

Definition of genre

Creative writing, a form of artistic expression, draws on the imagination to convey meaning through the use of imagery, narrative, and drama. This is in contrast to analytic or pragmatic forms of writing. This genre includes poetry, fiction (novels, short stories), scripts, screenplays, and [creative non-fiction](#).

Elements¹

- *Voice*: An author's unique style and way of saying things. You should be able to recognize an author's written voice the way you recognize a person's spoken voice. In creative writing, one goal is to develop your written voice. Your voice should come across as natural, clear, and consistent, as unique to you as a fingerprint. Wordiness, awkward use of language, awkward sentence structure, and lack of clarity all serve to muffle the voice of the author.
- *Characters*: The people or actors (e.g. animals, inanimate objects, forces of nature) who carry out the action of the story. Character development is the art of imagining and portraying characters in enough detail that they seem real both to the author and the audience.
- *Point-of-view*: The narrator's perspective on the characters and occurrences in the piece of writing. Whose voice is telling the story? Most fiction is written in first person, an eyewitness account, or in third person, where the narrator describes things that happened to other people.
- For elements specific to fiction, see: <http://web.archive.org/web/20071111054413/http://www.cas.usf.edu/lis/lis6585/class/litelem.html>
- For terms specific to poetry, see our [Poetry Explication](#) guide.
- For elements specific to creative non-fiction, see our [Creative Non-Fiction](#) guide.

Questions to ask

- Does the imagery work? Can the reader visualize the scene, the moment?
- Is the language clean? Does it flow smoothly? Are sound effects such as rhyme, alliteration, and repetition intentional? Effective? Does it have a clear voice? (See above.)
- Does the reader care about the characters? Are they sufficiently complex and developed?

¹The descriptions for character and point-of-view are adapted from Orson Scott Card's book *Characters and Viewpoint* (1999).

- Is the piece engaging? Is it alive all the way through or are there dead moments when the reader quits paying attention?
- Is it unique? Cliché is the universal deadener of creative writing. You must find fresh ways to say things, new stories to tell, or new ways to tell old stories.
- Can you follow the time flow, the sequence of events?

Helpful Links

<http://www.6ftferrets.com/index.html>

The 6' Ferrets Writers Group shares tips for writing and for forming successful writing groups.

www.critters.org

The Critters Workshop, a high quality online writers group for writers of fantasy, science fiction, and horror.

<http://www.sfwaweb.org/beware>

Writers Beware. There are many online scams and money motivated web sites trawling the internet for gullible writers. This web page helps warn writers of scams and teaches street wisdom for the online writing world.

<http://www.cla.wayne.edu/polisci/kdk/general/sources/zinsser.htm>

Excerpts from *Writing Well* by William Zinsser.

Examples:

<http://www.moreview.org>

The Missouri Review is a well-known literary journal with archives online.

<http://www.poems.com>

Poetry Daily, an online anthology of contemporary poetry. The daily poem is selected for its topical or seasonal interest, as well as for its literary quality. Included with each poem are information about the poet and attribution of the poem's source.