

Genres

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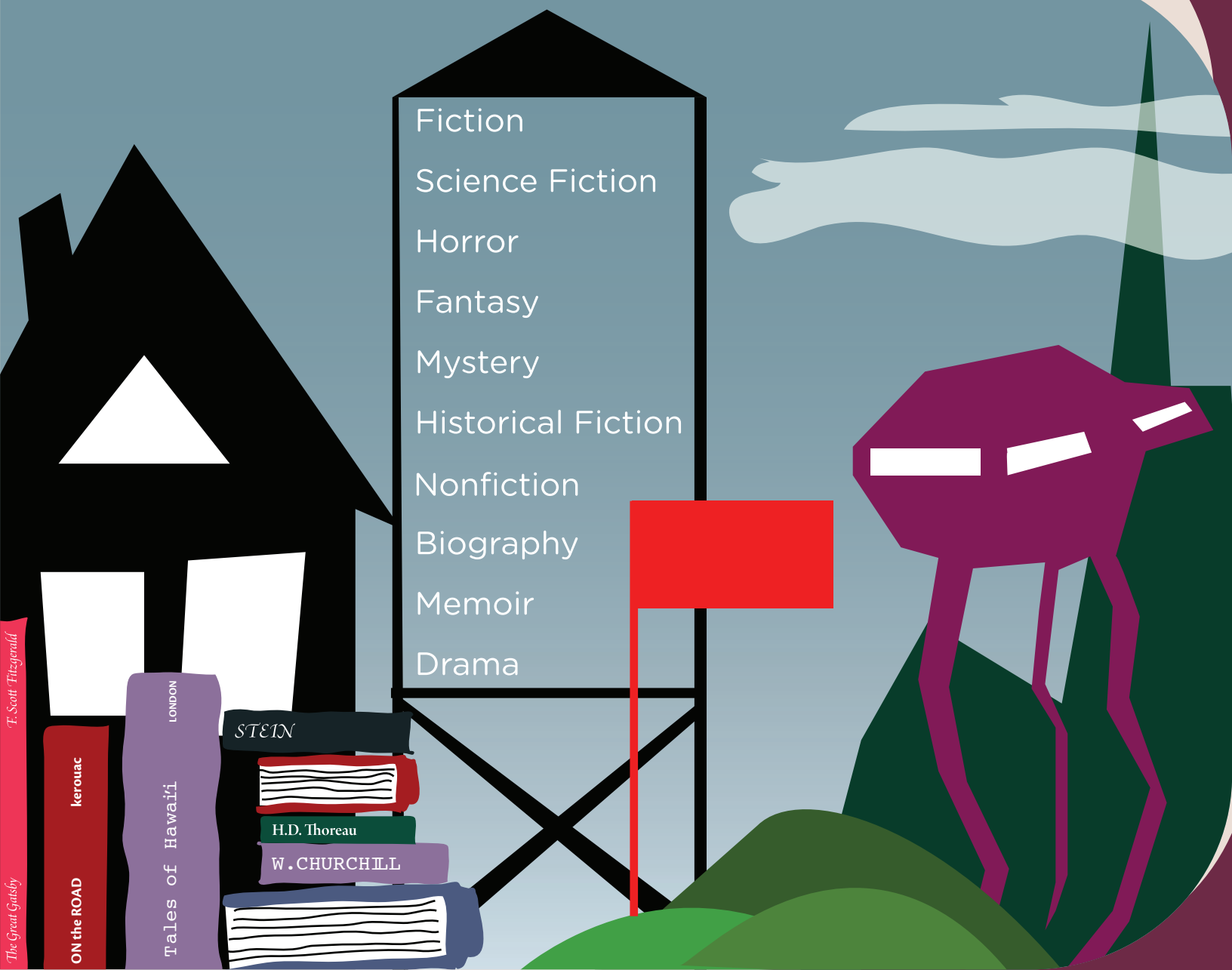


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LEARNING GENRES FICTION

Fiction is a genre that uses imaginary characters and stories, rather than using real events that happened. However, many fiction writers base their imaginary stories on real events. Most fictional stories are somewhat realistic so that the reader can both relate to and learn from it. In fact, many fiction writers use their own life experiences as a starting point for their stories. The fiction genre is very broad and includes many sub-genres, such as science fiction, historical fiction, fantasy and more. Read the following excerpts and answer the questions.

The Great Gatsby

F. Scott Fitzgerald

ON the ROAD

kerouac

Tales of Hawai'i

LONDON

Jack London: Jack London was a writer living in the San Francisco area just after the Gold Rush had passed. He used his experiences traveling to create fiction novels with travel and adventure themes.

“Indeed I had noticed that delicious, rhythmic, breathing. Each morning I had watched the sea breeze begin at the shore and slowly extend seaward as it blew the mildest, softest whiff of ozone to the land. It played over the sea, just faintly darkening its surface, with here and there and everywhere long lanes of calm, shifting, changing, drifting, according to the capricious kisses of the breeze. And each evening I had watched the sea breath die away to heavenly calm, and heard the land breath softly make its way through the coffee trees and monkeypods.”

-The Sheriff of Kona (1910)



What real life experiences do you think inspired London's story of Hawai'i?

F. Scott Fitzgerald: F. Scott Fitzgerald is considered one of the greatest American authors, famous for capturing the decadent essence of the 1920s and '30s. His novel *The Great Gatsby* is required reading in many high schools.

“Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year receded before us. It eluded us then, but that’s no matter — tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther... And one fine morning —
So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.”

-The Great Gatsby (1925)



What kind of real life experiences do you think helped Fitzgerald come to this conclusion?

Jack Kerouac: Kerouac is one of America’s most famous and loved authors. He started getting published in the 1950s with his book *On the Road*. His books have a spirit of adventure and celebrate the country he lived in and explored.

“I woke up as the sun was reddening; and that was the one distinct time in my life, the strangest moment of all, when I didn’t know who I was — I was far away from home, haunted and tired with travel, in a cheap hotel room I’d never seen, hearing the hiss of steam outside, and the creak of the old wood of the hotel, and footsteps upstairs, and all the sad sounds, and I looked at the cracked high ceiling and really didn’t know who I was for about fifteen strange seconds.”

-On the Road (1956)

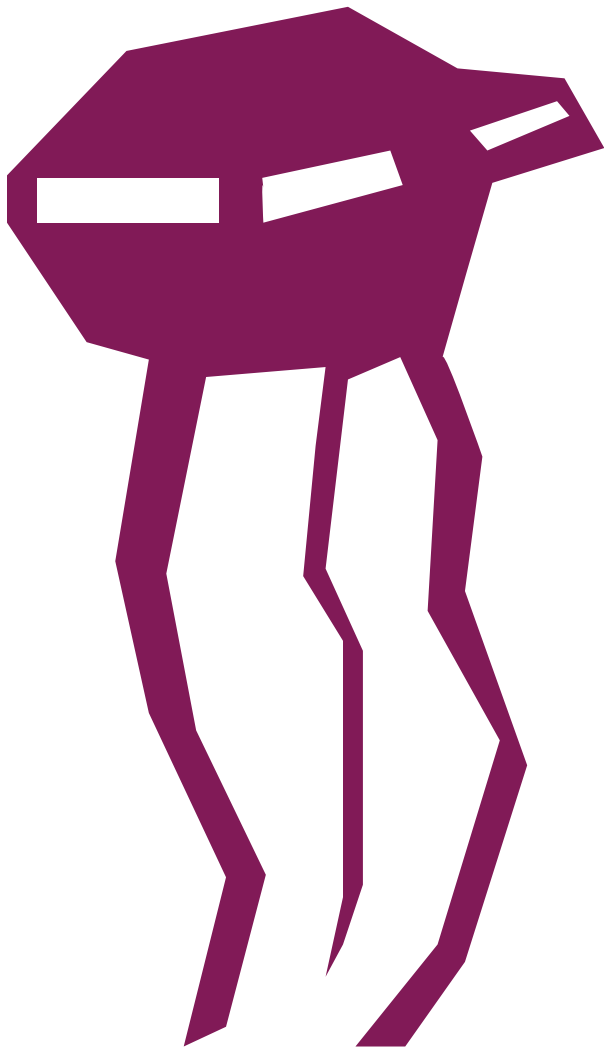


Judging from this quote, how much of *On the Road* do you think was based on real life and how much did he make up for the story?

LEARNING GENRES

SCIENCE FICTION

The science fiction (or sci-fi) genre is a type of fiction. It can be any imaginary story that involves science and/or technology that's more advanced than what exists today. Sci-fi can include anything from mad scientists to outer space exploration. Most science fiction stories take place in the future. They are also less believable than regular fiction stories because the technology or science in question is only theoretical—it's not something we can find in the real world ... yet.



H.G. Wells: Wells was a British author of many books during the late 1800s and early 1900s. He is most famous for his science fiction books that remain popular today.

“And this Thing I saw! How can I describe it? A monstrous tripod, higher than many houses, striding over the young pine trees, and smashing them aside in its career; a walking engine of glittering metal, striding now across the heather; articulate ropes of steel dangling from it, and the clattering tumult of its passage mingling with the riot of the thunder. A flash, and it came out vividly, heeling over one way with two feet in the air, to vanish and reappear almost instantly as it seemed, with the next flash, a hundred yards nearer. Can you imagine a milking stool tilted and bowled violently along the ground? That was the impression those instant flashes gave. But instead of a milking stool imagine it a great body of machinery on a tripod stand.”

-War of the Worlds (1897)



Name some of the words and elements of this quote that tell you it is science fiction.

SCIENCE FICTION



Orson Scott Card: He is an American sci-fi author who is best known for his book *Ender's Game*. The book is set in the future at a time when the Earth is being constantly attacked by an alien species. The main character is a kid who trains at a *battleschool* and proves to be a genius capable of saving humanity.

“Ender smiled. He was the one who had figured out how to send messages and make them march—even as his secret enemy called him names, the method of delivery praised him. It was not his fault he was a Third. It was the government's idea, they were the ones who authorized it—how else could a Third like Ender have got into school? And now the monitor was gone. The experiment entitled Andrew Wiggin hadn't worked out after all. If they could, he was sure they would like to rescind the waivers that had allowed him to be born at all.”

-Ender's Game (1985)



What elements of this quote suggest it is science fiction?

Jules Verne: Verne was a French writer of fantastical stories. It was not until later that his style would become known as science fiction.

“There is a powerful agent, obedient, rapid, easy, which conforms to every use, and reigns supreme on board my vessel. Everything is done by means of it. It lights, warms it, and is the soul of my mechanical apparatus. This agent is electricity.”

“Electricity?” I cried in surprise.

“Yes, sir.”

“Nevertheless, Captain, you possess an extreme rapidity of movement, which does not agree well with the power of electricity. Until now, its dynamic force has remained under restraint, and has only been able to produce a small amount of power.”

“Professor,” said Captain Nemo, “my electricity is not everybody's and that is all I wish to say about it... I point out only this: I owe all to the ocean; it produces electricity, and electricity gives heat, light, motion, and, in a word, life to the Nautilus[the submarine].”

-20,000 Leagues Under the Sea (1870)



What elements of this quote suggest it is science fiction?

LEARNING GENRES

HORROR

The horror genre is definitely not for everyone! This fiction sub-genre is imaginary, but all great horror stories seem very realistic. They usually feature a crazy/evil person on the loose or a *supernatural* event that causes harm or destruction. Some horror stories are graphic, meaning that there is a lot of blood and gore. Other horror stories are *psychological*, meaning that the scary part is what's going on in the minds of the characters. Don't read horror stories when it's dark out, you may not make it to sleep.

Supernatural: Something whose existence is outside the natural world; strange and unnatural

Psychological: Something that affects the mind and emotions



Ambrose Bierce: Bierce is a lesser-known writer today but is an important figure in American writing and horror fiction. He was a Civil War veteran and often used war as a topic. In his seventies he went to Mexico during its revolution and was never heard from again.

“And now he became conscious of a new disturbance. Striking through the thought of his dear ones was a sound which he could neither ignore nor understand, a sharp, distinct, metallic percussion like the stroke of a blacksmith's hammer upon the anvil; it had the same ringing quality. He wondered what it was, and whether immeasurably distant or near by—it seemed both. Its recurrence was regular, but as slow as the tolling of a death knell. He awaited each stroke with impatience and—he knew not why—apprehension. The intervals of silence grew progressively longer, the delays became maddening. With their greater infrequency the sounds increased in strength and sharpness. They hurt his ear like the thrust of a knife; he feared he would shriek. What he heard was the ticking of his watch.”

-An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge (1807)



Name some of the words and elements of this quote that tell you it is horror fiction.

HORROR



Edgar Allan Poe: Poe helped advance many genres of fiction, but most famously horror. His stories often had a character suffering from madness and went into detail about the strange causes and effects of it.

“TRUE! - nervous - very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses - not destroyed - not dulled them. Above all was the sense of hearing acute. I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell. How, then, am I mad? Hearken! and observe how healthily - how calmly I can tell you the whole story.”

-Tell Tale Heart (1844)



What element of horror fiction does this first paragraph of the *Tell Tale Heart* use?

H.P. Lovecraft: Lovecraft was an American suspense and horror writer in the early 20th century. He is considered one of the 20th centuries most important writers of horror fiction.

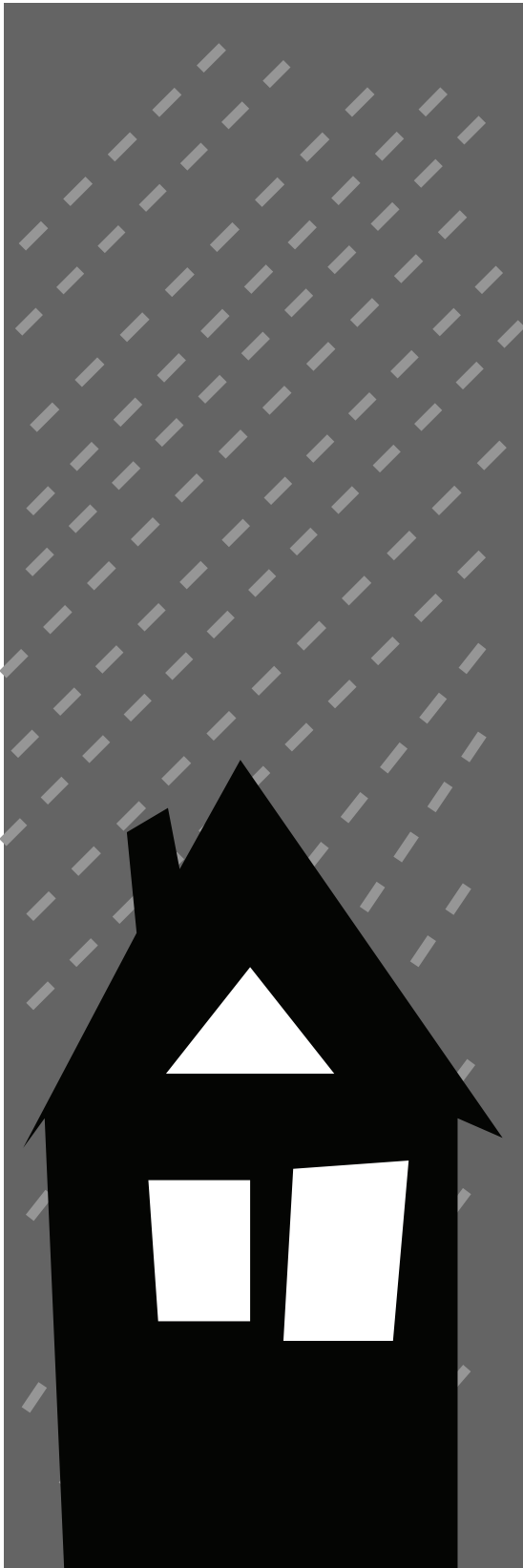
“Immediately upon beholding this amulet we knew that we must possess it; that this treasure alone was our logical pelf from the centuried grave. Even had its outlines been unfamiliar we would have desired it, but as we looked more closely we saw that it was not wholly unfamiliar. Alien it indeed was to all art and literature which sane and balanced readers know, but we recognised it as the thing hinted of in the forbidden Necronomicon of the mad Arab Abdul Alhazred; the ghastly soul-symbol of the corpse-eating cult of inaccessible Leng, in Central Asia..”

- The Hound (1922)



What elements of this quote suggest it is horror fiction?

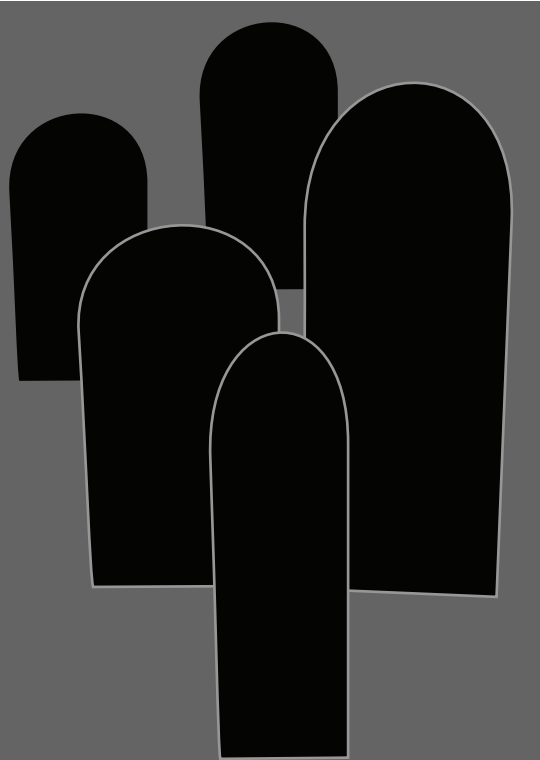
HORROR



You find yourself outside in the rain with just a flashlight. Then, you hear footsteps behind you. They're getting louder and louder! What happens next?!

You are home alone one night, and suddenly you hear a crashing noise at the other end of the house! What do you do?

HORROR

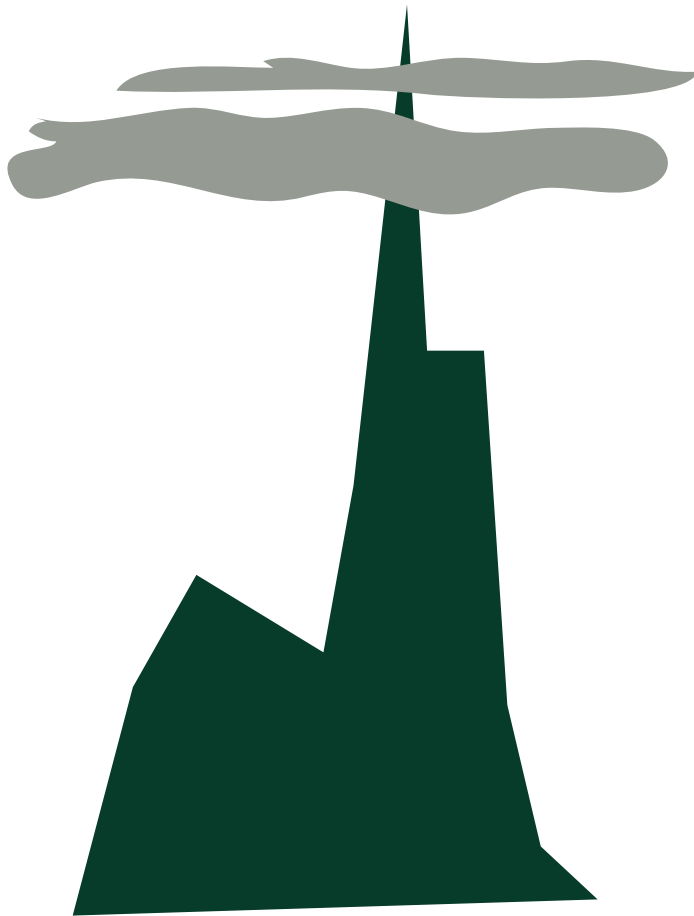


Your friends dared you to walk in the cemetery at night! Suddenly your flashlight goes out. What happens next?

You wake up in an abandoned hospital. When you go outside, the city is abandoned. What happened and how did you get there?

LEARNING GENRES FANTASY

The fantasy genre is a type of fiction. Fantasy stories cannot happen in the real world—they are purely imaginary. Fantasy stories include make-believe animals, magic, monsters and other things that do not exist in our reality. They can take place in the past, present or future, but usually do not take place on Earth (at least not the Earth we are familiar with). Many beloved childhood series such as *Lord of the Rings* are great examples of the fantasy genre. Can you think of any others?



C.S. Lewis: Lewis was a British fantasy writer. He was a contemporary and friend of Tolkien and wrote the *Chronicles of Narnia* series.

"But what does it all mean?" asked Susan when they were somewhat calmer.

"It means," said Aslan, "that though the Witch knew the Deep Magic, there is a magic deeper still which she did not know. Her knowledge goes back only to the dawn of Time. But if she could have looked a little further back, into the stillness and the darkness before Time dawned, she would have read there a different incantation. She would have known that when a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor's stead, the Table would crack and Death itself would start working backwards."

-The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe (1950)



Name some of the words and elements of this quote that tell you it is fantasy.

FANTASY



J.R.R. Tolkein: Tolkein was a British fantasy writer and scholar like his friend C.S. Lewis. He is probably the most famous fantasy writer in the world. He wrote the *Lord of the Rings* series.

“The stars were out in a dark sky above the trees. He thought of the jewels of the dwarves shining in dark caverns. Suddenly in the wood beyond The Water a flame leapt up - probably somebody lighting a wood-fire - and he thought of plundering dragons settling on his quiet Hill and kindling it all to flames. He shuddered; and very quickly he was plain Mr Bag-gins of Bag-End, Under-Hill, again.”

-The Hobbit (1937)



What elements of this quote tell you it is fantasy?

H.P. Lovecraft: Lovecraft's books covered many genres. His otherworldly themes were partly inspired by Edgar Allen Poe, and like him, his books greatly advanced all the genres they covered.

“the marble cloud-city of Serannian, that lies in ethereal space beyond where the sea meets the sky... Shining still is the bronze of the great gates, nor are the onyx pavements ever worn or broken..”

- The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath (1927)

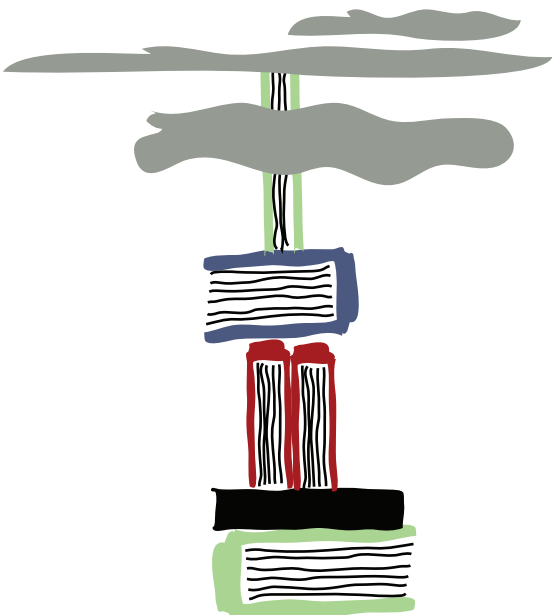
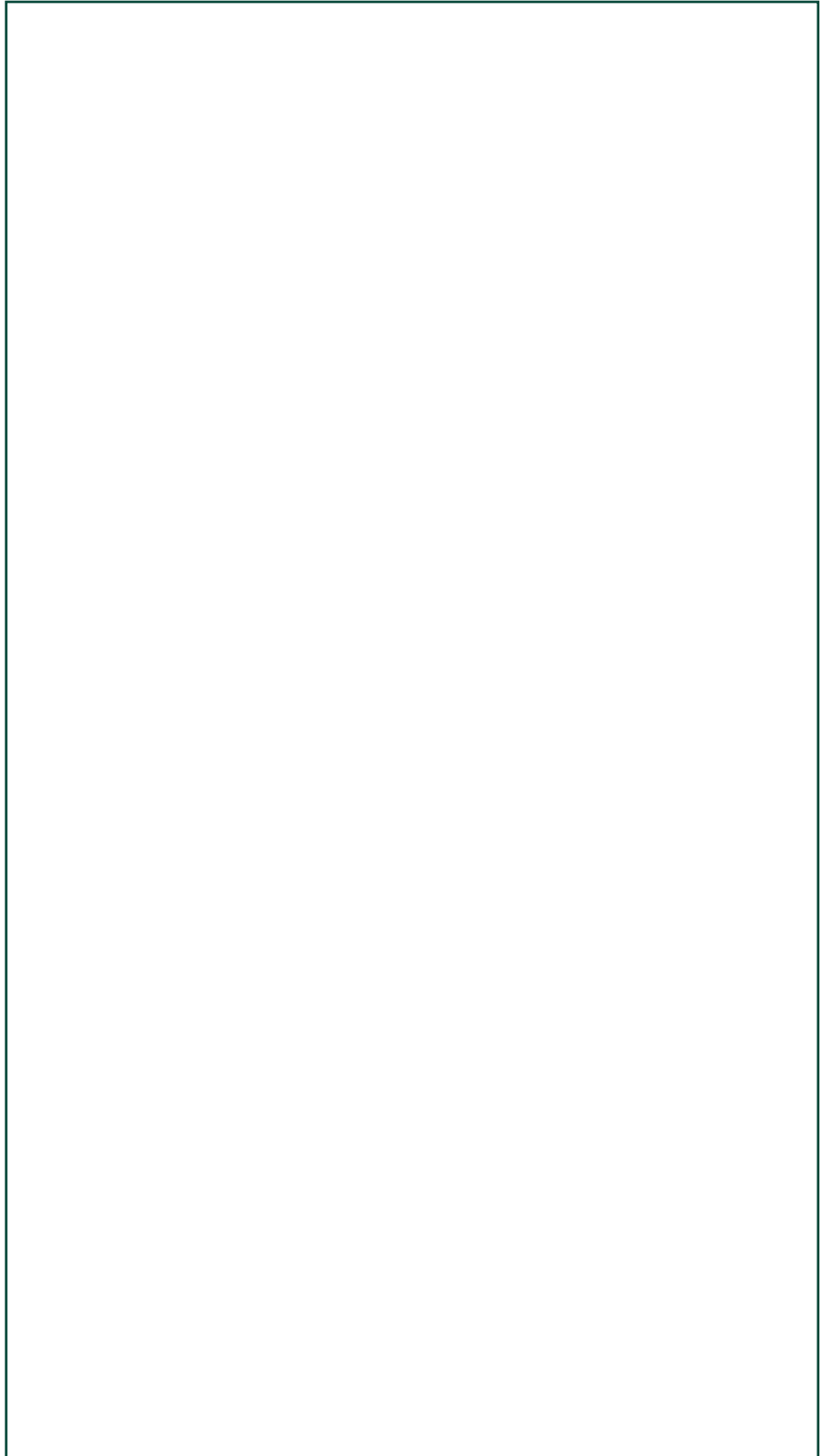


How do we know that this quote is from a fantasy story?

FANTASY



All fantasy stories have mythical characters that we can't find in real life: trolls, wizards, flying bear-dogs ... you name it! Now it's time to come up with your own character for your fantasy story. Is it an animal? Or is it more like a human with special powers and physical features? Draw a picture of your character in the box to the right, and write a paragraph describing who he/she/it is, what they do and where they live.



LEARNING GENRES

CRIME/MYSTERY

The mystery genre is a type of fiction. People have many different words to describe this genre: "whodunit", "hard-boiled", "detective story", etc. All mystery stories focus on a crime that was committed or mysterious event that happened. Many of these stories have twists and turns to keep us on our toes as we follow the detective on his journey to discover the culprit. The fun part about mystery or crime stories is that they are usually believable; they could happen in real life, and some of them are even based on true stories!



Ian Fleming: Fleming created the famous James Bond character, an adventurous, fast-living spy with the British secret intelligence.

"But I am greedy for life. I do too much of everything all the time. Suddenly one day my heart will fail. The Iron Crab will get me as it got my father. But I am not afraid of The Crab. At least I shall have died from an honourable disease. Perhaps they will put on my tombstone. 'This Man Died from Living Too Much!'"

-From *Russia With Love* (1957)



Name some of the words and elements of this quote that tell you it is crime or mystery fiction.



Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: Doyle was an English adventure and mystery writer from the early 1900s. He is most famous as the creator of Sherlock Holmes, the detective genius.

"He said that there were no traces upon the ground round the body. He did not observe any. but I did - some little distance off, but fresh and clear"

"Footprints?"

"Footprints."

"A man's or a woman's?"

Dr. Mortimer looked strangely at us for an instant, and his voice sank almost to a whisper as he answered: "Mr Holmes, they were the footprints of a gigantic hound!"

-Sherlock Holmes: The Hound of the Baskervilles (1901)



Name some of the words and elements of this quote that tell you it is crime or mystery fiction.

Agatha Christie: Christie is one of the most important mystery writers in English literature. She invented the character Poirot, an eccentric and intelligent detective from Belgium.

"Once I went professionally to an archaeological expedition--and I learnt something there. In the course of an excavation, when something comes up out of the ground, everything is cleared away very carefully all around it. You take away the loose earth, and you scrape here and there with a knife until finally your object is there, all alone, ready to be drawn and photographed with no extraneous matter confusing it. That is what I have been seeking to do--clear away the extraneous matter so that we can see the truth--the naked shining truth."

- Death on the Nile (1937)



Name some of the words and elements of this quote that tell you it is crime or mystery fiction.

CRIME/MYSTERY



Uh oh, the class hamster Mr. Chubbles has gone missing! What could have happened to him? You are the lead detective on the case, and it's up to you to find Mr. Chubbles and bring him back to the classroom safely. Write a mystery story from your point of view about your search for the hamster and who the culprit was behind his disappearance.

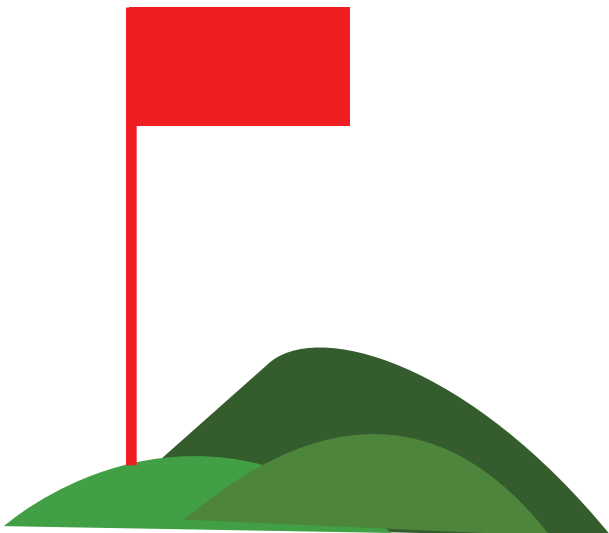




LEARNING GENRES

HISTORICAL FICTION

Historical fiction is a type of fiction. All historical fiction stories take place in the past, and they revolve around a true event that happened in history. However, historical fiction stories typically do not feature real characters. Because it is so difficult to recreate events of the past exactly how they happened, historical fiction is a good alternative. Authors can tell a story about an important, true event while using fake characters and fake storylines. The film *Titanic* is an excellent example of historical fiction. Can you think of any others?



Stephen Crane: Crane was an American writer in the 1800s. His most famous book *The Red Badge of Courage* was about a young man's experiences in the Civil War.

“Within him, as he hurled himself forward, was born a love, a despairing fondness for this flag which was near him. It was a creation of beauty and invulnerability. It was a goddess, radiant, that bended its form with an imperious gesture to him. It was a woman, red and white, hating and loving, that called him with the voice of his hopes. Because no harm could come to it he endowed it with power. He kept near, as if it could be a saver of lives, and an imploring cry went from his mind.”

-The Red Badge of Courage (1895)



Name some of the words and elements of this quote that tell you it is historical fiction.

HISTORICAL FICTION



James Michener: Michener often wrote about the Pacific Islands and what was going on there during the wars in the early 20th century. *Tales of the South Pacific* is about the soldiers stationed in the islands out there during WWII.

“I wish I could tell you about the South Pacific. The way it actually was. The endless ocean. The infinite specks of coral we called islands. Coconut palms nodding gracefully toward the ocean. Reefs upon which waves broke into spray, and inner lagoons, lovely beyond description. I wish I could tell you about the sweating jungle, the full moon rising behind the volcanoes, and the waiting. The waiting. The timeless, repetitive waiting.”

-Tales of the South Pacific (1946)



Even though this quote is fictional, how does it help us better understand that part of history?

Nathaniel Hawthorne: Hawthorne was a famous early American writer. His books often dealt with the problems in the strict Puritan culture of early New England.

“A throng of bearded men, in sad-colored garments, and gray, steeple-crowned hats, intermixed with women, some wearing hoods and others bareheaded, was assembled in front of a wooden edifice, the door of which was heavily timbered with oak, and studded with iron spikes.

The founders of a new colony, whatever Utopia of human virtue and happiness they might originally project, have invariably recognized it among their earliest practical necessities to allot a portion of the virgin soil as a cemetery, and another portion as the site of a prison.”

- The Scarlet Letter (1850)



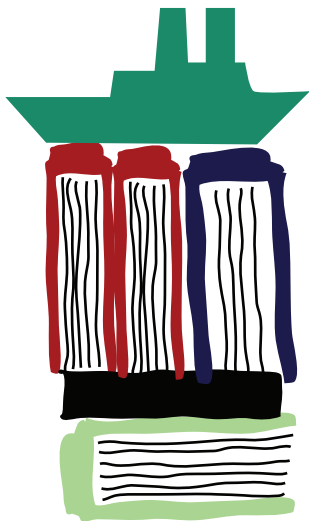
What does this quote teach us about the time period it takes place in?

HISTORICAL FICTION



Now it's time for you to practice writing some historical fiction. Choose an important event or time period from the suggested list below (or come up with one on your own). Research online to learn about the basic locations, dates, clothing and other real-life elements to describe that event. Then create a character who could have been alive back then, and tell his or her story about being alive during that event.

Suggestions: Ancient Egypt, Christopher Columbus sailing to the New World, The American Revolution, The Great Depression, Lewis and Clarke's expedition, The Gold Rush...

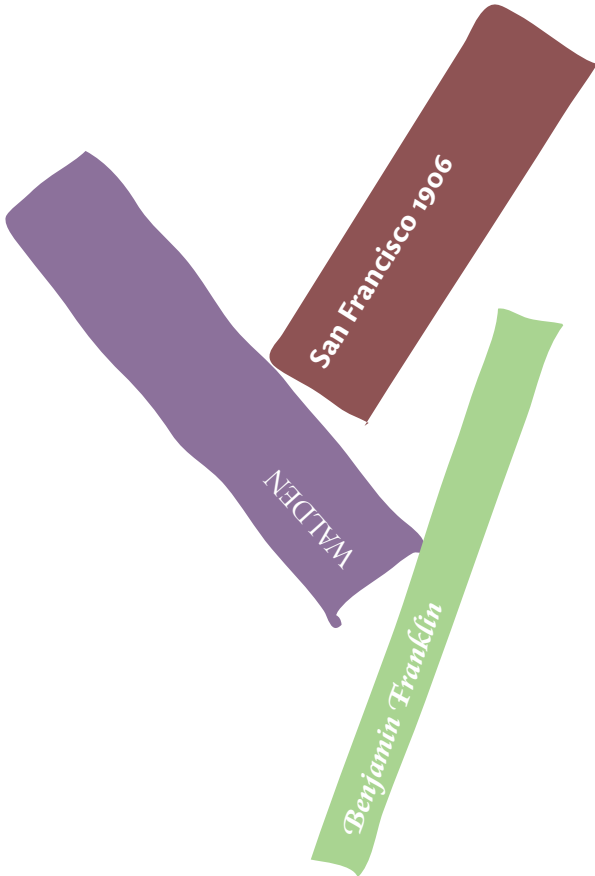


LEARNING GENRES NONFICTION

Nonfiction stories are true stories, meaning that they actually happened in real life. The most common form of nonfiction literature that we see every day is called *journalism*. This includes almost everything on the news, magazines or in newspapers. There is no exaggeration or stretching of the truth in nonfiction. Can you think of any other forms of nonfiction literature?



Journalism: The investigation and reporting of events and issues to a broad audience



Answers: documentary film, biography, autobiography, history textbooks, encyclopedia, memoir, blog, story

Jack London: Jack London was most famous for his fiction writing, but he was also a well-respected journalist. He wrote reports on the San Francisco earthquake of 1906 and the poor living conditions of England's working class during the Industrial Revolution.

“On Wednesday morning at a quarter past five came the earthquake. A minute later the flames were leaping upward. In a dozen different quarters south of Market Street, in the working-class ghetto, and in the factories, fires started. There was no opposing the flames. There was no organization, no communication. All the cunning adjustments of a twentieth century city had been smashed by the earthquake.”

-The Story of an Eyewitness: The San Francisco Earthquake (1906)



Name some of the words and elements of this quote that tell you it is nonfiction.

NONFICTION



Benjamin Franklin: Franklin was one of the Founding Fathers of the United States. He was a printer, inventor and an avid writer as well. His writings cover a large area, from humor to politics and invention.

“I imagine it will be found pretty generally true, that the same convexity of glass, through which a man sees clearest and best at the distance proper for reading, is not the best for greater distances. I therefore formerly had two pairs of spectacles, which I shifted occasionally, as in travelling I sometimes read, and often wanted to regard the prospects [look outside]. Finding this change troublesome, and not always sufficiently ready, I had the glasses cut and half of each kind put in the circle [glasses frame].”

-Franklin’s description of his new invention, Bifocals (1785)



What elements of this quote suggest it is nonfiction?

Henry David Thoreau: Thoreau was one of America’s most influential thinkers. He only wrote a few books in his lifetime, all nonfiction accounts of one experience or another. He often used nonfiction stories to express his philosophy for life and love of nature.

“For the first week, whenever I looked out on the pond it impressed me like a tarn high up on the side of a mountain, its bottom far above the surface of other lakes, and, as the sun arose, I saw it throwing off its nightly clothing of mist, and here and there, by degrees, its soft ripples or its smooth reflecting surface was revealed, while the mists, like ghosts, were stealthily withdrawing in every direction into the woods...”

-Walden (1854)



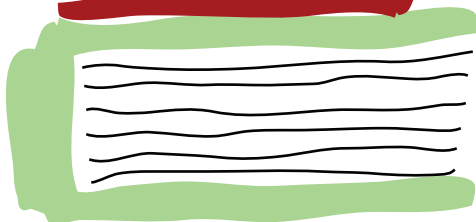
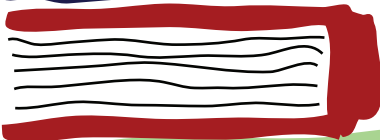
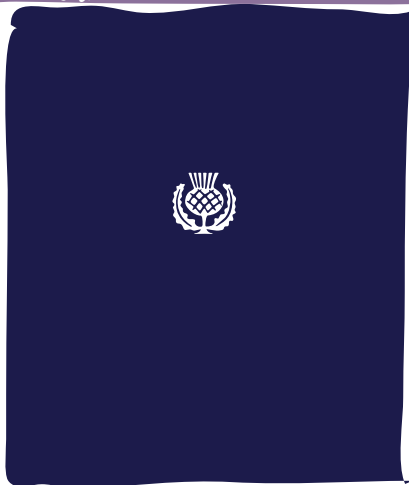
How is Thoreau’s nonfiction writing different from journalism?

LEARNING GENRES BIOGRAPHY & AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Biographies and autobiographies are types of nonfiction literature. A biography is the true story of someone's whole life, written by another person. Most biographies are written about a person after that person has passed away. An autobiography is the true story of your own life that you write yourself. A biography can be as short as one paragraph, or it can be as long as 1,000 pages! Can you think of any famous biographies or autobiographies?



Thomas Jefferson



Mark Twain: Twain was one of America's first great writers. His style was unusual and unique to his own country. His autobiography was done in a unique and humorous way too. He demanded that it not be published until 100 years after his death.

“Her talk is my circus, my menagerie, my fireworks, my spiritual refreshment. When she is at it I would rather be there than at a fire. She talks but little to me, for I understand only about half that she says, and I have had the sagacity not to betray that I understand that half...”

-Autobiography of Mark Twain (2010)



Most of Mark Twain's Autobiography is spent talking about other people. What about it makes it still an autobiography, rather than journalism or a biography?

BIOGRAPHY/AUTOBIOGRAPHY



Thomas Jefferson: Jefferson was one of the most important figures in the early history of the U.S. His autobiography is a great resource for learning what America was like when it was young.

“At the age of 77, I begin to make some memoranda and state some recollections of dates and facts concerning myself, for my own ready reference and for the information of my family.

The tradition in my father's family was that their ancestor came to this country from Wales, and from near the mountain of Snowdon, the highest in Great Britain.”

-Autobiography (1821)



How can we tell from this introductory paragraph that we are reading an autobiography?

Alexander von Humboldt: Humboldt was a German scientist and adventurer in the 1800s. Even though few people talk about him today, he made many great discoveries and his life story is a fascinating tale that takes place all over the globe.

“A biography of Alexander Von Humboldt, which shall contain a full and conscientious account of his life and labors, written in a style sufficiently clear and untechnical to meet popular tastes, has long been a necessity in our literature. Those biographies which are already in existence do not possess this character: they are rather chronicles of his achievements in the various departments of Natural Science, than stories of a life almost unexampled for its wealth of experiences, its labors, and successes.”

- The Life Travels and Books of Alexander von Humboldt (1859) by R.H. Stoddard



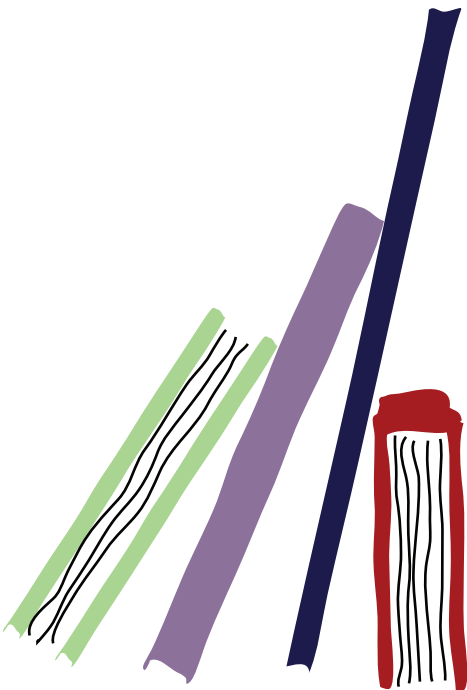
What elements of this quote suggest it is a biography? How is this different from an autobiography?

BIOGRAPHY/AUTOBIOGRAPHY



Let's practice writing a biography about someone! Most biographies talk about a person's whole life. Find a partner or friend to interview about his or her life! Use a scratch piece of paper to write the answers. Where were you born? What is your family like? How was childhood? What about the future? Ask as many questions as you want! Then write a brief bio for your friend.





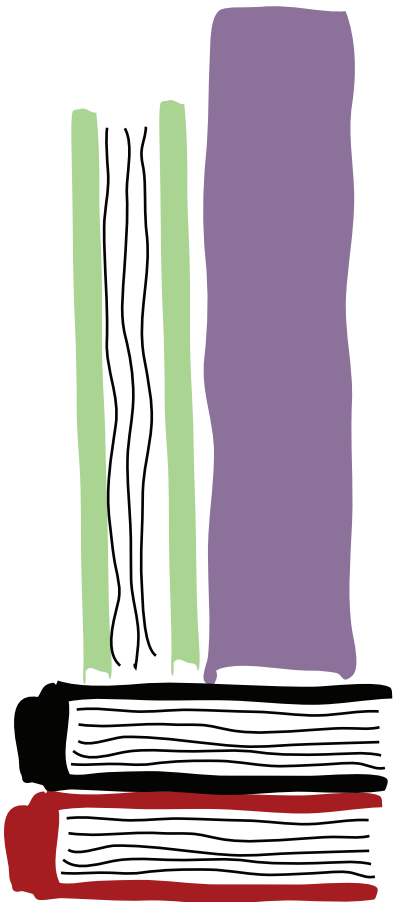
LEARNING GENRES

MEMOIR

A memoir (mem-wahr) is a type of nonfiction, meaning that it is a true story. It is usually a story that the author writes about his or her self, like an *autobiography*, except that a memoir only focuses on a specific event or time period in one's life. Not all memoirs are autobiographical; some are written about other people's lives.



Autobiography: A true report of a person's life, written by that person



Gertrude Stein: Stein is most well known for being friends with all the great artists in Paris in her time, such as Ernest Hemmingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Picasso. But she was also a very talented artist, writer and critic.

“Paris, France is exciting and peaceful. I was only four years old when I was first in Paris and talked French there and was photographed there and went to school there, and ate soup for early breakfast and had leg of mutton and spinach for lunch, I always liked spinach, and a black cat jumped on my mother's back. That was more exciting than peaceful.”

-Paris, France: Personal Recollections (1940)



Name some of the words and elements of this quote that tell you it is a memoir.

MEMOIR



Winston Churchill: Churchill is most famous for leading Great Britain during WWII. After the war though he wrote many memoirs, essays and books about his experiences.

“I have followed, as in previous volumes, as far as I am able, the method of Defoe’s *Memoirs of a Cavalier*, in which the author hangs the chronicle and discussion of great military and political events upon the thread of the personal experiences of an individual. I am perhaps the only man who has passed through both the two supreme cataclysms of recorded history [WWI and WWII] in high cabinet office.”

-Memoirs of the Second World War (1959)



Name some of the words and elements of this quote that tell you it is a memoir.

Henry David Thoreau: Thoreau's writings cover many genres at the same time. They are nonfiction, often philosophy but are always written as a memoir. A memory of a certain time and place he experienced.

“Concord River is remarkable for the gentleness of its current, which is scarcely perceptible, and some have referred to its influence the proverbial moderation of the inhabitants of Concord, as exhibited in the Revolution, and on later occasions. It has been proposed, that the town should adopt for its coat of arms a field verdant, with the Concord circling nine times round. I have read that a descent of an eighth of an inch in a mile is sufficient to produce a flow. Our river has, probably, very near the smallest allowance. ...Compared with the other tributaries of the Merrimack, it appears to have been properly named Musketaquid, or Meadow River, by the Indians.”

- The Hound (1922)



How are Thoreau's descriptions different from an autobiography?

MEMOIR



Most people decide to write a memoir when they reach old age, after they've had many experiences in their lives. However, you may have had some experiences so far that are well worth writing about! Let's practice writing in the style of a memoir. Can you recall a very important or significant event that happened in the past year? Why was it important to you? Tell a story about it, and remember to use first person ("I") past tense.





LEARNING GENRES DRAMA & THEATER

Theater and plays are very different than most types of literature. Most theater is fictional, meaning that it is imaginary. Lots of plays are based on true events, but they rarely show true nonfiction stories. The theater is very different because it must be acted out on a stage, which means that there is not much movement or travel happening. Plays are dialogue-heavy; the only way for actors to tell us what's going on in the characters' heads is to say it out loud.



Arthur Miller: Miller was an American playwright and is considered one of the best. *Death of a Salesman* is a play that deals with the struggles and disappointments of an aging salesman and his family.

LINDA. Biff, you can't look around all your life, can you?

BIFF. I just can't take hold, Mom. I can't take hold of some kind of a life.

LINDA. Biff, a man is not a bird, to come and go with the springtime.

BIFF. Your hair ... [He touches her hair] Your hair got grey.

LINDA. Oh, it's been gray since you were in high school. I just stopped dyeing it, that's all.

BIFF. Dye it again, will ya? I don't want my pal looking old.

LINDA. You're such a boy! You think you can go away for a year and ... You've got to get it into your head now that one day you'll knock on this door and there'll be strange people here –

-Death of a Salesman (1949)



How does a play get its ideas across differently from a novel?

DRAMA/THEATER



William Shakespeare: Shakespeare wrote some of the world's most popular plays. His play *King Lear* is about an aging King who is tricked into betraying his one honest daughter (Cordelia) by her two cruel sisters.

[King Lear's palace]

Enter one bearing a coronet, then King Lear, Cornwall, Albany, Goneril, Regan, Cordelia, and Attendants.

LEAR. To thee and thine hereditary ever
Remain this ample third of our fair kingdom,
No less in space, validity, and pleasure,
Than that conferr'd on Goneril.—Now, our joy,
Although our last and least, to whose young love
The vines of France and milk of Burgundy
Strive to be interest'd, what can you say to draw
A third more opulent than your sisters'? Speak.

CORDELIA. Nothing, my lord.

LEAR. Nothing?

CORDELIA. Nothing.

LEAR. Nothing will come of nothing, speak again.

CORDELIA. Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave
My heart into my mouth. I love your Majesty
According to my bond, no more nor less.

-King Lear (1606)



How is the written form of a play different from most literature?

Sam Shepard: Shepard is a modern American playwright whose plays deal with family struggles and the myth of the American West.

AUSTIN: It's only an outline. We're not writing an entire script now.

LEE: Well ya' can't leave things out even if it is an outline. It's one a' the most important parts. Ya' can't go leavin' it out.

AUSTIN: Okay, okay. Let's just get it done. Now, he's in the truck and he's got his horse trailer and his horse.

AUSTIN: We've already established that.

LEE: And he sees this other guy comin' up behind him in another truck. And that truck is pullin' a gooseneck.

AUSTIN: What's a gooseneck?

LEE: Like on a cattle trailer. You know the kind with a gooseneck, goes right down in the bed a' the pick-up.

AUSTIN: Oh, all right. (types)

LEE: It's important.

AUSTIN: Okay, I got it.

LEE: All these details are important.
(Austin types as they talk)

- True West (1980)



What elements of this quote let you know it is a play to be performed?



HOW TO WRITE A SCREENPLAY FOR A THEATER PRODUCTION (A PLAY IN ONE SCENE)

SCENE 1.

This part sets the stage. It gives directions for how the stage looks, who is on stage and where they are. We can tell it is not the dialogue because the word SCENE (and which scene it is) is written before in capital letters and the text is set far to the right. There are many ways to do this, but the function is the same; screen directions must be easy to tell from dialogue. There are two Quaker style chairs in the middle of an otherwise empty and well lit stage. On the left is Playwright 1, on the right is Playwright 2.

(We enter the scene in the middle of a discussion. This is an action and it is different from a stage setting so it has to look different on the page. In this case, set in the middle and in parenthesis.)

PLAYWRIGHT 1. When a character is speaking, their name is put first, in all capital letters, this way we know who is speaking.

PLAYWRIGHT 2. Now it is my turn to speak but how would anyone be sure we're speaking to each other?

PLAYWRIGHT 1. (to PLAYWRIGHT 2) We could write a screen direction, or we can expect people to understand based on the how the stage is set and that we're the only ones here.

PLAYWRIGHT 2. Yes, and it is better to put the action in parenthesis, after the character doing it. This is best way, there are rules and without them we'll never know what is going on.

PLAYWRIGHT 1. There are rules, but the most important one is to be consistent and make yourself understood. The best way to learn is to try writing your own play.

PLAYWRIGHT 2. I prefer stricter rules, now that the play is finished we end it with FINIS, set in all capitals and the middle of the page, the last word we read.

PLAYWRIGHT 1. FINIS is fine but it's French, we can also use END OF THE PLAY.

END OF THE PLAY



Great job!

is an ThuVienTiengAnh.Com reading superstar

