Genre Definitions

Contemporary/Realistic: Realistic fiction creates imaginary characters and situations that depict our world and society. It focuses on themes of growing up and confronting personal and social problems. This genre portrays characters coming to understand themselves and others.

Fantasy: Fantasy tells imaginary tales of make believe lands, creatures and people. Magic is often a major facet in fantasy and readers must willingly enter the writer's realm to understand this other world. Fantasy will usually develop characters who wrestle with the nature of good and evil. Many of the themes of fantasy can be reflected in the contemporary genre but the setting and the characters extend beyond the confined of realistic fiction.

Graphic Novels: Graphic novels present stories using visual frames to support dialogue. They are very similar to comic books in format but they often offer provocative and complex plots that engage young readers. Graphic novels differ from comics in that they deal with character growth and development as well as develop challenging thematic concepts.

Historical: Historical fiction describes fictionalized stories that are set in the documented past. The details of the time and place are usually authentic and accurate and may contain actual historical figures. Other characters, including the protagonist, are often fictionalized. Historical fiction can be closely aligned with realistic fiction as the characters may be dealing with themes of growth and their place in society common in contemporary fiction.

Horror: The horror genre emerges from the fantasy genre. It concentrates on the dark aspects of fantasy and its goal is to frighten the reader. Its pages are populated by demons, vampires and ghosts and its settings are usually dark and isolated locations. As in the fantasy genre, readers have to engage willingly with the text and to use their imaginations. A common attribute in horror literature is the battle between the hero(ine) and the forces of evil.

Informational: Informational books are those which explain known facts about specific topics. These texts must not only be accurate but they must also present the information so that it is easily understood. Illustrations are often included to extend the concepts as described in the books.

Mixed Media: This type of text has a variety of sources and images on its pages. It may include different writing forms, visuals, emails, manipulatives, charts, etc. The reader has to be flexible in order to extract meaning from the pages because the meaning does not emerge in a traditional, linear manner.

Mystery: Mystery novels emphasize plot. Usually, the protagonist is seeking an answer to a crime or to a mysterious event. Characteristics of this style of writing include suspense and a fast paced style.

Picture Books: These books are often associated with younger readers as the text may appear to be simple and there are many illustrations to support the text. However, often the text and illustrations can be brought to a higher level of reflection to develop critical understandings for older learners. Picture books can frequently convey a powerful and thought provoking message.

Poetry: Poetry encompasses many diverse forms and subjects. Some of these include free verse, blank verse, limericks, haiku, and so on. Poetry expresses intense emotions and reflections as it is usually written in a compressed form.

Science Fiction: Science fiction describes futuristic settings, settings based in outer space, different worlds or dimensions that are often based upon existing or fictionalized scientific principles. It is not wholly based upon imagination as is the fantasy genre.

Traditional: Traditional literature consists of ancient stories and tales that were originally preserved by the use of oral traditions and were later written down. It is often formulaic and explains some kind of natural phenomena or moral teaching.

Verse Novels: Verse novels tell the story by using verse instead of using conventional sentence structures organized in paragraphs.