

# BARTON

## LIBRARY

*Dare to Know*

### Domestic Fiction

*Works of fiction that feature home and family life.*

Also known as “domestic realism” and “family fiction,” this genre originally focused on the decisions, moral character, and domestic lives of young, typically middle-class Victorian women, as they make their way in the world. The plot and conflict of these stories often centered around courtship, family life, marriage, and childbearing. The genre fell out of favor in the late nineteenth century, but was later revived to examine evolving forms of modern literary realism and popular feminist ideas.

Currently, the genre focuses on the tensions and drama of family relationships, either functional or dysfunctional. These stories may explore the complexities of family dynamics, the struggles of parenthood, and the challenges of balancing family and career. This reworking of the genre to reflect modern times can lead domestic fiction authors to use elements from **humorous fiction** and **psychological fiction**.

Catherine Maria Sedgwick’s *A New-England Tale* (1822) is considered the first novel in this genre. Susan Warner’s *The Wide, Wide World* (1850), Charles Dickens’s *Bleak House* (1853), Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women* (1868), John Galsworthy’s *The Man of Property* (1906), Luigi Pirandello’s *Her Husband* (1911), Pearl S. Buck’s *The Good Earth* (1931), Stella Gibbons’s *Cold Comfort Fiction* (1932), Betty Smith’s *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* (1943), Evelyn Waugh’s *Brideshead Revisited* (1945), Eudora Welty’s *Delta Wedding* (1946), Elizabeth Spencer’s *Fire in the Morning* (1948), Saul Bellow’s *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953), James Agee’s *A Death in the Family* (1957), and Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960) are classic examples.

### Common Elements

Marriage
Family bonds
Power of friendship
Understanding the home
Troubled domestic situations
Educational journeys

Distinctions between home and outside environments
Personal strength
Courage to endure adversity
Wit

### Benefits of Reading

Allows readers to reflect on love, family, and relationships
Provides readers with different perspectives into the concepts of home and family

Cautions readers about the resentments and conflicts that can fester inside a family
Offers reader a venue for social satire

### Modern Literary Examples

<i>Academy Street</i> (2015) by Mary Costello	<i>Land of Milk and Honey</i> (2012) by Anthony Barcellos
<i>After This</i> (2006) by Alice McDermott	<i>Little Fires Everywhere</i> (2017) by Celeste Ng
<i>American Appetites</i> (1989) by Joyce Carol Oates	<i>Maine</i> (2011) by J. Courtney Sullivan
<i>Angle of Repose</i> (1971) by Wallace Stegner	<i>Malibu Rising</i> (2021) by Taylor Jenkins Reid
<i>Anywhere but Here</i> (1986) by Mona Simpson	<i>The Midnight Library</i> (2020) by Matt Haig
<i>Ask Again, Yes</i> (2019) by Mary Beth Keane	<i>Mockingbird</i> (2010) by Kathryn Erskine
<i>August</i> (2020) by Callan Wink	<i>Pachinko</i> (2017) by Min Jin Lee
<i>The Aviator's Wife</i> (2013) by Melanie Benjamin	<i>The Progress of Love</i> (1986) by Alice Munro
<i>Be Frank with Me</i> (2016) by Julia Claiborne Johnson	<i>The Promise</i> (2021) by Damon Galgut
<i>Chronicle of a Death Foretold</i> (1981) by Gabriel García Márquez	<i>Rabbit Cake</i> (2017) by Annie Hartnett
<i>Commonwealth</i> (2016) by Ann Patchett	<i>The Ranvenscar Dynasty</i> (2006) by Barabara Taylor Bradford
<i>The Girl Who Wrote in Silk</i> (2015) by Kelli Estes	<i>Rich Man, Poor Man</i> (1970) by Irwin Shaw
<i>The Great Alone</i> (2018) by Kristin Hannah	<i>A River Runs Through It and Other Stories</i> (1976) by Norman McLean
<i>The Great Santini</i> (1976) by Pat Conroy	<i>Sarah's Girls</i> (2006) by Lenore McComas Coberly
<i>Heartburn</i> (1983) by Nora Ephron	<i>Saving Missy</i> (2020) by Beth Morrey
<i>Hello Beautiful</i> (2023) by Ann Napolitano	<i>The Secret Life of Bees</i> (2001) by Sue Monk Kidd
<i>Homeland Elegies</i> (2020) by Ayad Akhtar	<i>Sharp Objects</i> (2006) by Gillian Flynn
<i>House of Sand and Fog</i> (1999) by Andre Dubus III	<i>Skins</i> (2022) by Adrian C. Louis
<i>The House of the Spirits</i> (2015) by Isabel Allende	<i>Telegraph Avenue</i> (2012) by Michael Chabon
<i>How I Got Him Back</i> (2013) by Valerie Sayers	<i>The Transit of Venus</i> (1980) by Shirley Hazzard
<i>Independence Day</i> (1995) by Richard Ford	<i>The Weight of Water</i> (1997) by Anita Shreve
<i>The Joy Luck Club</i> (1989) by Amy Tan	<i>Where'd You Go Bernadette</i> (2012) by Maria Semple
<i>Juliet in August</i> (2012) by Dianne Warren	<i>You Will Know Me</i> (2016) by Megan Abbott