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*Dare to Know*

In addition to the recognized sub-genres, detective and mystery fiction can be organized into several informal subsets:

## Classic/Traditional Mysteries

A subset in which a shocking crime has been committed in a closed, social setting (e.g., small village, university, or club). According to the traditional British formula, which originated in the genre's Golden Age of the 1920s and 1930s, the crime is solved by a detective who uses conventional investigative techniques (i.e., questioning suspects, observing clues, and making deductions). The crime is solved, and the perpetrator caught by the end of the story. The detective may be a professional investigator or an amateur not affiliated with a private detective or law enforcement agency. In the case of the amateur, they use their profession, hobby, or personal skills to solve a crime for which they have been framed or has been committed against someone close to him or her. Arthur Conan Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet* (1887), G. K. Chesterton's "The Blue Cross" (1910), Amalgamated Press's *The Sexton Blake Library* (1915-1968), DC Thomson's *The Dixon Hawke Library* (1919-1941), Agatha Christie's *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* (1920), A. A. Milne's *The Red House Mystery* (1922), Anthony Berkeley Cox's *The Layton Court Mystery* (1925), Patricia Wentworth's *Grey Mask* (1928), Margery Allingham's *The Black Dudley Murder* (1929), Arthur Upfield's *The Barrakee Mystery* (1929), Ngaio Marsh's *A Man Lay Dead* (1934), Dorothy L. Sayers's *The Nine Tailors* (1934), Rex Stout's *Fer-de-Lance* (1934), Christina Brand's *Green for Danger* (1944), Nicholas Blake's *A Question of Proof* (1935), Michael Innes's *Death at the President's Lodging* (1936), Christianna Brand's *Heads You Lose* (1941), Josephine Tey's *The Daughter of Time* (1951), P. D. James's *Cover Her Face* (1962), and Ruth Rendell's *From Doon with Death* (1964) are classic examples of this sub-genre.

### Common Elements

|                                     |
|-------------------------------------|
| Seemingly perfect crime             |
| Wrongly accused suspect             |
| The powers of observation           |
| The superior mind of the detective  |
| An academic institution             |
| The startling and unexpected finale |

|                            |
|----------------------------|
| Gardening                  |
| Cooking                    |
| Tea                        |
| Poison                     |
| Detective novel of manners |

### Modern Literary Examples

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| <i>Asking for Trouble</i> (1997) by Ann Granger       |
| <i>Bootlegger's Daughter</i> (1992) by Margaret Maron |

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| <i>Cast, In Order of Disappearance</i> (1975) by Simon Brett |
| <i>Cover Up Story</i> (1971) by Marian Babson                |
| <i>Deal Breaker</i> (1995) by Harlan Coben                   |

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| <i>Death of an Old Got</i> (1974) by Robert Bernard            |
| <i>Death on Demand</i> (1987) by Carolyn Hart                  |
| <i>Detective</i> (1987) by Parnell Hall                        |
| <i>Diners, Dives &amp; Dead Ends</i> (2012) by Terri L. Austin |
| <i>Edwin of the Iron Shoes</i> (1977) by Marcia Muller         |
| <i>Evans Above</i> (1997) by Rhys Bowen                        |
| <i>Fellowship of Fear</i> (1982) by Aaron Elkins               |
| <i>For Whom the Minivan Rolls</i> (2002) by Jeffrey Cohen      |
| <i>Front Page Fatality</i> (2019) by LynDee Walker             |
| <i>A Great Deliverance</i> (1988) by Elizabeth George          |
| <i>The Man with a Load of Mischief</i> (1981) by Martha Grimes |
| <i>Mud, Muck and Dead Things</i> (2009) by Ann Granger         |
| <i>Not One of Us</i> (1971) by June Thomson                    |

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|---|
| <i>One Coffee With</i> (1981) by Margaret Maron                                   |
| <i>A Perfect Match</i> (1983) by Jill McGown                                      |
| <i>Prose and Cons</i> (2016) by Amanda Flower                                     |
| <i>The Question of the Dead Mistress</i> (2018) by E. J. Copperman and Jeff Cohen |
| <i>A Rising Man</i> (2016) by Abir Mukherjee                                      |
| <i>Say It with Poison</i> (1991) by Ann Granger                                   |
| <i>Scorched Grace</i> (2023) by Margot's Douaihy                                  |
| <i>The Secret, Book &amp; Scone Society</i> (2071) by Ellery Adams                |
| <i>A Share in Death</i> (1993) by Deborah Crombie                                 |
| <i>A Spy in the House</i> (2009) by Y. S. Lee                                     |
| <i>The Sweetness at the Bottom of the Pie</i> (2009) by Alan Bradley              |
| <i>Wicked Autumn</i> (2011) by G. M. Malliet                                      |
| <i>A Willing Murder</i> (2018) by Jude Deveraux                                   |

### Hard-Boiled Crime Fiction

This subset's invention is credited to Carroll John Daly (1889–1958) and Dashiell Hammett (1894–1961), both of whom were contributors to the pulp magazines of the 1920s. A distinctly American style, hard-boiled fiction, usually involves weathered and cynical private detectives solving crimes within a corrupt and unfair system. The stories can contain overtly graphic violence and sex, and often depict the dark, seedy underbelly of a large city. As Raymond Chandler observed, “down these mean streets a man must go who is not himself mean, who is neither tarnished nor afraid.” Protagonists may be hard men who have seen violence and dealt death, but, true to their traditional **Western fiction** antecedents, the stories depend on them following an ethical code of abstract “truths,” even when those around them lie, cheat, steal, and murder. Hard-boiled fiction is noted for an unflinching realism considered essential to crime writing, which led to an element of social observation and commentary. Hard-boiled language describes events and actions rather than ideas; adjectives are used sparingly. The detective employs a terse commentary, a skeptical perspective, a stubborn honesty, and a tenacious courage when confronting dangerous criminals. Slang appropriate to the usually early- or mid-twentieth century setting is frequently used. Dashiell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon* (1930), Paul Cain's *Fast One* (1933), Raymond Chandler's *The Big Sleep* (1939), Mickey Spillane's *I, The Jury* (1947), Ross MacDonald's *The Moving Target* (1949), Chester Himes's *For Love of Imabelle* (1957), and Michael Collins's *Act of Fear* (1967) are classic examples.

### Common Elements

|                    |
|--------------------|
| Social corruption  |
| Cynicism           |
| Private detectives |
| Organized crime    |

|                        |
|------------------------|
| Gritty tone            |
| Murder                 |
| Sex                    |
| First-person narration |

### Modern Literary Examples

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| <i>A Is for Alibi</i> (1982) by Sue Grafton            |
| <i>The Back-Door Man</i> (1986) by Rob Kantner         |
| <i>Dead Skip</i> (1972) by Joe Gores                   |
| <i>The Cuckoo's Calling</i> (2013) by Robert Galbraith |
| <i>The Dead Are Discrete</i> (1974) by Arthur Lyons    |
| <i>Devil in a Blue Dress</i> (1990) by Walter Mosley   |
| <i>Edwin of the Iron Shoes</i> (1977) by Marcia Muller |
| <i>Even When You Lie</i> (2023) by Michelle Cruz       |
| <i>Fadeout</i> (1970) by Joseph Hansen                 |
| <i>Freeze My Margarita</i> (1998) by Lauren Henderson  |
| <i>Glitz</i> (1985) by Elmore Leonard                  |
| <i>God Save the Child</i> (1974) by Robert B. Parker   |
| <i>Grave Error</i> (1979) by Stephen Greenleaf         |
| <i>The Hills of Homicide</i> (1983) by Louis L'Amour   |
| <i>Indemnity Only</i> (1982) by Sara Paretsky          |
| <i>Killing Floor</i> (1997) by Lee Child               |
| <i>The Last Good Kiss</i> (1978) by James Crumley      |
| <i>The Last Place You Look</i> (2017) by Kristen       |

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|---|
| Lepionka  |
| <i>Midnight Rambler</i> (2007) by James Swain                   |
| <i>The Monkey's Raincoat</i> (1989) by Robert Crais             |
| <i>Motor City Blues</i> (1980) by Loren D. Estleman             |
| <i>Rafferty's Rules</i> (1987) by W. Glenn Duncan               |
| <i>Riding the Rap</i> (1995) by Elmore Leonard                  |
| <i>Right as Rain</i> (2001) by George Pelacanos                 |
| <i>Savage Season</i> (1990) by Joe R. Lansdale                  |
| <i>Shadow of a Broken Man</i> (1977) by George Chesbro          |
| <i>The Sins of the Fathers</i> (1976) by Lawrence Block         |
| <i>The Snatch</i> (1971) by Bill Pronzini                       |
| <i>The Spellman Files</i> (2007) by Lisa Lutz                   |
| <i>Stardust Trail</i> (2020) by J. R. Sanders                   |
| <i>True Detective</i> (1983) by Max Allan Collins               |
| <i>Walking the Perfect Square</i> (2001) by Reed Farrel Coleman |
| <i>When the Sacred Ginmill Closes</i> (1986) by Lawrence Block  |
| <i>When Christmas</i> (2021) by Andrew Klavan                   |
| <i>The Wrong Side of Goodbye</i> (2017) by Michael Connelly     |

### Heist Fiction

Also known as “caper mysteries,” this subset features the execution of a particularly arduous undertaking, often dubious or illegal, the success of which depends on skill and meticulous planning. Similar to a police procedural, these stories depict criminals as the colorful protagonists and the process of carrying out acts of crime, often thefts of heavily guarded, precious items. The stories offer intricate details of the criminal underworld from the perspective of those inhabit it. This subset usually focuses on cleverness and misdirection, as well as delivering humor and a sense of high-flying adventure. The police investigation attempting to prevent or solve the crime

may also be chronicled, but it is not the primary focus of the story. This subset may blend with **suspense fiction**. Richard Stark’s *The Hunter* (1962) is a classic example.

### Common Elements

|                   |
|-------------------|
| Gentleman thieves |
| Armed robbers     |
| Thefts            |
| Swindles          |
| Kidnappings       |

|            |
|------------|
| Humor      |
| Audacity   |
| Cleverness |
| Adventure  |

### Modern Literary Examples

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|--|
| <i>Burglars Can't Be Choosers</i> (1977) by Lawrence Block |
| <i>Crashed</i> (2010) by Timothy Hallinan                  |
| <i>Heist Society</i> (2010) by Ally Carter                 |
| <i>The Hot Rock</i> (1970) by Donald E.                    |

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|---|
| Westlake  |
| <i>The Switch</i> (1978) by Elmore Leonard        |
| <i>Thick as Thieves</i> (2020) by Sandra Brown    |
| <i>The Two Minute Rule</i> (2006) by Robert Crais |

## Historical Mysteries

This subset combines elements of mystery and **suspense fiction** with **historical fiction**. The main focus of historical mysteries is usually the solving of a crime or mystery, often murder, within a specific historical context. The mystery is the driving force of the story while the history adds depth and complexity. The best authors in this sub-genre meticulously research the time period and incorporate historical events, cultures, and characters to create an immersive reading experience. Melville Davisson Post’s “The Angel of the Lord” (1911) is considered by some scholars to be the first example of this subset. Agatha Christie’s *Death Comes as the End* (1944) and John Dickson Carr’s *The Bride of Newgate* (1950) are classic examples.

### Common Elements

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|-------------------------------|
| Historical eras               |
| Historical accuracy           |
| History enhancing the mystery |

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| Suspenseful storytelling                  |
| Innovative investigative methods          |
| The thrill of unraveling a complex puzzle |

### Modern Literary Examples

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| <i>The Alienist</i> (1994) by Caleb Carr                   |
| <i>The Beekeeper's Apprentice</i> (1994) by Laurie R. King |
| <i>The Bone Garden</i> (2007) by Tess                      |

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| Gerritsen  |
| <i>Canaletto and the Case of Westminster Bridge</i> (1997) by Janet Laurence |
| <i>The Cater Street Hangman</i> (1979) by                                    |

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| Anne Perry   |
| <i>Crocodile on the Sandbank</i> (1975) by Elizabeth Peters  |
| <i>Curious Toys</i> (2019) by Elizabeth Hand                 |
| <i>Dead Dead Girls</i> (2021) by Nekesa Afia                 |
| <i>Deadly Inheritance</i> (2012) by Janet Laurence           |
| <i>The Devil in the Marshalsea</i> (2014) by Antonia Hodgson |
| <i>Dissolution</i> (2003) by C. J. Sansom                    |
| <i>The Face of a Stranger</i> (1990) by Anne Perry           |
| <i>The Golden Tresses of the Dead</i> (2019) by Alan Bradley |
| <i>Her Royal Spyness</i> (2007) by Rhys Bowen                |
| <i>Imperium</i> (2006) by Robert Harris                      |
| <i>The Lost Girls of Paris</i> (2019) by Pam Jenoff          |
| <i>Maisie Dobbs</i> (2003) by Jacqueline Winspear            |
| <i>Medicus</i> (2007) by Ruth Downie                         |
| <i>A Morbid Taste for Bones</i> (1977) by Ellis              |

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| Peters  |
| <i>Murphy's Law</i> (2001) by Rhys Bowen  |
| <i>The Name of the Rose</i> (1980) by Umberto Eco   |
| <i>The Owl Killers</i> (2009) by Karen Maitland   |
| <i>The Paragon Hotel</i> (2019) by Lyndsay Faye   |
| <i>Pardonable Lies</i> (2005) by Jacqueline Winspear  |
| <i>A Rare Interest in Corpses</i> (2006) by Ann Granger   |
| <i>See What I Have Done</i> (2017) by Sarah Schmidt   |
| <i>The Seven Wonders</i> (2012) by Steven Saylor  |
| <i>Stolen Away</i> (1991) by Max Allan Collins  |
| <i>A Study in Scarlet Women</i> (2017) by Sherry Thomas   |
| <i>The Suspicions of Mr. Whicher, or The Murder at Road Hill House</i> (2008) by Kate Summerscale |
| <i>A Test of Wills</i> (1996) by Charles Todd   |

## Howdunit Mysteries

Also known as the “howcatchem” style. An inversion of the classic whodunit, this subset allows the reader to know the identity of the perpetrator from the beginning. Instead, the story revolves around the manner in which the guilty party commits the crime, attempts to cover up their involvement, and is subsequently caught by the detective. This format is often called a procedural (not to be confused with the police procedural) since it focuses on the procedure of the investigation rather than the solution. The characters, the plot, and the details of the case (e.g., culprit’s identity and motive, crime scene location, etc.) and its eventual conclusion need to be complex enough to hold a reader’s interest, yet be realistically solvable. R. Austin Freeman’s “The Signing Bone” (1912) began this style, and Frances Iles’s *Malice Aforethought* (1931), Philip MacDonald’s *Murder Gone Mad* (1931), Freeman Wills Crofts’s *Antidote to Venom* (1938), Roger Bax’s *Blueprint for Murder* (1948), and Ira Levin’s *A Kiss Before Dying* (1953) are early examples. Demonstrating the cross-over appeal of the mystery genre, Alfred Bester’s *The Demolished Man* (1953) is an inverted detective story set in the far future.

## Common Elements

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| Explicit reveal of crime and perpetrator in beginning |
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| Emphasis on how the crime was committed |
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| Examination of motive                     |
| Focus on detective's attempt to solve the |

|         |
|---------|
| mystery |
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### Modern Literary Examples

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| <i>The Crossing</i> (2015) by Michael Connelly   |
| <i>A Demon in My View</i> (1976) by Ruth Rendell |
| <i>Mr. Mercedes</i> (2014) by Stephen King       |

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| <i>The Scarecrow</i> (2009) by Michael Connelly |
| <i>Winter Prey</i> (1993) by John Sandford      |

### Locked Room Mysteries

Also known as “puzzle mysteries,” this is a narrow subset in which a crime is committed in ostensibly incredible circumstances, such as a location that seems impossible to enter or exit without being noticed (e.g., a hotel, an island, estates, or remote towns). The strange details and sense of urgency make catching the culprit difficult. The detective must use careful observation and extraordinary logic to solve the mystery. Edgar Allen Poe created this subset with his short story “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” (1841). Wilkie Collins’s *The Moonstone* (1868), Arthur Conan Doyle’s “The Adventure of the Speckled Band” (1892), Israel Zangwill’s *The Big Bow Mystery* (1892), Gaston Leroux’s *The Mystery of the Yellow Room* (1907), Mary Roberts Rinehart’s *The Circular Staircase* (1908), Ear Derr Biggers’s *The House Without a Key* (1925), S. S. Van Dine’s *The Benson Murder Case* (1925), Stuart Palmer’s *The Penguin Pool Murder* (1931), Ellery Queen’s *The Chinese Orange Mystery* (1934) and *The King is Dead* (1951), John Dickson Carr’s *The Three Coffins* (1935) and *The Case of the Constant Suicides* (1941), Clayton Brown’s *Death from a Top Hat* (1938), Agatha Christie’s *And Then There Were None* (1939), Anthony Boucher’s *Nine Times Nine* (1940), Hake Talbot’s *Rim of the Pit* (1944), Edmund Crispin’s *The Case of the Gilded Fly* (1944), Christianna Brand’s *Suddenly at His Residence* (1946) and *Death of Jezebel* (1948), Seishi Yokomizo’s *The Honjin Murders* (1946), Derek Smith’s *Whistle Up the Devil* (1953), and Helen McCoy’s *Mr. Splitfoot* (1969) are early examples.

### Common Elements

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| Apparently unsolvable crimes           |
| Crime scenes in inaccessible locations |

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|------------------------------|
| Clever plots                 |
| False clues (“red herrings”) |

### Modern Literary Examples

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| <i>Bloodhounds</i> (1996) by Peter Lovesey                   |
| <i>Breathless</i> (2022) by Amy McCullough                   |
| <i>The Crimson Frog</i> (1988) by Paul Halter                |
| <i>The Decagon House Murderers</i> (1987) by Yukito Ayatsuji |
| <i>Her Dark Lies</i> (2021) by J. T. Ellison                 |

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| <i>Death in the Family</i> (2020) by Tessa Wegert  |
| <i>The Dying Game</i> (2017) by Åsa Avdic          |
| <i>The Hunting Party</i> (2018) by Lucy Foley      |
| <i>Invisible Green</i> (1977) by John Sladek       |
| <i>La Septième hypothèse</i> (1991) by Paul Halter |
| <i>Malice</i> (1996) by Keigo Higashino            |

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| <i>No Exit</i> (2017) by Taylor Adams                   |
| <i>One of the Girls</i> (2022) by Lucy Clarke           |
| <i>The Sanatorium</i> (2021) by Sarah Pearse            |
| <i>Shiver</i> (2021) by Allie Reynolds                  |
| <i>Snowblind</i> (2010) by Ragnar Jonasson              |
| <i>They All Fall Down</i> (2019) by Rachel Howzell Hall |

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| <i>The Tokyo Zodiac Murders</i> (1981) by Soji Shimada    |
| <i>Under Lock and Skeleton Key</i> (2022) by Gigi Pandian |
| <i>An Unwanted Guest</i> (2018) by Shari Lapena           |
| <i>The Woman in Cabin 10</i> (2017) by Ruth Ware          |

## Paranormal Mystery

Also known as “occult detective fiction.” Often overlapping with **fantasy fiction** and **paranormal fiction**, these stories contain traditional mystery tropes, with additional supernatural elements. For example, a ghost or otherwise supernatural being may be responsible for a strange crime or murder. The detective is often depicted as being psychic or endowed with supernatural abilities. Settings often include a magical underworld. They can be part of the cozy mystery subset when presented without extensive gore or violence. Fitz James O’Brien’s “The Pot of Tulips” (1855), Sheridan Le Fanu’s “Green Tea” (1872), William Hope Hodgson’s “The Gateway of the Monsters” (1910), and Peter Saxon’s *The Curse of Rathlaw* (1968) are classic examples.

### Common Elements

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|------------------------------|
| Deduction                    |
| Suspects                     |
| False clues (“red herrings”) |
| Ghosts                       |
| Curses                       |

|                  |
|------------------|
| Vampires         |
| Werewolves       |
| Djinn            |
| Undead creatures |
| Monsters         |

### Modern Literary Examples

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| <i>Abby Cooper, Psychic Eye</i> (2004) by Victoria Laurie              |
| <i>Curse of the Black Pharaoh</i> (1989) by Lin Carter                 |
| <i>The Chronicles of Lucius Leffing</i> (1977) by Joseph Payne Brennan |
| <i>The Dark Days Club</i> (2017) by Alison Goodman                     |
| <i>The Devil’s Footsteps</i> (1976) by John Burke                      |
| <i>Dirk Gently’s Holistic Detective Agency</i> (1987) by Douglas Adams |
| <i>Every Dead Thing</i> (1999) by John Connolly                        |
| <i>Fated</i> (2012) by Benedict Jacka                                  |
| <i>The First Prophet</i> (2012) by Kay Hooper                          |

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|---|
| <i>Half-Resurrection Blues</i> (2015) by Daniel José Older                  |
| <i>The Haunted Earth</i> (1973) by Dean Koontz                              |
| <i>In the Company of Witches</i> (2021) by Auralee Wallace                  |
| <i>Loose Ends</i> (2012) by Terri Reid                                      |
| <i>Midnight Riot</i> (2011) by Ben Aaronovitch                              |
| <i>Secondhand Spirits</i> (2009) by Juliet Blackwell                        |
| <i>Spellbound</i> (2019) by Allie Therin                                    |
| <i>Storm Front</i> (2000) by Jim Butcher                                    |
| <i>The Strange Case of the Alchemist’s Daughter</i> (2017) by Theodora Goss |
| <i>Strange Practice</i> (2017) by Vivian Shaw                               |

## Police Procedurals

A subset in which police detectives pursue a criminal through hard work, skill, and determination. The point of view may switch back and forth between that of the detective(s) and that of the criminal(s). A core element is the methodical routine taken to solve the crime, which is grounded in a realistic portrayal of police work. Aiding the dogged protagonist are other detectives, uniformed policemen, medical examiners, forensic experts, psychologists, sketch artists, prosecutors, and other members of law enforcement. Some novels explore the inner lives, motives, strengths, and weaknesses of the investigators as much as, if not more than, the crime in question. As writer Joseph Wambaugh noted, “The best crime stories are not about how cops work on cases but about how cases work on cops.” In other books, the detective is a loner and/or a rogue who breaks procedure or the law to catch the perpetrator. They are frequently reprimanded by their superiors and clash with outside characters (e.g., federal agents, prosecutors, journalists). Many authors have experience as crime reporters and consult with real-life law enforcement officers, both of which imparts a strong sense of realism. Georges Simenon’s *The Strange Case of Peter the Left* (1931), John Creasey’s *Inspector West Takes Charge* (1940), Lawrence Sanders’s *Victim* (1945), Hillary Waugh’s *Last Seen Wearing* (1952), J. J. Marric’s *Gideon’s Day* (1955), Ed McBain’s *Cop Hater* (1956), and H. R. F. Keating’s *The Perfect Murder* (1964) are classic examples.

### Common Elements

|                          |
|--------------------------|
| Dedicated policemen      |
| Clever criminals         |
| Crime scenes             |
| Methodology of detection |
| Squad rooms              |
| Morgues                  |

|                                  |
|----------------------------------|
| Autopsies                        |
| Courtrooms                       |
| Search warrants                  |
| Interrogations                   |
| Legal restrictions and procedure |

### Modern Literary Examples

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| <i>Assumption</i> (2011) by Percival Everett       |
| <i>The Black Echo</i> (1992) by Michael Connelly   |
| <i>The Blessing Way</i> (1970) by Tony Hillerman   |
| <i>Buried</i> (2020) by Lynda La Plante            |
| <i>Close to the Bone</i> (1992) by David Wiltse    |
| <i>The Cold Dish</i> (2004) by Craig Johnson       |
| <i>The Couple Next Door</i> (2016) by Shari Lapena |
| <i>Dead Simple</i> (2005) by Peter James           |
| <i>Faceless Killers</i> (1991) by Henning Mankell  |

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| <i>In the Woods</i> (2007) by Tana French                          |
| <i>Knots and Crosses</i> (1987) by Ian Rankin                      |
| <i>Last Bus to Woodstock</i> (1975) by Colin Dexter                |
| <i>McGarr and the Politician’s Wife</i> (1977) by Bartholomew Gill |
| <i>The Mind’s Eye</i> (1993) by Håkan Nesser                       |
| <i>Naked in Death</i> (1995) by J. D. Robb                         |
| <i>The Neon Rain</i> (1987) by James Lee Burke                     |
| <i>The New Centurions</i> (1970) by Joseph Wambaugh                |
| <i>The Ranger</i> (2011) by Ace Atkins                             |



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| <i>The Ritual Bath</i> (1986) by Faye Kellerman    |
| <i>Rules of Prey</i> (1989) by John Sandford       |
| <i>Run For Your Life</i> (2009) by James Patterson |
| <i>Sleepyhead</i> (2001) by Mark Billingham        |
| <i>Someone Else's Skin</i> (2014) by Sarah         |

|   |
|---|
| Hilary  |
| <i>Spider Woman's Daughter</i> (2013) by Anne Hillerman |
| <i>Tularosa</i> (1996) by Michael McGarrity             |
| <i>Wicked Game</i> (2016) by Matt Johnson               |
| <i>Wife of the Gods</i> (2009) by Kwei Quarty           |

## Whydunit

A subset in which the plot explores the psychological and emotional motivations of the characters. The focus of these stories is the protagonist and the reader discovering not only the identity of the perpetrator, but also their reasons for committing the crime. As with other detective fiction, the narrative depicts the investigation, as clues are discovered, suspects are questioned, observations are made, and conclusions are drawn; all of which moves toward answering the open question of *why*. In order to retain the suspense and reader interest, progress must be measured, with complications, more questions, conflict, and challenges impeding the resolution. As the protagonist comes closer to the truth, the danger increases. Often, the detective, whether professional or amateur, develops a strong personal connection to solving the case. This can lead to them violating society's rules, or sacrificing their own moral code, in order to know the final clue. Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (1866), Agatha Christie's *A Murder is Announced* (1950) are early examples. Whydunits can easily blend with **psychological fiction** titles that involve a crime.

### Common Elements

|                        |
|------------------------|
| Detective              |
| Antagonist             |
| Character-driven plots |

|                    |
|--------------------|
| Secret motives     |
| Dark turn or twist |

### Modern Literary Examples

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|--|
| <i>Anything for You</i> (2019) by Saul Black                       |
| <i>The Crucifix Killer</i> (2009) by Chris Carter                  |
| <i>The Devotion of Suspect X</i> (2011) by Keigo Higashino         |
| <i>The Illicit Happiness of Other People</i> (2012) by Manu Joseph |
| <i>A Judgment in Stone</i> (1977) by Ruth Rendell                  |
| <i>The Majesties</i> (2020) by Tiffany Tsao                        |

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| <i>My Lovely Wife</i> (2019) by Samantha Downing     |
| <i>The Perfect Nanny</i> (2016) by Leila Slimani     |
| <i>The Secret Place</i> (2014) by Tana French        |
| <i>Still Life</i> (2006) by Louise Penny             |
| <i>Water Touching Stone</i> (2001) by Eliot Pattison |
| <i>The Witch Elm</i> (2018) by Tana French           |