, weekly or monthly (e.g., newspapers, magazines)

Reference – writing that is not meant to be read from beginning to end but instead is used to look up specific information (e.g., dictionaries)

Manual – writing that explains the steps, rules or process involved in doing a task

Fact-book – nonfiction writing that includes a great deal of information on a specific topic

Examples of Genres Organized by Content

Informational – writing that focuses on real events, people and places

Folk Tales – short, traditional stories that teach lessons, sometimes through the experiences of animals (e.g., fairy tales, fables)

Fantasy – stories that involve imaginary creatures, places and events

Science Fiction – stories that involve futuristic creatures, settings and technology

Historical Fiction – stories that involve imaginary characters but are set in real times and around real events of the past

Realistic Fiction – stories about people, places and events that are not true but could possibly be true (e.g., adventures)

Humour – stories that are funny

Romance – stories about love and relationships

Mystery – stories where characters try to solve crimes and learn about the unknown

Tragedy – stories that are very sad

Identifying Genres in the Library

Use these strategies to identify the genres found in different sections of the library.

Search the fiction section for collections of short stories, poems, novels and plays.

↳ **Identify** other categories they are divided into.

Search the nonfiction section for autobiographies, manuals, fact-books and encyclopedias.

↳ **Identify** the different topics they are divided into, e.g., history, travel.

Search the library's periodicals section for newspapers and magazines.

↳ **Identify** the different kinds of articles and magazines.



Try searching your local library's Web site or online catalogue. Reading material may be listed by genre.

You can also read newspaper and magazine articles online at *The Alberta Library Online*.