1. **ADVENTURE STORY**
A genre of fiction in which action is the key element, overshadowing characters, theme and setting. … The conflict in an adventure story is often man against nature. A secondary plot that reinforces this kind of conflict is sometimes included. In Allistair MacLean’s Night Without End, for example, the hero, while investigating a mysterious Arctic air crash, also finds himself dealing with espionage, sabotage and murder.
2. **BIOGRAPHICAL NOVEL**
A life story documented in history and transformed into fiction through the insight and imagination of the writer. This type of novel melds the elements of biographical research and historical truth into the framework of a novel, complete with dialogue, drama and mood. A biographical novel resembles historical fiction, save for one aspect: Characters in a historical novel may be fabricated and then placed into an authentic setting; characters in a biographical novel have actually lived.
3. **ETHNIC FICTION**
Stories and novels whose central characters are black, Native American, Italian-American, Jewish, Appalachian or members of some other specific cultural group. Ethnic fiction usually deals with a protagonist caught between two conflicting ways of life: mainstream American culture and his ethnic heritage.
4. **FICTIONAL BIOGRAPHY**
The biography of a real person that goes beyond the events of a person’s life by being fleshed out with imagined scenes and dialogue. The writer of fictional biographies strives to make it clear that the story is, indeed, fiction and not history.
5. **GOTHIC**
This type of category fiction dates back to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Contemporary gothic novels are characterized by atmospheric, historical settings and feature young, beautiful women who win the favor of handsome, brooding heroes—simultaneously dealing successfully with some life-threatening menace, either natural or supernatural. Gothics rely on mystery, peril, romantic relationships and a sense of foreboding for their strong, emotional effect on the reader. A classic early gothic novel is Emily Bronte’s Wuthering Heights. The gothic writer builds a series of credible, emotional crises for his ultimately triumphant heroine. The writer’s descriptive talents are used instead to paint rich, desolate, gloomy settings in stark mansions and awesome castles. He composes slow-paced, intricate sketches that create a sense of impending evil on every page.
6. **HISTORICAL FICTION**
A fictional story set in a recognizable period of history. As well as telling the stories of ordinary people’s lives, historical fiction may involve political or social events of the time.
7. **HORROR**
Howard Phillips (H.P.) Lovecraft, generally acknowledged to be the master of the horror tale in the twentieth century and the most important American writer of this genre since Edgar Allan Poe, maintained that “The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown.”
8. **WRITING FOR JUVENILES**
This includes works … intended for an audience usually between the ages of two and sixteen. Writing for children is a specialized art that’s harder than it looks. The language must be appropriate for the age of the reader, the subject matter must be of interest to the target age group, the opening of the work must be vivid enough to capture the reader’s attention and the writing throughout must be action-oriented enough to keep it. … Story ideas begin with a strong character and meaningful, directed action. The use of suspense and the interplay of human relationships are two features of effective juvenile fiction. Books and stories are told almost exclusively from a single viewpoint (in first or third person), as this technique helps to establish and sustain a sense of reader identity.
9. **LITERARY FICTION VS. COMMERCIAL FICTION**
To the writer of literary, or serious, fiction, style and technique are often as important as subject matter. Commercial fiction, however, is written with the intent of reaching as wide an audience as possible. Commercial fiction is sometimes called genre fiction because books of this type often fall into categories, such as western, gothic, romance, historical, mystery and horror.
10. **MAINSTREAM FICTION**
Fiction that transcends popular novel categories—mystery, romance or science fiction, [etc.]—is called mainstream fiction. Using conventional methods, this kind of fiction tells stories about people and their conflicts but with greater depth of characterization, background, etc. than the more narrowly focused genre novels. It is not, however, experimental in style as are more avant-garde works. Some examples of contemporary mainstream fiction would be the work of James Michener, John Updike and Joyce Carol Oates.
11. **MYSTERY**
A form of narration in which one or more elements remain unknown or unexplained until the end of the story. The modern mystery story contains elements of the serious novel: a convincing account of a character’s struggle with various physical and psychological obstacles in an effort to achieve his goal, good characterization and sound motivation.
12. **PSYCHOLOGICAL NOVEL**
A narrative that emphasizes the mental and emotional aspects of its characters, focusing on motivations and mental activities rather than on exterior events. The psychological novelist is less concerned about relating what happened than about exploring why it happened. The term is most often used to describe twentieth-century works that employ techniques such as interior monologue and stream of consciousness. Two [examples of contemporary] psychological novels … are Judith Guest’s Ordinary People and Mary Gordon’s The Company of Women.
13. **ROMANCE NOVEL**
Also known as the category romance, the romance novel is a type of category fiction in which the love relationship between a man and a woman pervades the plot. The story [is often] told from the viewpoint of the heroine, who meets a man (the hero), falls in love with him, encounters a conflict that hinders their relationship, then resolves the conflict. Romance is the overriding element in this kind of story: The couple’s relationship determines the plot and tone of the book. Despite all this emotion, however, characters and plot both must be well-developed and realistic: Contrived situations and flat characters are unacceptable.
14. **SCIENCE FICTION [VS. FANTASY]**
Science fiction can be defined as literature involving elements of science and technology as a basis for conflict, or as the setting for a story. The science and technology are generally extrapolations of existing scientific fact, and most (though not all) science fiction stories take place in the future. It is generally accepted that, to be science fiction, a story must have elements of science. Fantasy, on the other hand, rarely utilizes science, relying instead on magic, mythological and neo-mythological beings and devices, and outright invention for conflict and setting.
15. **TECHNO-THRILLER**
This genre utilizes many of the same elements as the thriller, with one major difference. In techno-thrillers, technology becomes a major character. In Tom Clancy’s The Hunt for Red October [for example], specific functions of the submarine become crucial to plot development.
16. **THRILLER**
A novel intended to arouse feelings of excitement or suspense. Works in this genre are highly sensational, usually focusing on illegal activities, international espionage, and violence. A thriller is often a detective story in which the forces of good are pitted against the forces of evil in a kill-or-be-killed situation.