

Unit 0 – Literary Genres

Lingua e Cultura Inglese
Classe III A

What is Literature?

- It is a body of written **works**.
- The name has traditionally been applied to those imaginative works of poetry and prose distinguished by the intentions of their authors and the perceived aesthetic excellence of their execution. Literature may be classified according to a variety of systems, including language, national origin, historical period, genre, and subject matter.

What is a literary genre?

- A literary genre is a category of literary composition. Genres may be determined by [literary technique](#), [tone](#), [content](#), or even, as in the case of fiction, length.
- A **genre** is a broad term that translates from the French to mean 'kind' or 'type.' In entertainment, this can translate to horror, romance, science fiction, etc. In general, these types differ for all sorts of reasons, from the actions in their plots to the feelings they elicit from the audience. However, in literature, there are some more defined genres. It is important to know which genre a piece of work falls into because the reader will already have certain expectations before he even begins to read.
- Genre, in broad terms, refers to any works that share certain characteristics. If enough characteristics are in common, then the pieces are said to be in the same genre. In literature, there are four main genres to help the reader focus their expectations for the piece, though these genres can be broken down even further
- The main distinction is between Prose and Fiction, but we can recognize also other general genres such as Epic, Tragedy, Comedy and so on.....

Prose

- Prose is the ordinary medium through which we communicate;
- There are several types of prose: descriptive prose, dialogue or monologue, historical, scientific, journalistic, epistolary ecc..
- Prose has 6 main structural features: Story, plot, setting, character, narrator and point of view.

Story and plot

- The **story** is the description of a connected series of events which usually involve one or more characters and settings
- The **plot** is the way in which the events that make up a story are organized into a narrative.
- **Story** and **plot** don't always coincide because a story may be told through different plots, for example by flashback.

Setting

- Is the place where the story happens and includes the time when it takes place.
- The place may be known or invented background and can include outdoor or indoor scenery (Paris, London, exotic places).
- The social setting analyses details of behaviour, dress.....
- Read the text g2

Characters

- Are the people represented in a story.
- There may be main and secondary characters.
- Some of them are types and others realistic.
- **Round characters** show psychological awareness and are called dynamic; **Flat characters** show little developments and are called static.
- Text G3

Narrator and point of view

- These features are strictly connected each other.
- All the stories are narrated but the narrator is not always identified with the novelist. He has sometimes a name, but he is often anonymous.
- There are several types of narrator, each with a different **point of view**:

- First person narrator: He/she speaks as “I” and is usually the main character of the novel. He is typically found in letters, autobiographies, diaries;
- Third person narrator: He/she is not usually part of the story and he introduces the characters, describes what happens and may do comments on the story (obtrusive narrator), while the more impersonal narrator never intervenes (unobtrusive).

- With the third person narration the reader has the impression of listening to an **omniscient narrator** who controls all the characters. He knows everything in the story.
- BUT third person narrators can also be **non-omniscient** when he only tells the story and without giving additional informations (more common since the end of 19^o century).
- **G4**

Fiction

- With the term fiction we refer to both the novel and the short story.
- Both can include the different types of prose listed before, but to have fiction they must be kept together (there must be a story, at least a character, a description of place and time).