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| **Genres & Authors** |
| A Readers’ Advisory Resource for Adult Popular Fiction |
| *Adapted from the 2007 “Popular Fiction Checklist” created by the Adult Reading Round Table (ARRT) of Illinois (www.arrtreads.org).* |

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**Introduction**

“I looked at Dublin rising. And there she came, through it all, out of the darkest of flames, the loveless old hoor herself, Granny Nash. She was carrying a wall made of books; she had two of them open on top of the pile, reading them already, one eye for each, as she strolled up Sackville Street. She looked singed and half-destroyed but she moved like a dreaming child on her way to school. And I cheered her on. I shouted with all I had but she never looked up from her books.” – *A Star Called Henry* by Roddy Doyle

I read. A LOT. Not quite Granny Nash territory, above, but, you know, a good amount. Yet as much as I read, I still feel woefully ignorant of many authors and genres – and sub-genres, and sub-sub-sub-genres, and blended genres (vampire-Christian-Amish-romance, anyone?). So this project started out as completely selfish: I wanted to improve my knowledge of the major genres and authors I don’t read, and in so doing learn how to better connect readers with books.

My research led me to NoveList and the terrific “Popular Fiction Checklist” compiled by the Adult Reading Round Table (ARRT, [www.arrtreads.org](http://www.arrtreads.org)) of Illinois. Not only were there great lists, but there were also succinct and helpful descriptions of various genres, typical readers, and trends. Boom! “Genres & Authors” was born.

There are two parts to this project:

1. This longer “Genres & Authors” booklet;
2. A “Popular Fiction Pack” of 3 X 5 index cards with essentially the same (though condensed) information, perfect for quick study.

You can order both (handmade!) through the order form at the end of this, or go online to print both. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions, or make suggestions, or give me tips for picking good lottery numbers.

Happy reading!

Laura Raphael – [lraphae@tulsalibrary.org](mailto:lraphae@tulsalibrary.org); 596-7979

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| **ADVENTURE**  **DEFINITION:** Adventure novels typically have fast-moving plots, exotic settings, and larger-than-life heroes. The hero is involved in death-defying activities: gun battles, car chases, sneak attacks, etc. The stories can be set at any time during the last several centuries. Corsairs may be replaced by submarines, but the formula remains the same. |

**APPEAL:** Many are military in setting, and appeal to anyone who has served in the military, or did not and but enjoys the vicarious experience of reading about people who did.  They have a larger-than-life cartoon quality that makes them entertaining.  Some exhibit a high level of violence which may or may not be appealing, and since they are fast-paced, they are often quick, satisfying reads that don’t involve a tremendous investment in time and emotion. Since they are often set in exotic locales, they also appeal to readers who like to ‘visit’ unusual places.

**READERS:** It would be wrong to assume that only men read adventure stories, although, traditionally, the adventure genre has been viewed as men’s fiction.  Anyone who enjoys a good story with a somewhat predictable and unambiguous ending may enjoy an adventure story.

**TRENDS:** The thriller genre is overtaking and absorbing the classic adventure genre.  Younger readers and a world influenced by the events of 9/11 and the *Da Vinci Code* have made the adventure genre seem dated and quaint for some.  Perhaps the most obvious example of this is the retreat of the Western as a viable subgenre of adventure.  Some analysts believe that the thriller *is* the new adventure.  Authors such as Preston Douglas, Lincoln Child and John J. Nance who are often described as adventure writers may, in fact, be writing thrillers, by definition, not adventure fiction.  [See the Thriller handout for possible insight into overlap and genre blending]

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| Classic authors | Max Brand, C.S. Forester, Zane Grey, H. Rider Haggard, Louis L’Amour, Jack London, Alistair MacLean |
| Exotic Adventure | Michael Crichton, Clive Cussler, Douglas J. Preston/Lincoln Child, Matthew Reilly, James Rollins, Wilbur Smith |
| Military Adventure | Dale Brown, Bernard Cornwell (19th century), Harold Coyle, Michael DiMercurio, W.E.B. Griffin, Alexander Kent (19th century) |
| Technothrillers/  Political Adventure | Tom Clancy, Stephen Coonts, David Poyer |
| Westerns | Johnny D. Boggs, Loren D. Estleman, Elmer Kelton, Richard S. Wheeler |

**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 |

**CHRISTIAN FICTION**

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| **DEFINITION:** Christian fiction has at its core biblically-based attitudes, values and actions. It is sometimes called inspirational fiction or gentle reads, but these terms can be misleading.  Christian fiction is characterized by explicit or implicit Christianity and little or no sex, violence or profanity. Often written in a series to show the growth of faith over time, these books pose religious questions and answers, show conflict over faith and morality, often emphasize a conversion or crisis of faith and exemplify Christian faith in real life. |

**CHARACTERISTICS:** Christian fiction has little or no sex, violence or profanity.  These books always show Christian values and although there may be a conflict, or a crisis of faith, good and evil (black and white) is very clearly drawn.  The pace may be slower with the emphasis on the characters.

**APPEAL:** Many of the authors currently write series with a stand alone here and there.  Series by favorite authors are a huge attraction.  Also, readers know they can rely on these authors to be consistent in their subject matter.

**READERS:** Most often, the readers are women of an evangelical faith.  Also, you will have requests by young adult girls and their mothers looking for transitional reads in the romance and historical genres.  As Christian fiction expands its subgenres, it draws young adults and adults who want biblical themes in their science fiction and fantasy.  In the past, the readers were generally older women but this has changed over time due to perhaps television programs (7th Heaven, Little House, etc.) and better marketing by publishers.

**SUBGENRES:** Most of the subgenres are what you would find elsewhere:  apocalyptic, contemporary, historical, romance, western, science fiction, fantasy, and suspense, and additionally, biblical themes.

**TRENDS:** Series are more popular than stand alones.   Janette Oke’s books are popular again due to the recent release of movies based on her books.  Many authors are addressing contemporary, often difficult, issues (e.g., divorce, alcoholism, abuse, etc.).

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| Classic Authors | Lloyd C. Douglas, Grace Livingston Hill, C.S. Lewis, Catherine Marshall, Janette Oke, Lew Wallace |
| Apocalyptic | Randy Alcorn, Tim F. LaHaye/Jerry B. Jenkins, Bill Myers, Frank Peretti |
| Biblical Themes | Joseph Girzone, Walter Wangerin |
| Contemporary | Robin Jones Gunn, Robin lee Hatcher, Karen Kingsbury, Beverly Lewis |
| Historical (incl. Westerns) | T. Davis Bunn, Lynn and Gilbert Morris, Judith Pella, Michael Phillips, Francine Rivers, Brock and Bodie Thoene |
| Historical Romance | L.L. Chaikin, Al and JoAnna Lacy, Tracie Peterson, Lori Wick |
| Science Fiction/Fantasy | Karen Hancock, Stephen Lawhead |
| Suspense | Terri Blackstock, Ted Dekker, Linda Hall, Dee Henderson, Patricia H. Rushford |

**FANTASY**

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| **DEFINITION:** Fantasy is speculative fiction based on magic or myth. The plots usually emphasize journeys, whether psychological or physical, and stress the importance of human virtues through individual acts of courage, sacrifice, and kindness. Long-running series are very popular, an example being the Piers Anthony *Xanth* novels. Complex and internally consistent rules support the manifestation of magical beings and actions, but the appeal is to the reader's emotions, not intellect. |

**CHARACTERISTICS:** Mythical beasts abound, and everyday animals gain special powers (speech, telekinesis). Other universes exist, and magic is used to travel between them. Objects become filled with power and even personality, and conflict is often over possessing these swords, rings, cloaks, etc. The mythology of every culture is mined for ideas. A focus on the arts is common. They are plot-driven above all else, though the frame and setting build the fantasy world for the reader. Urban settings are the exception, not the rule.

**APPEAL:** Fantasy worlds are rich, and beautiful, and embrace the natural world. The characters are fluid, often transforming literally (from human to wolf) or figuratively (from goose girl to Queen). Emotional strengths are paramount: bravery, kindness, love. There is often a strong element of romance, or the satisfaction of finding one’s “proper” place in the world. The stories speak to a long history of human belief in myths and magic.

**SUBGENRES:***Arthurian:* the King Arthur myths, in historical or modern settings*; Epic:* Multi-volume series, “high” or formal language, complex cast of characters or races; *Games*: Based on role-playing games; *Historical:* A familiar time and place is infused with fantastic events; *Magic and Mages:* Quests, sword and sorcery, with the structure and rules of magic at the core; *Not-quite-horror:* Werewolves, vampires, and other demons integrated into human society, often with a mystery plot; *Urban Fantasy:* Magic and mythology in city settings.

**TRENDS:** The growing popularity of literary fantasy writers like Gregory Maguire and Haruki Marukami is blurring the line between genre and mainstream fiction. The success of fantasy in films such as *Lord of the Rings* is exposing a lot of people to stories they might never have read. Vampires are everywhere!

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| Classic Authors | Marion Zimmer Bradley, Edgar Rice Burroughs, J.R.R. Tolkien, T.H. White |
| Dark Fantasy | Anne Bishop, Laurell K. Hamilton, Kim Harrison, Anne Rice, Chelsea Quinn Yarbro |
| Dragons | Anne McCaffrey, Margaret Weis |
| Epic Fantasy | Terry Brooks, David and Leigh Eddings, Raymond E. Feist, Terry Goodkind, Robert Jordan, George R.R. Martin, Tad Williams |
| Humorous | Piers Anthony, Jasper Fforde, Christopher Moore, Terry Pratchett |
| Legends | J. Gregory Keyes, Steve Lawhead, Patricia McKillip, Gergory Maguire, Juliet Marillier, Rosalind Miles, Jack Whyte |
| Quest/Adventure | Louis McMaster Bujold, Robin Hobb, Guy Gavriel Kay, Dennis McKiernan, Mickey Zucker Reichert, R.A. Salvatore, Sharon Shinn |
| Urban Fantasy | Steven Brust, Charles DeLint, Neil Gaiman |

**GENTLE READS**

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| **DEFINITION:** With charm and humor, these novels explore the everyday joys, frustrations, and sorrows of lives quietly led. They typically revolve around the activities of a small community of people, such as a small town, a church, or a gathering of friends. The realities of sex, violence, and other passions are downplayed and are never presented in a graphic manner. Although the genre was once largely dominated by British authors, American authors in the vein of Jan Karon are now extremely popular. **See also: Cozy Mysteries under Mysteries.** |

**CHARACTERISTICS:** Gentle reads can be found across many genres, however, they are not likely to be in horror or thriller genres. Relationships and character development are the important factors and the pace is usually slower.   Whereas these stories are not devoid of problems to solve or difficult situations to face, the response is upbeat and positive.   Sex can be hinted at but not graphically described.  The murder in the mystery book usually happens off-stage.  Many of the popular authors of gentle reads write books in series.

**APPEAL:** Gentle reads have a satisfying, if not happy, ending.  Series books allow the reader to become involved with the characters and, along with them, explore the joys and hardships of everyday life.  These books are suitable for a young adult audience as well as the more mature reader.

**READERS:** Gentle fiction readers are looking for a good story with wholesome characters who have positive values.  People who are offended by the portrayal of sex and violence and the excessive use of strong language in today’s popular movies and television programming would be likely to seek a gentle read.

**SUBGENRES:** There are no subgenres listed in our Popular Fiction Tool under Gentle Reads.  However, you can find gentle reads in many categories including cozy mysteries, Christian fiction, historical, literary and women’s fiction, non-fiction and innocent or sweet romances.

**TRENDS:** Publishers are not marketing gentle reads as such but they are marketing inspirational fiction.

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| Classic | Elizabeth Cadell, Miss Read, Barbara Pym, D.E. Stevenson, Angela Thirkell |
| Popular | Nancy Atherton, Jennifer Chiaverini, Sandra Dallas, Richard Paul Evans, Philip Gulley, Jan Karon, Alexander McCall Smith, Joan Medlicott, Sharon Owens, Ann Purser, Ann B. Ross, Rebecca Shaw, Nicholas Sparks |

**HISTORICAL FICTION**

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| **DEFINITION:** One accepted definition of an historical novel is a story that is set at least a generation (25 years) prior to when it was written. In the best historical fiction, setting, character, and an involving plot combine to bring an historical period to life. These stories may center on real historical figures, real events, or fictional characters living in a particular time and place. By reading historical fiction, one can gain insight into lives and time of the past. The best historical fiction authors conduct extensive research to authenticate their novels’ settings and details and then meld that research seamlessly into the story. |

**CHARACTERISTICS:**Historical novels tend to be long, well-researched, and slow paced. They may focus on real people, fictional characters, or a mixture of the two. Generally, they take place over a long period of time, a matter of years rather than weeks or months. Their tone can range from highly romanticized to gritty realism and from straightforward stories intended to evoke an era to stories designed to comment or draw parallels to current day events.

**APPEAL:**Historical Fiction allows the reader to lose himself in another time. Their leisurely pacing and attention to detail allows for a “submersion” experience. They give the reader the opportunity to compare historic eras and past events to the present day. Female characters in historical fiction are often strong, independent characters.

**READERS:**Readers of Historical Fiction are often people who “like to learn something” while they read. They like to lose themselves in leisurely paced novels, often read over a longer period of time than just a weekend.  
Readers like to be taken to another place, both in time and geographically. Inaccuracies in the details may greatly bother some readers and others might be troubled by anachronistic characterizations.  Historical Fiction readers like it to be right. Most readers have a particular era they enjoy reading about.

**TRENDS:**Ancient eras are seeing a comeback with books set among the Romans, Greeks, and Hebrews. The first half of the twentieth century is gaining in popularity, especially with books set in the lead up to or during WWI. Writers are mining pockets of history until now overlooked: early Victorian and not just late Victorian, or American novels set in the 1800s that aren’t about the Civil War or Westward expansion.  
Writers are looking at the well-covered eras and coming at them from a new angle or from the point of view of lesser known, real-life characters. Writers are finding parts of the world long-neglected by the West: the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and the Far East.

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| Classic Authors | Thomas Bertrain Costain, Dorothy Dunnett, James Michener, Howard Fast, Margaret Mitchell, Jean Plaidy, Mary Renault, Sir Walter Scott, Irving Stone |
| Popular | Jean Auel, Sara Donati, Sarah Dunant, Diana Gabaldon, W. Michael and Kathleen O’Neal Gear, Margaret George, Philippa Gregory, Robert Harris, Cecelia Howard, John Jakes, Morgan Llywelyn, Colleen McCullough, David Nevin, Sharon Kay Penman, Steven Pressfield, Edward Rutherford, Jeff Shaara, James Alexander Thom, Susan Vreeland, Lisa See, Geraldine Brooks |

**HORROR**

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| **DEFINITION:** Horror fiction is written to frighten the reader, as opposed to "dark fantasy" which is a fantastic or romantic story using vampires or werewolves to add ominous shadows. Supernatural or occult elements distinguish horror from suspense fiction, where a serial killer may be frightening but is all too human. The power of the natural world gone awry and uncontrolled is a common theme. The appeal of horror fiction is an emotional response of terror, fear, and disgust. |

**CHARACTERISTICS:** Populated by monsters of some sort as well as supernatural elements and beings (ghosts, ghouls, vampires), horror novels create a menacing atmosphere that evokes a feeling of fear in the reader. The dark tone and sense of foreboding are intensified by graphic violence, strong language, and explicit sex, as horror explores the dark side of human–and inhuman–impulses. While the disturbing atmosphere is important, the key to horror is the unresolved ending. Although the evil is beaten down, it is never destroyed. It waits, lurking just beneath the surface, to strike again.

**APPEAL:** Whether readers enjoy the horror popularized by Stephen King, with evil invading a normal life, or that exemplified by Clive Barker’s early novels, characterized by explicit violence from the early pages, they expect an atmospheric tale with haunted protagonists stalked by evil monsters and attacked randomly. Horror is appreciated for the level of fear it produces in the reader. In addition, an inescapable feeling of dread throughout heightens emotional reaction to these disturbing stories.

**READERS:** Horror fans span a wide range of readers, male and female, young and old. Horror seems particularly attractive to teen readers, who appreciate these out-of-control worlds and emotions, with monsters of every type. Readers read horror to be surprised and frightened; they expect the unexpected. Many fans come to horror fiction from movies and television shows. Others cross over from dark fantasy and the thriller and suspense genres. Short stories provide a good introduction to popular horror authors, for readers and librarians interested in exploring the genre. While readers are often looking for newer authors, many appreciate the classic tales of established masters as well.

**TRENDS:**One of the most important trends in the horror genre is the lending of traditional themes–ghosts, vampire, were beasts–to other genres, especially romance, mystery, and fantasy. Watch for further crossover with other genres, including western and suspense. Traditionally horror does not lend itself to series, but several–Dean Koontz’s Odd Thomas and F. Paul Wilson’s Repairman Jack–have gained popularity. Vampires, ghost stories, and gothic novels remain popular, although current authors consistently reinvent these traditional themes, pushing the boundaries of the horror genre.  
Humorous horror novels have long been a popular sideline but the trend is growing with Christopher Moore as one of the leading practitioners. Joe Hill, son of Stephen King, is an author to watch. His award-winning collection of short stories was followed this year with his first horror novel, *The Heart-Shaped Box*, a novel for all King’s fans.

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| Classic Authors | Robert Bloch, Charles Grant, Shirley Jackson, H.P. Lovecraft, Richard Matheson, Robert R. McCammon, Edgar Allan Poe, Bram Stoker, Whitley Strieber |
| Popular | Kelley Armstrong, Clive Barker, Ramsey Campbell, Douglas Clegg, John Farris, Stephen King, Tanith Lee, Bentley Little, Brian Lumley, John Saul, Peter Straub |

**LITERARY FICTION**

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| **DEFINITION:** Literary fiction is high quality, often prize-winning fiction, characterized by a distinctive writing style -- inventive, rich, demanding, multi-layered, experimental, or showing technical virtuosity. Books in this category focus more on character than plot, deal in nuances, are intellectually interesting and rewarding, and prompt a high degree of interaction between reader and book. Authors of literary fiction are consistently featured in major book review sources, and their books are often used for thought-provoking discussions. |

**CHARACTERISTICS:** The emphasis is on fine writing; complex, well-developed characters; and stories that probe the human condition.  These books often have a dark or bleak outlook, pose serious questions concerning moral issues, utilize symbolism and imagery, and offer the reader an opportunity to search for hidden meanings.

**APPEAL:** These books encourage readers to think about particular themes and issues.  They push readers to form opinions and make connections between the stories and their own lives.  They appeal to readers who appreciate distinctive writing and enjoy participating in thoughtful discussions.

**READERS:** People who enjoyed literature classes in high school and college; leaders and members of book discussion groups; those who like to get inside characters’ skins and think about authors’ messages.  Readers of other genres who particularly appreciate character development and elegant writing may be led to cross over to Literary Fiction.

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| United States | T.C. Boyle, Michael Chabon, Pat Conroy, Don DeLillo, E.L. Doctorow, Alice Hoffman, John Irving, Ward Just, Barbara Kingsolver, Cormac McCarthy, Alice McDermott, Larry McMurtry, Toni Morrison, Joyce Carol Oates, Ann Patchett, Philip Roth, Richard Russo, Jane Smiley, Anne Tyler, John Updike, Tom Wolfe |
| Africa | Chinua Achebe (Nigeria), J.M. Coetzee (S. Africa), Nadine Gordimer (S. Africa), Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (Nigeria) |
| Asia | Monica Ali (Bangladesh), Anita Desai (India), Amitav Ghosh (India), Ha Jin (China), Anchee Min (China), Rohintin Mistry (India), Haruki Muakami (Japan), Salman Rushdie (India), V.S. Naipaul (India) |
| Great Britain | Margaret Atwood (Canada), A.S. Byatt (England), Peter Carey (Australia), Roddy Doyle (Ireland), Kazuo Ishiguro (England), Thomas Keneally (Australia), Ian McEwan (England), Alice Munro (Canada), Michael Ondaatjie (Canada), Zadie Smith (England), William Trevor (Ireland) |
| Europe | Umberto Eco (Italy), Gunter Grass (Germany), Milan Kundera (Czech Republic), Arturo Perez-Reverte (Spain), Jose Saramago (Portugal), Elie Wiesel (Romania) |
| Latin & Central America | Isabel Allende (Chile), Paulo Coelho (Brazil), Laura Esquivel (Mexico), Carlos Fuentes (Mexico), Gabriel Garcia Marquez (Colombia), Mario Vargas Llosa (Peru) |
| Middle East | Yasmina Khadra (Afghanistan), Amos Oz (Israel), Orhan Pamuk (Turkey) |

**MULTICULTURAL FICTION**

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| **DEFINITION:** Multicultural fiction relates the American experience from minority points of view. These books can be literary fiction, popularly written family stories, romances, mysteries, or any other genre. This list provides a small sample of authors from various cultures, but only begins to touch on the diversity present in America. |

**CHARACTERISTICS:** Multicultural fiction’s primary characteristic is a minority character or group’s perspective. Typically the main characters are members of a minority group; mere inclusion of secondary characters who belong to a minority group does not qualify a novel as a work of multicultural fiction. Groups such as African Americans, Asian Americans, gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered, Hispanic Americans/Latinos, Jewish Americans, Native Americans, and other cultures are included in multicultural fiction. Since multicultural fiction includes various genres, it is as diverse in style as it is in characters’ perspectives.

**APPEAL:** Readers belonging to a particular culture identify with the cultural backdrop of the story and appreciate the validation of their experience. Readers outside the culture represented in a novel can gain an understanding of the lives and cultures of their neighbors.

**READERS:** Readers of multicultural fiction include people of all backgrounds and ages. As mentioned above, readers may be drawn to multicultural fiction for its familiarity to their own experience or for its power to introduce them to other viewpoints. Literary fiction written from a particular cultural viewpoint often introduces the theme of cultural differences within society, which can make these novels excellent choices for book discussions. Readers of a particular genre often read multicultural fiction within that genre.

**TRENDS:** The major trend is that multicultural literature has, to a great extent, gone mainstream. Multicultural novels appear on the bestseller lists, win mainstream literary awards, and are considered mainstream fiction by some readers.

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| Asian-American | Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Gish Jen, Jhumpa Lahiri, Bharati Mukherjee, Amy Tan, Gail Tsukiyama |
| Gay & Lesbian | Michael Cunningham, E. Lynn Harris, Laurie King (Kate Martinelli), Armistead Maupin, Sarah Waters, Jeanette Winterson |
| Hispanic Americans | Julia Alvarez, Rudolfo A. Anaya, Denise Chavez, Sandra Cisneros, Oscar Hijuelos, Alisa Valdes-Rodriguez |
| Jewish Americans | Allegra Goodman, Faye Kellerman, Rochelle Krich, Cynthia Ozick, Noami Ragen, Philip Roth |
| Native Americans | Sherman Alexie, Louise Erdrich, Leslie Silko |

**MYSTERY**

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| **DEFINITION:** Detective and mystery novels are stories in which a crime, usually but not always a murder, has been committed, and the means, motive, and criminal are in doubt or unknown. This problem is presented to an amateur or professional detective who accepts the puzzle and its clues and who then solves it. Contemporary authors in this genre are stressing the why—the psychology behind the crime—above the who, when, and how that have been the hallmarks of the classic detective and mystery novel. Specialists abound in today’s mysteries, whether forensic experts in a police procedural or amateur detectives whose interest in rare books, horse racing, or cosmetology is as important to the story as the solving of the crime. Recent trends are the use of paranormal creatures such as vampires and ghosts in the stories and the emphasis on the reader's emotional involvement with the character. |

**CHARACTERISTICS:** Mysteries present a challenge to the reader who must use the clues to solve the crime. The stories are usually intricately plotted but can be either fast paced and suspenseful or slower paced with lots of detail and description.  The protagonist can be an amateur detective who just happens to find a dead body, a police detective, or a private eye.  The stories can be very realistic and recreate the real world of the police or crime with gritty language, violence, and sex.  Amateur detective mysteries can by light hearted with the violence off stage, but even these now have a love interest and some sex.  Most mysteries feature a series character that readers get to know and identify with through the books.  Authors delve into the psychology of the characters while the crimes often reflect the problems of society including drugs, greed, corruption, runaways, child abuse, and more.  The end of the story must tie up all loose ends and solve the crime.

**APPEAL:** Mysteries appeal to readers on many levels—as puzzles that are a battle of wits between the reader and the sleuth, as a morality play where the hero slays evil and saves mankind, as entertainment that tells a good story with a satisfying resolution, as an acceptable way to channel aggressive thoughts and act out aggressive fantasies, as a way to learn about special subjects or problems, and as stories with characters that  have strong emotional appeal.

**READERS:** Mystery readers come in all ages from pre-teen to seniors. These are people who like their stories based in the real world and want to see good defeat evil.  Traditionally women have read the amateur detective and cozy subgenres while men like the hard hitting and more realistic police procedural, private eye, and crime subgenres.  Today women are also reading these subgenres as women authors have created women police detectives and women private eyes.  Many men may not read women writers although this too is changing.

**TRENDS:**Development of main character and readers emotional involvement with the character  
Weaving specialized subjects such as cooking, gardening, anthropology, sports into the mystery  
Adding suspense elements into mysteries and blurring the lines between suspense and mystery  
The rise of the historical mystery, especially those set from 1920 to 1960  
The return of the cozy and the use of humor in the story  
The use of paranormal elements such as ghosts and vampires in the stories  
Mystery writers doing both series characters and stand alone mysteries that feature psychological suspense

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| Classic | Raymond Chandler, Agatha Christie, Wilkie Collins, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Dashiell Hammett, Ed McBain, Ellis Peters, Edgar Allan Poe, Mickey Spillane, Jim Thompson |
| Amateur Detective | Nevada Barr, Jan Burke, John Dunning, Dick Francis, Jonathan Kellerman, Margaret Maron, Julia Spencer-Fleming, Stuart Woods |
| Cozy | Lillian Jackson Braun, Jill Churchill, Diane Mott Davidson, Joanne Fluke, Earlene Fowler, Carolyn Hart |
| Crime/Caper | Lawrence Block, Tim Dorsey, Carl Hiaasen, Elmore Leonard, Donald E. Westlake |
| Historical | Lindsey Davis, P.C. Doherty, Anne Perry, Elizabeth Peters, Charles Todd, Jacqueline Winspear |
| Humorous | Donna Andrews, M.C. Beaton, Rita Mae Brown, Janet Evanovich, Joan Hess |
| International | Cara Black (France), Kerry Greenwood (Australia), Roderic Jeffries (Majorca), Stieg Larsson (Sweden), Donna Leon (Italy), Henning Mankell (Sweden), Magdalen Nabb (Italy) |
| Police | Michael Connelly, Deborah Crombie, Elizabeth George, Martha Grimes, Tony Hillerman, P.D. James, J.A. Jance, Faye Kellerman, William Kent Krueger, Michael McGarrity, Ian Rankin, Peter Robinson |
| Private Investigator | James Lee Burke, Robert Crais, Sue Grafton, Laura Lippman, Walter Mosley, Marcia Muller, Sara Paretsky, Robert B. Parker |

**ROMANCE**

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| **DEFINITION:** Romances appeal to the emotions of their readers who are drawn into the love story with its inevitable happy ending. Storylines feature misunderstandings between hero and heroine or outside circumstances that force them apart. In the end, all difficulties are overcome and the lovers are united. Both male and female characters are portrayed as strong and independent, and the ultimate fulfillment of their relationships is the focus. Settings may be historical, contemporary, or futuristic. Relationships may be portrayed gently, sensually, or even erotically. Romance series published by Silhouette and Harlequin are still important to the genre and popular with readers. Many series authors also write for other publishers, as well. |

**CHARACTERISTICS:**Resolution of story includes declaration of love, marriage, or decision to marry. Main characters are strong and independent or through the course of the book learn to be so. Even the anti-heroes in romances have some redeeming feature—usually their love for the heroine. Plots are fairly simple and easy to follow.

**APPEAL:** The emotional force of the story. The reader follows the hero/heroine’s ups and downs, then has catharsis with their eventual declarations of love. Certain happy endings—this can be a comfort read for readers looking for an upbeat book.

**READERS:** Mainly women, wide age range.

**TRENDS:** As in a great many other genres, genre-blending is very popular with readers. The paranormal romance has seen a huge boom in the last few years with vampires, demons, and telepathic heroes coming out of the woodwork. There has also been some genre blending for science fiction. Contemporary romances remain extremely popular, with some of the top selling writers in this subgenre as well as in Romantic Suspense. The traditional Regency seems to have faded somewhat in popularity, although Cerridwen Pess, an imprint of Ellora’s Cave is starting to print new titles and a few reprints of Regencies. As a trade-off, many historicals have been set in the Regency period.

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| Classic | Jane Austen, Faith Baldwin, Marion Chesney, Georgette Heyer, Grace Livingston Hill, Johanna Lindsey, Kathleen Woodiwiss |
| Contemporary | Susan Anderson, Jennifer Crusie, Rachel Gibson, Susan Elizabeth Phillips, Nora Roberts |
| Erotic | Thea Devine, Virginia Henley, Emma Holly, Susan Johnson, Robin Schone, Beatrice Small |
| Historical & Regency | Mary Balogh, Jo Beverley, Christina Dodd, Jane Feather, Eloisa James, Sabrina Jeffries, Stephanie Laurens, Mary Jo Putney, Amanda Quick, Julia Quinn |
| Paranormal | Christine Feehan, Susan Grant (futuristic), Sherrilyn Kenyon Susan Krinard, Lynn Kurland (time travel), Constance O’Day-Flannery (time travel), Linna Sinclair (futuristic) |
| Romantic Suspense | Suzanne Brockman, Sandra Brown, Catherine Coulter, Linda Howard, Iris Johansen, Jayne Ann Krentz, Eliabeth Lowell, Nora Roberts |

**SCIENCE FICTION**

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| **DEFINITION:** Science Fiction is speculative fiction based on plausible extrapolation from our current understanding of science and the physical world. The appeal of the genre is often the intellectual exploration of traditional ideas in non-traditional settings. The best Science Fiction evokes a “sense of wonder” in new worlds and new adventures.  The genre defies precise classification because Science Fiction authors experiment with themes, styles, and frames, blending technology with sociological ideas or adventure stories with far future settings. The list below groups authors in subgenres that reflect much of their writing. |

**CHARACTERISTICS:**Technology and science is both the framework and the forefront of the story. Xenophilia: or, a love of the strange, alien and new. The reader is routinely challenged to accept new cultures and unimagined technology. Setting and atmosphere contribute to this strangeness and “sense of wonder”. Generally plot-driven; very few novels are character studies. Pacing is moderate to brisk; again, very few dreamy, slow, unfolding stories. Short stories are very prominent, and readers have great affection for anthologies of both classic and new stories.

**APPEAL:** Readers like being intellectually challenged and are proud at the amount of tacit knowledge they must have to read and understand the genre. For SF set in our near future, the setting is very familiar, just ramped up. The adrenaline rush of military or space opera is a draw for both men and women. SF has become very feminist, and there are almost as many empowered heroines as there are in Romance!

**READERS:** Intelligent and young: the average age for SF /Fantasy discovery is 11! Often begin as media readers and discover other, more specific worlds. May disdain fantasy or adore it, but a constant is the love of escape and a willingness to use their imagination to learn new languages, memorize alien street names, and comprehend alien biology. Generally not big fans of libraries: they like to own their books and mistrust the librarian’s knowledge of the genre. Anecdotally, more male than female.

**TRENDS:** There are diminishing print sources of stories, but reprints and anthologies are booming: a good way to sample unfamiliar authors. The continued interest in science fiction films brings a larger audience to these stories.

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| Classic Authors | Isaac Asimov, Ray Brabury, Octavia Butler, Arthur C. Clarke, Robert Heinlein, Frank Herbert, Ursula K. LeGuin, Andre Norton, Theodore Sturgeon, Jules Verne, H.G. Wells |
| Adventure | Catherine Asaro, Louis McMaster Bujold, C.J. Sherryh, William C. Dietz, Sharon Lee/Steve Miller, Elizabeth moon, John Ringo, Dan Simmons, Harry Turtledove |
| Society | Kage Baker, John Barnes, Greg Bear, Orson Scott Card, Anne McCaffrey, Jack McDevitt, Kim Stanley Robinson, Robert Sawyer, Neal Stephenson, Charles Stross, Connie Willis |
| Technology | Peter Hamilton, Nancy Kress, Larry Niven, Robert Reed, Alastair Reynolds, Bruce Sterling, John Varley, Vernor Vinge, William Gibson |

**SUSPENSE/THRILLERS**

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| **DEFINITION:** Suspense and thrillers are two of the most popular genres for readers because of their fast pacing, plot twists, and emotional appeal. Suspense novels compress action into a short period of time, emphasize the psychological and physical danger the protagonist faces and appeal to the reader’s sense of unease. Emotionally the reader identifies with the survival of the central character. Thrillers, on the other hand, are complex stories that use a specific world such as the courtroom, medical laboratory, or government agency, often have exotic settings, and emphasize the defeat of the villain and his conspirators.  In both genres, the story is filled with tension, plot twists, and most recently graphic violence and sex. The distinctions between the two genres are blurring as writers use elements from both genres and the mystery genre in their books. |

**CHARACTERISTICS:** Plot rules--often intricately woven plots--clever, often with a dash of history and science--fast pacing, frequent action, and resourceful heroes--Suspense, red herrings, and cliffhangers are used extensively.  Sense of foreboding--menacing atmosphere--danger--some violent action.  Twists and turns--layers of secrets--exotic locales

**APPEAL:**Reader identifies with dilemma of protagonist--feels the fear--can view violence from a safe distance. Pure entertainment--safe, predictable, fun. Riveting--quick moving stories--reader can be privy to secrets and can jump from one narrow escape to another. Clear delineation between good and evil.

**TRENDS:** Terrorism is the new arch enemy; Romance writers have turned to writing Romantic Suspense; Ancient as well as contemporary conspiracies ala *The Da Vinci Code* play key roles

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| Classic | Eric Ambler, Jeffrey Archer, Daphne DuMaurier, Ian Fleming, Graham Greene, Thomas Harris, Robert Ludlum |
| Conspiracy Thrillers | Steve Berry, Dan Brown, Joseph Finder, James Grippando |
| Detective Thrillers | Lee Child, Michael Connelly, Jeffrey Deaver, James Patterson, Ridley Pearson, John Sandford, Martin Cruz Smith |
| Espionage/Intelligence Thrillers | Stephen Coonts, Ken Follett, Alan Furst, John LeCarre, Daniel Silva |
| Forensic Thrillers | Patricia Cornwell, Kathy Reichs, Karin Slaughter |
| Legal Thrillers | William Bernhardt, D.W. Buffa, John Grisham, John T. Lescroat, Phillip Margolin, Steve Martini, Perri O’Shaugnessy, Lisa Scottoline, Scott Turow |
| Medical Thrillers | Robin Cook, Tess Gerritsen, Michael Palmer |
| Political Thrillers | David Baldacci, Vince Flynn, Stephen Frey, Richard North Patterson |
| Suspense | Mary Higgins Clark, Harlan Coben, Thomas H. Cook, Nelson DeMille, Linda Fairstein, Tami Hoag, Greg Iles, Dean Koontz, Dennis Lehane, Val McDermid, Ruth Rendell (Barbara Vine), Minette Walters |

**DOMESTIC (“WOMEN’S”) FICTION**

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| **DEFINITION:** These novels explore the lives of female protagonists and focus on their relationships with family, friends, and lovers. Some books are characterized by a romantic tone and, there may be elements of suspense or mystery as well, but the main theme is of a woman overcoming and learning from crises and emerging triumphant. One current trend is to employ a lighter, sometimes even tongue-in-cheek tone.  Two subgroups of Women’s Fiction are rapidly gaining in popularity. Chick Lit, kicked off in the late 1990s with *Bridget Jones’s Diary* by Helen Fielding, is a sub-genre with titles focusing on single, 20- or 30-something protagonists usually trying to find their way in life, in the big city or in a new fabulous career. These books are humorous and generally lighthearted. On the flip side, Issue-Driven titles are darker, dealing with family problems and issues—more “hot topic,” Oprah-esque tales. |

**CHARACTERISTICS:**These arenovels exploring the lives of female protagonists, with a focus on their relationships with family, friends, and lovers.  They can be funny, sad, suspenseful, frothy, hopeful, romantic, or poetic, but the one common thread is that the main characters are women, and the main thrust of the plot follows events in women’s lives.

**APPEAL:** The two main categories of appeal for this genre are characters and storyline, which tend to be intertwined.  Often times, readers enjoy Women’s Fiction because they can identify with a character (or sometimes, it’s a feeling of relief that they are not like a particular character!). Because the storyline of the books focuses on relationships, characters are important.    
Pacing is almost irrelevant in this genre, as it varies widely from book to book – some novels are slow and you can sink your teeth into them, others are quick and frothy reads.

**READERS:** Is it too obvious to say Women?  Women of all ages, classes, and races enjoy this genre. Women’s Fiction is also enjoyed by young adult readers as well, but it is likely that you will rarely find men reading this genre on a regular basis.

**TRENDS:** Much has been bantered about regarding the demise of Chick Lit, but the publishers keep cranking them out, and women keep reading them.  However, there has been quite a bit of branching out from the single-in-the-city books, with Mommy Lit dominating the publishing houses recently.  Issue driven novels continue to increase in popularity, even without the assistance of Oprah’s book club.

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| Classic Authors | Elizabeth Cadell, Mary McCarthy, Rosamunde Pilcher, Helen VanSlyke |
| Popular | Mary Kay Andrews, Elizabeth Berg, Maeve Binchy, Barbara Taylor Bradford, Barbara Delinsky, Katie Fforde, Fannie Flagg, Dorotha Benton Frank, Patricia Gaffney, Kristin Hannah, Jane Heller, Debbie Macomber, Lorna Landvik, Elinor Lipman, Jeanne Ray, Luanne Rice, Anne Rivers Siddons, Lee Smith, Danielle Steel, Nancy Thayer, Adriana Trigiani, Joanna Trollope, Jennifer Weiner |
| Chick Lit | Meg Cabot, Jane Green, Marian Keyes, Sophie Kinsella, Sarah Mlynowski |
| Issue-Driven | Christopher Bohjalian, Jane Hamilton, Sue Miller, Jodi Picoult, Anna Quindlen, Anita Shreve |

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