

BARTON

LIBRARY

Dare to Know

Thrillers

Fiction in which the reader is kept on tenterhooks by plots that feature a build-up of suspense, tension, uncertainty, menace, and anxiety.

This genre is usually defined by the dark, engrossing mood elicited and the general focus on plot, the tone of danger and sudden violence, the quick pace, the abundance of physical action, and the high stakes of the outcome. They focus on characters being in danger or on the verge of discovering the villain's master plan. While still considered thrillers, more suspenseful stories slowly build tension and convey feelings of anxiety, heightened anticipation, and uncertainty before the resolution. Often, the protagonist must fight for his or her survival, stop a villain or halt a destructive conspiracy, or save the victim of a crime. In many cases, protagonists are current or former member of the regular armed forces, special operations forces, or an elite government agency. Sometimes, they are part of a team of experts. Other times, main characters are scholars, journalists, or amateur investigators who stumble into the role of toppling secret societies or conspiracies. They use their wits and specialty knowledge to resolve the situation, with or without the help of authorities. Villains are often internationally located and rule a large, powerful organization or entity, and the hunt for them spans continents. Settings may include urban areas, deserts, jungles, polar regions, and the high seas. Eric Ambler's *Background to Danger* (1937), James M. Cain's *Mildred Pierce* (1941), Vera Caspary's *Bedella* (1945), and Donald Hamilton's *Death of a Citizen* (1960) are classic examples.

Common Elements

False clues ("red herrings")
Plot twists
Cliffhangers
Suspenseful excitement
Focus on physical danger

Exhilarating action sequences
High-speed vehicle chases
Close quarters combat
Significant body counts
Rumors

Lies
Secret histories
Revenge
Kidnappings and ransoms

Benefits of Reading

Satisfies readers' curiosity for the unknown
Allows readers to vicariously experience danger and intrigue
Presents readers with an opportunity to solve puzzles

Permits readers to be unsettled or alarmed in a safe environment
Engages readers' brains in an active experience
Stimulates readers' cognitive abilities
Provides readers with stress relief

Upholds readers' shared values and principles
Encourages readers to examine their personal beliefs and values

Reminds readers that society needs heroes who make difficult choices and sacrifices

Modern Literary Examples

<i>Arc Light</i> (1994) by Eric L. Haley
<i>Artic Gambit</i> (2018) by Larry Bond
<i>The Au Pair</i> (2019) by Emma Rous
<i>The Circle</i> (2014) by Dave Eggers
<i>Clark and Division</i> (2021) by Naomi Hirahara
<i>The Cleaner</i> (2007) by Brett Battles
<i>Columbus Affair</i> (2012) by Steve Berry
<i>Connections in Death</i> (2019) by J. D. Robb
<i>Covenant</i> (2011) by Dean Crawford
<i>Crossfire</i> (1985) by J. C. Pollock
<i>Crucible</i> (2019) by James Rollins
<i>The Cuban Affair</i> (2017) by Nelson DeMille
<i>Dark Places</i> (2009) by Gillian Flynn
<i>Dead Lines</i> (2004) by Greg Bear
<i>The Eiger Sanction</i> (1972) by Trevanian
<i>Freedom Road</i> (2019) by William Lasher
<i>Ghoster</i> (2019) by Jason Arnopp
<i>The Girl with All the Gifts</i> (2014) by M. R. Carey
<i>Graveyard of Memories</i> (2014) by Barry Eisler
<i>The Gray Man</i> (2009) by Mark Greaney
<i>Hawke</i> (2003) by Ted Bell
<i>Island 731</i> (2013) by Jeremy Robinson
<i>The Kill Artist</i> (2000) by Daniel Silva
<i>Kill Zone</i> (2007) by Jack Coughlin
<i>The Last House on Needless Street</i> (2021) by Catriona Ward
<i>The Line Between</i> (2019) by Tosca Lee
<i>The Lions of Lucerne</i> (2002) by Brad Thor

<i>Little Black Lies</i> (2015) by Sandra Block
<i>Lonesome Animals</i> (2012) by Bruce Holbert
<i>The Lost Man</i> (2019) by Jane Harper
<i>Most Wanted</i> (2016) by Lisa Scottoline
<i>The Negotiator</i> (1989) by Frederick Forsyth
<i>Panacea</i> (2016) by F. Paul Wilson
<i>The Poacher's Son</i> (2010) by Paul Doiron
<i>Recursion</i> (2019) by Blake Couch
<i>Run Before the Wind</i> (1983) by Stuart Woods
<i>The Scroll</i> (2011) by Grant R. Jeffrey and Alton L. Gansky
<i>The Shining Girls</i> (2013) by Lauren Beukes
<i>Six Days of the Condor</i> (1974) by James Grady
<i>Such Small Hands</i> (2017) by Andrés Barba
<i>The Sun Down Hotel</i> (2020) by Simone St. James
<i>The Templar Legacy</i> (2006) by Steve Berry
<i>The Terminal List</i> (2018) by Jack Carr
<i>The Tourist</i> (2017) by Olen Steinhauer
<i>The Truth About the Harry Quebert Affair</i> (2014) by Joël Dicker
<i>Wayfaring Stranger</i> (2014) by James Lee Burke
<i>The White Van</i> (2014) by Patrick Hoffman
<i>The Woman in the Window</i> (2018) by A. J. Finn