

# Genre

## from Studying Narrative



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# GENRE

## INTRODUCING GENRE

1. Read what Robert Eaglestone and John Mullan have to say below about genre, focusing on:
  - anything which helps you define what genre is
  - anything which tells you about the role genre plays in the narrative.

Share your discoveries in class discussion.

### CRITICAL EXTRACT 1

'Genre' is a word for types of writing; it is also therefore a word for habits of reading. Though novelists might like to cheat expectations, they need readers to have expectations that can be cheated.

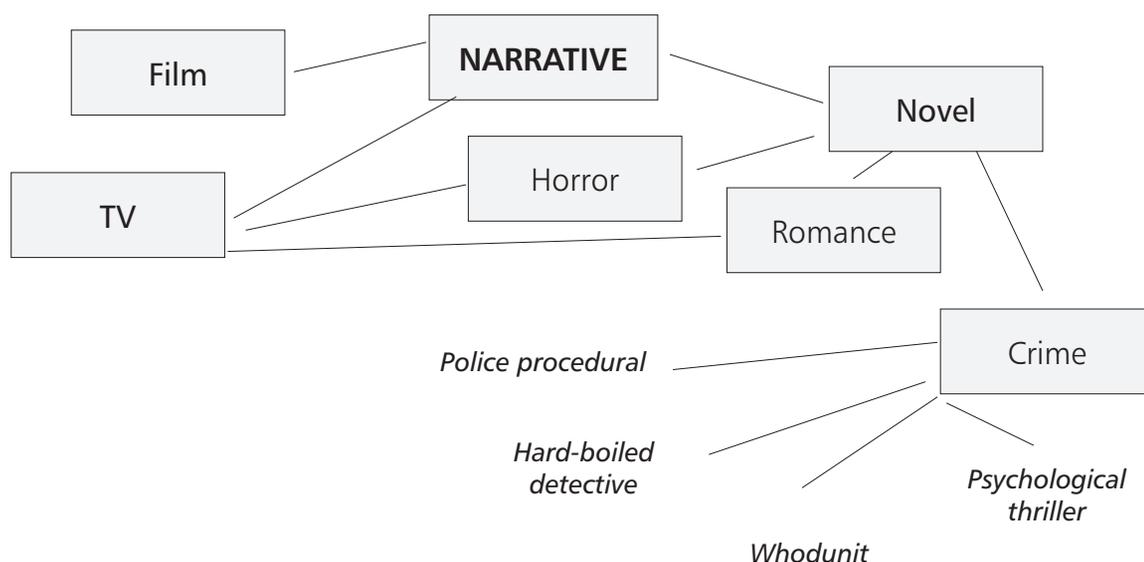
*John Mullan: How Novels Work*

### CRITICAL EXTRACT 2

('genre' means 'kind' or 'type' of literary texts) ... These days we have many genres of literary text, normally divided not by form but by content. In any bookshop there are shelves for all sorts of novel genres: thrillers, romances, science fiction, fantasy. These definitions can be even more detailed – a genre of novels set in universities (the 'campus novel'), thrillers where the lead character is a forensic scientist, perhaps ... Each genre has its own *generic conventions*, parts of plot or style that are special to that genre. These occur both in the content (you expect a murder in a whodunit, or a marriage at the end of a comic play) and in the style (for example, a spare, terse style in a hard-boiled detective story). Occasionally texts mix up or blur these conventions for effect.

*Robert Eaglestone: Doing English*

2. As a class add to the narrative mind-map that has been started below by brainstorming all the different genres and sub-genres you can think of. The crime strand has been filled in to show you the sort of thing you might do.



### **What is it that distinguishes different genres?**

You are going to explore genre in more detail by creating 'recipe' cards for some of the main narrative genres. To do this you will need to photocopy and cut up the 'Features and Conventions of Different Genres' on pages 3 to 4.

3. In pairs, read through the features and conventions, deciding which genre each one belongs to. (You may decide that some conventions belong to more than one genre.)
4. Once you have placed each convention or feature, create 'recipes' (a list of features and conventions) for the different genres below.
  - Adventure
  - Mystery
  - Detective
  - Fantasy
  - War
  - Romance
  - Family Saga
  - Thriller
  - Novel of Ideas
  - Science Fiction
  - Gothic Horror
  - Coming-of-Age
5. Join up with another pair and compare your genre recipes. Make any changes you decide are needed and together add any other conventions or features you think make the genre distinctive. You should think about:
  - typical events/action
  - plot
  - characters
  - themes
  - structure
  - voice and point of view
  - language/prose style.