

Form and Genre

Form describes structure

Genre describes content or subject matter of texts (written forms)


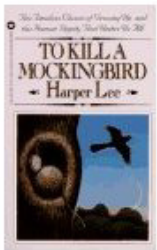
Examples of Forms	Characteristics
letter	personal communication that generally begins with return address and date and closes with conventional closings
memo	usually a brief internal communication (within a group) with limited information
short story	a single plot, usually few characters and up to 20,000 words in length
novella	a shorter version of the novel up to 50, 000 words in length
novel	extended piece of prose with many characters, conflicts, and even plots; usually over 50,000 words in length
play	prose written to be performed by actors on stage before an audience
screenplay	text that contains much dialogue and directions for a piece of drama

Genres contain specific elements common to that genre. For example, a western usually contains a gunfight between the good guys and the bad guys. Science fiction usually contains travel in space. A detective story usually contains a murder.

Forms and genres can combine in a variety of ways. A science fiction may also be a mystery; an historical novel may also be a romance; or a mystery may contain elements of a historical novel. Elements of one genre are sometimes used in other genres.

There are many possible combinations of form and genre. The following chart provides some of the most common examples.

Some Common Forms and Some Common Genres Within those Forms

Examples of Forms			Example of Genres
Fiction	poetry	free verse	sonnet epic ballad lyric
	prose	play musical motion picture Shakespearean modern	tragedy comedy history 
		novel novella short story	romance historical detective fantasy science fiction realistic adventure 
Non-fiction		history	political social military
		biography autobiography memoir	
		documentary film	
		essay	argumentative expository research
		letter	personal business letter to the editor
		diary	
		references	dictionary internet atlas
		textbook	science