

CRIME AND MYSTERY FICTION READER'S ADVISORY The Subgenres of Crime and Mystery Fiction

- What is a **mystery**?
- What is a **detective novel**?
- What is a **crime novel**?
 - What is **intrigue**?
 - What is a **thriller**?
 - What is **suspense**?
 - What is **adventure**?

What is a mystery?

- A mystery is a work of fiction in which the reader is asked to help solve a puzzle.
- The essential elements for this genre are an element of crime mixed with an element of detection.



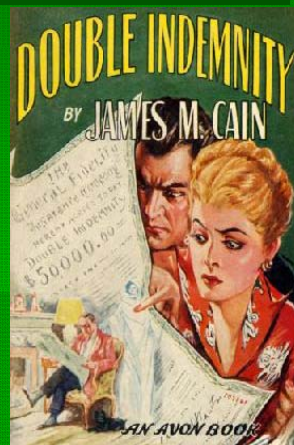
What is a detective novel?

- A detective novel is a mystery in which a fictional character tries to solve the puzzle before the reader.
- The reader will be in competition with the detective, but in most cases will also identify with the detective.
- It is an intellectual exercise.
- The concept is that the author will “play fair” with the reader by providing clues.
- It is fair for the author to use “red herrings” to distract the reader.
- The central question is “whodunit?”

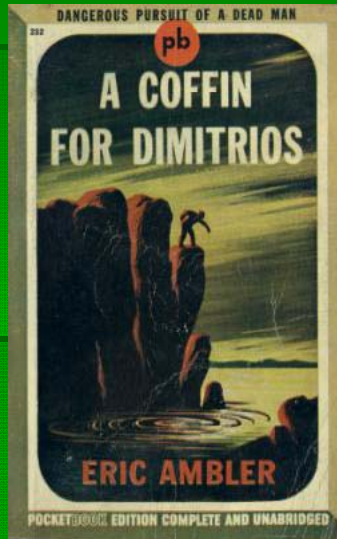


What is a crime novel?

- A crime novel observes the undertaking of a criminal act
- It does not necessarily have a detective who pursues either the criminal or a sense of justice.



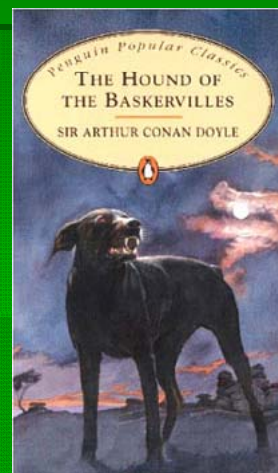
What is intrigue?



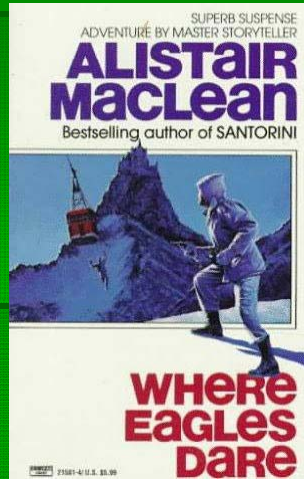
- In a novel of intrigue, the goal is accomplished by devious means.

What is suspense?

- A work of suspense keeps the reader waiting for particular outcomes, often by having the narrator in some kind of danger, even if it is a detective.
- It is also an emotional experience.
- Suspense poses a threat to a character who is often the primary victim of the evil. The reader identifies with the victim.
- The central question is "who is it going to happen to, or whendunnit?"



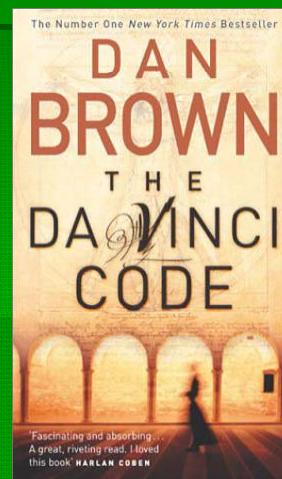
What is adventure?



- In a novel of adventure, dangerous actions or risks undertaken.

What is a thriller?

- A thriller is fiction designed to keep the reader interested through the use of a high degree of action, intrigue, adventure, and suspense.
- A thriller emotionally involves the reader.
- The reader identifies that everyone is a potential victim including themselves.



WHAT ARE THE APPEALS TO THE READER OF READING MYSTERY FICTION?

- the crime
- the search
- the resolution



Action

- Soft-boiled
- Hard-boiled
- Traditional

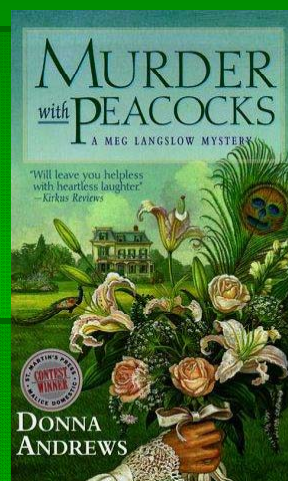


Soft-boiled

- the action is low on the description of violence, with little overt sexual content or abusive language
- a world in which society is viewed as orderly and controlled
- the crime is a failure of the society to correctly function
- the society portrayed is often a closed or confined set
- the inclusion of a mystery in a soft-boiled world is an intrusion
- most violent action takes place off-stage



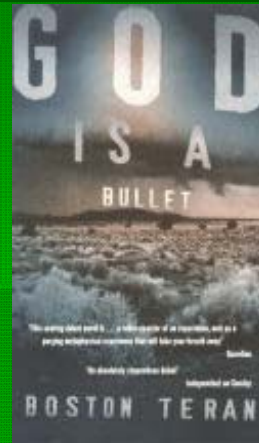
Soft-boiled



- the emphasis is on the solution of the crime
- readers anticipate a world where right and wrong are clearly defined
- the society depicted in a soft-boiled novel is more moral than a hard-boiled world
- the reader expects the detective to follow clues left by the perpetrator to an eventual administration of justice
- the detective is often an amateur although not limited to this type of detective.

Hard-boiled

- the action can be high on the description of violence, sexual content and uses the language of the streets
- a world where everything is suspect, including the established institutions and the people who work for them, often the legal forces
- the inclusion of a mystery in a hard-boiled world is inevitable
- most violent action takes place on-stage



Hard-boiled



- the emphasis is on the perpetration of the crime
- the characters are often driven to do what they do by circumstances that are often out of their control
- the novels can feature protagonists who are not clearly defined as being on either the right or wrong side of the law
- the administration of justice is not certain in a hard-boiled novel
- morality may have many definitions in a hard-boiled world.

Traditional

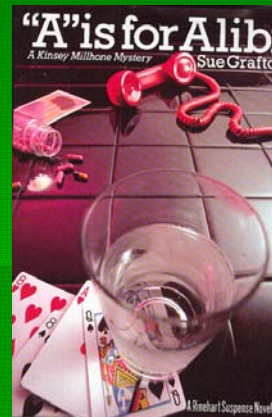


- the action utilizes violence to establish the seriousness of the crime without trivializing its importance or glorifying its horrifying effects
- most violent action takes place on stage but is not described in a graphic manner
- the emphasis can be both on the perpetration and solution of the crime
- the emphasis of the book is to find a solution to the crime, but not necessarily through the administration of justice by an official court of law
- the intent of a traditional novel is to restore the balance of right and wrong in a society gone wrong.

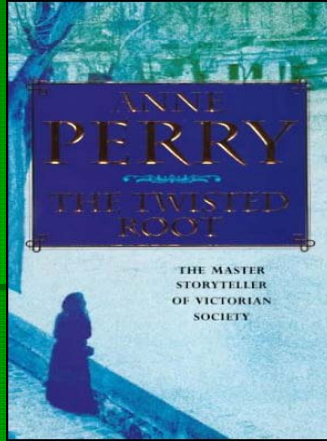


Other appeal factors

- Author
- Title
- Main character
(and significant others)
- Point of view



Other appeal factors



- Setting
- Time period
- Subject
- Theme

Other appeal factors

- Pace
- Level of violence
- Use of sexuality
- Use of language

