

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.

F. Scott Fitzgerald

The Great Gatsby

kerouac

ON the ROAD

LONDON

Tales of Hawai'i

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?

FICTION



Most fiction stories have some element of truth, whether it's the personalities of the characters, the scenery and setting, or the general storyline. Authors can use part of a real-life experience to build a new story that will better show what they felt, saw and came to understand from that experience.

Now let's practice writing fiction!



