

Genre

Genre is a term used to indicate what type of text you are reading. Each genre has its own rules and form which may be characterized by a particular style, structure or content.

A main distinction is between fiction and non-fiction. Important literary genres are prose, poetry and drama. Prose can be divided into novels and short stories which can be subdivided into other genres, e.g. historical novels, science fiction or horror stories. Non-fiction genres include for example articles, biographies, blogs and essays. You may also come across texts which are a mix of fiction and non-fiction.

1. Read each of the following excerpts. In pairs: Match genre and excerpt.

<p>1. Poem</p>	<p>A. I grew up in the country, deep in the country. The nearest major library was a twelve-mile bicycle ride into the city of Norwich. I was lucky to live in a house filled with books and to have parents who loved to read, but by the time I approached teenage my appetite for reading, combined with my more or less chronic insomnia, meant that I needed more, far more books to consume daily. Every other Thursday, a mobile library (in the form of a large grey pantechnicon that would today look absurdly old-fashioned) would come along and park not five minutes' walk from our house. This was my lifeline to the outside world.</p>
<p>2. Speech</p>	<p>B. O You just gave instructions to nuke London. P You bet. They've had it coming to them for a long time. What do you think? (<i>Rubs his hands</i>) They've had it coming to them and boy are they going to get it? O But I'm just mildly surprised that it's London. P Those cheapskates. Those horizontal pricks. Those scumbags. An elephant never forgets. Nor does a President. O But I thought they were on our side. P Our side! Traitors. Stinkypoos. Can't speak a damn word of English. O They can't speak English? Why not? P Because they're French, you fool. They live in Froggy land. Well, the Froggy Circus is over. Jesus. I think I'll have a drink. I know God won't mind. He's very fond of me.</p>

<p>3. Fairy tale</p>	<p>C. I waz born a short time before the Cold Time stard. My grandid tells me all the time abowt the wirld then. Its hard to believe wut he says. I cint member I wuz a baby. But them pickchrs in buks books bux whatever, thay dont lie. I seen cars without rust an I seen green yards like blankets put down. The grass green awl so smooth. I seen a sky with no clouds, awl sweet an blu lik the cleanest sheet yu ever seen. In pickchrs I seen it, torn from books an hangd up in th Pickchrs Plase calld the Multiplecks.</p>
<p>4. Science fiction</p>	<p>D. Out of the night that covers me, Black as the pit from pole to pole, I thank whatever gods may be For my unconquerable soul.</p> <p>In the fell clutch of circumstance I have not winced nor cried aloud. Under the bludgeonings of chance My head is bloody, but unbowed.</p>
<p>5. Short story</p>	<p>E. This is all wrong. I shouldn't be standing here. I should be back in school on the other side of the ocean. Yet you all come to me for hope? How dare you! You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words. And yet I'm one of the lucky ones. People are suffering. People are dying. Entire ecosystems are collapsing. We are in the beginning of a mass extinction. And all you can talk about is money and fairytales of eternal economic growth. How dare you!</p>
<p>6. Essay</p>	<p>F. – Men come in peace from the third planet which we call 'earth'. We are earthmen. Take us earthmen to your leader.</p> <p>– Thmen? Thmen? Bawr. Bawrhossop. Yuleeda tan hanna. Harrabost yuleeda.</p> <p>– I am the yuleeda. You see my hands, we carry no benner, we come in peace. The spaceways are all stretterhawn.</p>
<p>7. Poem</p>	<p>G. "O-oh!" The Burnell children sounded as though they were in despair. It was too marvellous; it was too much for them. They had never seen anything like it in their lives. All the rooms were papered. There were pictures on the walls, painted on the paper, with gold frames complete. Red carpet covered all the floors except the kitchen; red plush chairs in the drawing-room, green in the dining-room;</p>

	<p>tables, beds with real bedclothes, a cradle, a stove, a dresser with tiny plates and one big jug. But what Kezia liked more than anything, what she liked frightfully, was the lamp.</p>
<p>8. Drama</p>	<p>H. In a house, in a suburb, in a city, there were a man and his wife who loved each other very much and were living happily ever after. They had a little boy, and they loved him very much. They had a cat and a dog that the little boy loved very much. They had a car and a caravan trailer for holidays, and a swimming-pool which was fenced so that the little boy and his playmates would not fall in and drown. They had a housemaid who was absolutely trustworthy and an itinerant gardener who was highly recommended by the neighbors. For when they began to live happily ever after they were warned, by that wise old witch, the husband's mother, not to take on anyone off the street.</p>

2. Matrix groups: Each group works with an excerpt.
 - a. Explain which features helped you decide on the genre. You may consider
 - whether it is fiction or non-fiction
 - what the purpose of the text is
 - what is characteristic of the language: how the text has been spelled, punctuated and organized, what kind of vocabulary has been used, how words and phrases have been combined (e.g. syntax and grammar)
 - other features.
 - b. Write an entry for a website in four lines in which you describe what is characteristic of “your” genre.
 - c. Present your website entry and your analysis of “your” excerpt in matrix groups.