**AFRICAN-AMERICAN FICTION**

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| **DEFINITION:** Like other multicultural fiction, African American literature includes many variations in tone, style, plotting and pace. African American fiction appears in every genre and, in the case of hip-hop or urban lit, has created its own. African American literature explores the role of African Americans within American society. **CHARACTERISTICS:** African American literature spans many genres, from mystery to romance to literary fiction, but a common thread is the portrayal of the unique experiences of growing up black in America. Stories focus on black communities and families. While racism and minority status may be important themes in some books, others make little reference to the surrounding white culture. The important commonality is African Americans telling their own stories about their lives and culture. |

**APPEAL:** When the many types of African American fiction are grouped together, the main appeal factor is that African Americans take center stage in these books.  The diversity of the literature reflects the diversity of the African American community, so there is a broad spectrum of books within the genre, but all revolve around black characters telling their stories.

**READERS:** Literary fiction of this genre has a broad mainstream appeal; anyone who reads literary fiction would be open to reading Nobel-prize winning author Toni Morrison. Some authors of popular fiction, like Terry McMillan or Walter Mosley, also have broad appeal. However, the main readership is other African Americans. As this entire genre grows and deepens, the readership has grown as well and many library patrons now ask for the African American section of fiction, much like mystery readers often expect a separate mystery section. The popularity of the Zane books spotlighted the African American market with her bestselling titles and spawned a re-interest in black authors. Urban fiction, one the fastest growing segments of the genre, appeals mainly to teens and younger adults both male and female.

**TRENDS:** Urban fiction is still driving sales and so far shows no signs of slowing down. Some of the early writers of this genre, like Nikki Turner, are turning their sales power into publishing deals for finding and publishing other authors. Recent titles from Omar Tyree, already a best-selling author, reflect the dominance of the urban fiction trend.

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| Classic Authors | James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, Donald Goines, Zora Neale Hurston, Iceberg Slim, Sister Souljah |
| Contemporary | Connie Briscoe, Pearl Cleage, Eric Jerome Dickey, E. Lynn Harris, Kimberla Lawson Roby, Bernice McFadden, Diane McKinney-Whetstone, Terry McMillan, Omar Tyree, Carl Weber |
| Erotica | Noire, Zane |
| Hip-Hop/Urban | Shannon Holmes, K’Wan, Vickie M. Stringer, Nikki Turner, Teri Woods |
| Literary | J. California Cooper, Ernest J. Gaines, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Edward P. Jones |
| Mystery | Eleanor Taylor Brand, Walter Mosley |
| Romance | Rochelle Ayers, Shirley Hailstock, Donna Hill, Brenda Jackson, Sandra Kitt, Mary B. Morrison, Francis Ray |