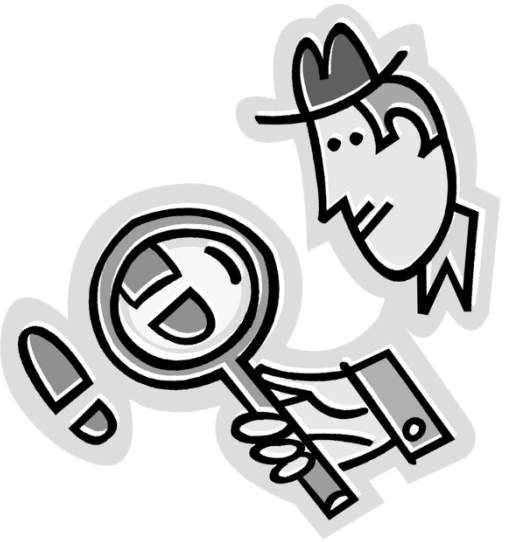


Whodunnit?



*Everything Mystery for Reader's
Advisory*

Alicia McGrath
KY Dept. for Libraries & Archives

INTRODUCTION

Definitions:

1. a work of fiction in which the character is asked to solve a puzzle.
2. any book in which a crime has been committed and someone attempts to solve the crime/mystery, i.e. discover: who, how and/or why the crime was committed.

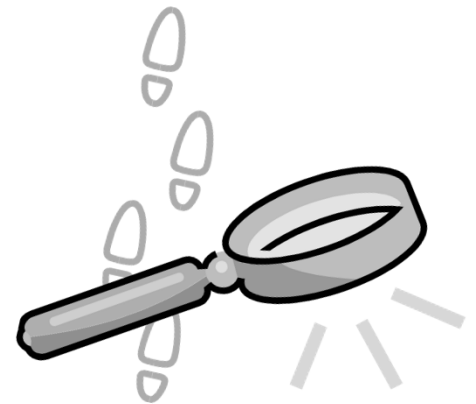
Mysteries are closely connected to Suspense and Thrillers

Edgar Awards: <http://www.theedgars.com/index.html>

Mystery Writers of America: <http://mysterywriters.org/>

Malice Domestic: <http://malicedomestic.org/index.html> &
has the Agatha Award: <http://malicedomestic.org/agathas.html>

The Daggers: <https://thecwa.co.uk/the-daggers/> (British mysteries)



MYSTERY BASICS

MYSTERY'S ALLURE

Why do we like Mysteries??

- Readers like to pit themselves against the detective and see who can solve the puzzle/crime first. Some like the surprise of a twist ending.
- Have a clear structure to the novel: crime – investigation – resolution
- Strong story
- Good vs. bad with justice triumphing
- Strong character appeal
- Modern version of the morality play
- Often learn something
- Lots & lots of series!



MYSTERY VS. SUSPENSE

- “Easiest” way to distinguish mystery from suspense:
 - ✓ Timeline of the book: With mysteries, the focus is on solving the crime. With suspense the focus is on preventing the crime from happening or escaping from a criminal.
 - ✓ In a Mystery the protagonist tries to figure out who the perpetrator is. In suspense the protagonist and/or reader knows who the perpetrator is and the plot focuses on how the protagonist escapes from becoming the next victim.
- Or: Mystery is the “after” and Suspense is the “before”

HISTORY

- “Founding Father” considered to be Edgar Allan Poe with his detective C. Auguste Dupin in *The Murders In The Rue Morgue* (1841).
- Most celebrated Mystery icon and credited with popularizing the genre is Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes. First appeared in *A Study In Scarlet* (1887).
- 1920 – 1940: The Golden Age with English authors Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers, and Ngaio Marsh and American authors Rex Stout and Ellery Queen.
 - 1930’s: Pulp magazine authors Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett also came into the spotlight and are considered the fathers of the hard-boiled mystery. These mysteries were tough and uncivilized because they portrayed the gritty day-to-day realities of life during this time period.
 - 1940’s: Rise of the Police Procedural with Hilary Waugh, Dell Shannon, and Ed McBain

HISTORY CONT.

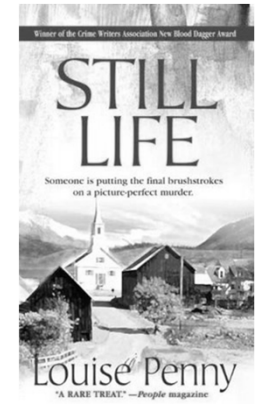
- 1970's – 1990's: Next change with Mystery Genre
 - Regional Mysteries with focus on the setting
 - 1970's/1980's: private-eye novels; more women writing (i.e. Sue Grafton, Marcia Muller, and Sara Paretsky); mysteries focusing on social issues and career-specialized characters; cozy mystery popular again
 - 1990's: new Golden Age of mysteries with new authors Nevada Barr, Dana Stabenow, Patricia Cornwell, Jan Burke, etc.
- Currently . . .
 - In 2004, *Thrillers* became a separate genre, but in Great Britain these two genres are still “lumped” together and called Crime Fiction
 - More Cozy Mysteries incorporated with pets, hobbies, etc.
 - Mysteries set in foreign countries
 - Historical Mysteries
 - Genreblending



SUBGENRES



TRADITIONAL



- Cozies as a subset!?
- May have dark/disturbing themes with violence

- Examples:

- ◆ China Bayles series by Susan Albert Wittig
- ◆ Flavia de Luce series by Alan Bradley
- ◆ Walt Longmire series by Craig Johnson
- ◆ Armand Gamache series by Louise Penny
- ◆ Clare Fergusson/Russ Van Alstyne series by Julia Spencer-



Fleming



COZY

- Gentle, lighthearted, and sometimes humorous
- “Comfort reads” of the mystery genre
- No violence, crime usually takes place “off-stage”
- Amateur sleuth
- “Hobby” mysteries
- Examples:

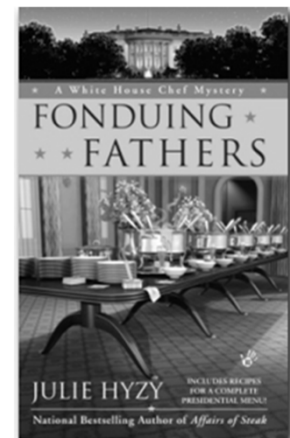
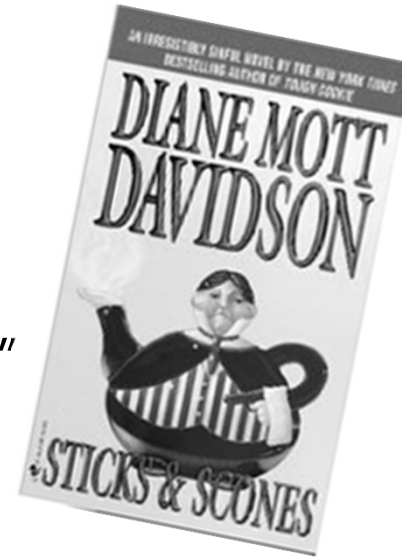
🍷 Meg Langslow series by Donna Andrews

🍷 Goldy Schulz Culinary Mysteries by Diane Mott Davidson

🍷 Death on Demand series by Carolyn Hart

🍷 Josie Prescott Antiques Mysteries series by Jane K. Cleland

🍷 White House Chef series by Julie Hyzy



HISTORICAL

- Occur in a historical setting with the main character and/or detective sometimes being a historical figure.
- Appeal of the historical details and atmosphere of a particular time period.
- Debate about cut off date for historical mysteries. Possibly the 1980's?

- Examples:

- 🔍 Molly Murphy series by Rhys Bowen
- 🔍 Hannah Vogel series by Rebecca Cantrell
- 🔍 Miranda Corbie series by Kelli Stanley
- 🔍 Charlotte & Thomas Pitt series and William Monk series by Anne Perry
- 🔍 Matthew Shardlake series by C.J. Sansom
- 🔍 Maisie Dobbs series by Jacqueline Winspear
- 🔍 Phryne Fisher series by Kerry Greenwood ("cozies with an edge")



PROCEDURALS

The “public detective”: police and other professionals aligned with the police.

Appeal is character, realism, and setting

Examples:

- 🔍 Anna Pigeon series by Nevada Barr
- 🔍 Joe Pickett series by CJ Box
- 🔍 Dave Robicheaux series by James Lee Burke
- 🔍 Harry Bosch Mysteries by Michael Connelly
- 🔍 Irene Kelly series by Jan Burke
- 🔍 Duncan Kincaid/Gemma James series by Deborah Crombie
- 🔍 Alex (Alexandra) Cooper series by Linda Fairstein
- 🔍 Deborah Knott series by Margaret Maron
- 🔍 The Dublin Murder Squad by Tana French
- 🔍 Inspector Chen series by Qui Xiaolong



PRIVATE INVESTIGATORS

- “Lone wolf” that is dedicated to the client’s cause.
- In the gray area outside the law



Examples:

- 🕵️ Jack Taylor series by Ken Bruen
- 🕵️ Elvis Cole and Joe Pike series by Robert Crais
- 🕵️ Cork O’Connor series by William Kent Krueger
- 🕵️ Kenzie/Gennaro series by Dennis Lehane
- 🕵️ Sharon McCone series by Marcia Muller
- 🕵️ Spencer series by Robert B. Parker
- 🕵️ Easy Rawlins series by Walter Mosley
- 🕵️ Tess Monaghan series by Laura Lippman

CRIME CAPERS

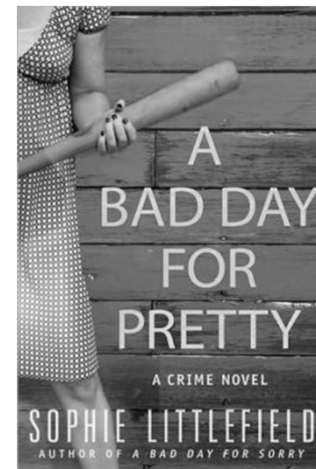
Components: humor, adventure, and clever characters.

Has one or more crimes with an emphasis on thefts, swindles, or kidnappings and something goes wrong.

Often stand alone novels instead of series.

Examples:

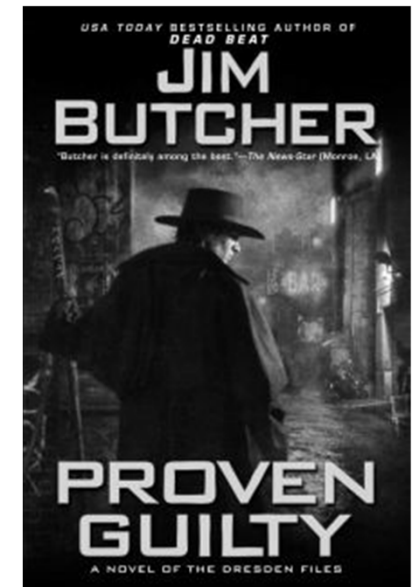
- *Gunshot Straight* by Lou Berney
- Lucky O'Toole novels by Deborah Coonts
- Stephanie Plum novels by Janet Evanovich
- Wollie Shelley series by Harley Jane Kozak
- Stella Hardesty series by Sophie Littlefield



GENREBLEND

Examples:

- 👮 The Dresden Files by Jim Butcher
- 👮 Sookie Stackhouse series by Charlaine Harris
- 👮 Holmes On The Range series by Steve Hockensmith
- 👮 In Death series by J. D. Robb



MYSTERY READERS ADVISORY

ASK YOUR PATRON:

- What detective do they like to read about?
- What mystery television shows and/or movies do they like?
- Ask what other genres they read in order to select some genreblends for them to try

APPEAL FACTORS

- Character (strong, flawed, sassy, quirky, complex)
- Illustration
- Pace
- Storyline (action packed, character-driven, plot driven)
- Tone (disturbing, funny, steamy, offbeat, moving)
- Writing Style (descriptive, lyrical, witty, spare)

JUST A FEW MORE MYSTERIOUS THINGS



5 MYSTERY AUTHORS TO KNOW

1. Agatha Christie – a.k.a. “Queen Of Crime”

2. Robert B. Parker

3. Sue Grafton

4. Tony Hillerman

5. Michael Connelly



A



B



C



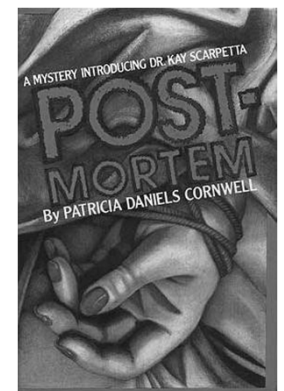
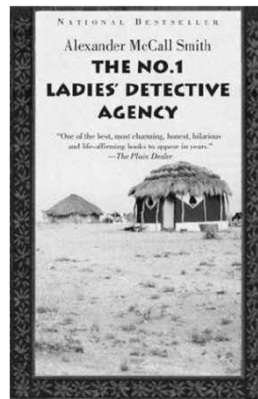
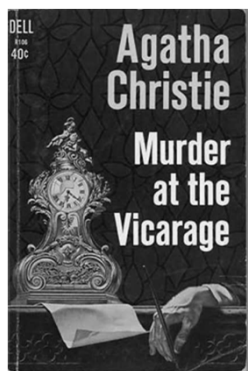
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E

5 MYSTERIES EVERYONE SHOULD READ

- 1) Murder At The Vicarage by Agatha Christie
- 2) Devil In A Blue Dress by Walter Mosley
- 3) The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency by Alexander McCall Smith
- 4) Farewell, My Lovely by Raymond Chandler
- 5) Postmortem by Patricia Cornwell



RESOURCES

- Stop, You're Killing Me!: <http://www.stopyourekillingme.com/>
- Vernon Area Public Library District Mystery Guide:
<http://guides.vapld.info/content.php?pid=80311>
- Looking For A Mystery?: <http://www.sldirectory.com/mystery.html>
- Edgar Awards: <http://www.theedgars.com/index.html>
- Mystery Writers of America: <http://mysterywriters.org/>
- On Twitter, "Crime Lady" Sarah Weinman @sarahw & Mystery Scene Magazine @MysteryScene
- <https://www.libraryjournal.com/?detailStory=taking-the-mystery-out-of-mystery-readers-advisory>