



The Lantern English Co.  
The Creative Writer

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## Exploring Genres – Syllabus

**Course Description:** If you've ever been to a library, you've seen a sample of the plethora of genres used in creative writing. Science fiction, fantasy, historical fiction, young adult—there seems to be an infinite number! This course will provide an introduction to nine of the most common fictional genres, with an eye towards expanding the student's writing repertoire and helping him or her locate favorite genres to write. *Prerequisite: Intro to Creative Writing or equivalent writing experience.*

**REQUIREMENT:** Students must be willing to write age-appropriate pieces in the eight genres listed below (with their choice of romance or paranormal).

### Course Outline:

**Week One:** The Catch-All—Young Adult (YA)

**Week Two:** Whole New Worlds—Fantasy

**Week Three:** Question Everything—Mystery

**Week Four:** Finding Adventure—Action/Adventure

**Week Five:** Looking Back—Historical Fiction

**Week Six:** Looking Ahead—Science Fiction (Sci-Fi)

**Week Seven:** The Fall—Dystopian

**Week Eight:** Double Feature—Romance & Paranormal

**Grading Information:** All assignments will be graded using *The Creative Writer Rubric* and averaged to receive a final course grade.



## **Exploring Genres**

### **Lesson One: The Catch-All—Young Adult (YA)**

#### **SAMPLE LESSON**

(Note: Typically, we split fiction for teenagers into two categories, Teen Fiction and Young Adult. The differentiation is based on age. Teen Fiction is written for readers from the ages of roughly twelve to fifteen, while YA is written for readers from the ages of sixteen to twenty-five. For the sake of simplicity, we are boiling it all down into YA, because that is the category that the majority of you will be reading.)

Let's say that you are walking into your favorite library. Shelves of books stretch out in front of you, each one neatly categorized in lovely rows and saying, "Read me! Read me!" . . . Okay, well, maybe they aren't talking, but each and every one of those books is there for you, the patron, to read.

Now, let's say that you decide to do just that: read. You pick up the fictional book that is nearest to you, and then walk over and grab a novel from the far end of the library. If you started to read both of these books, you wouldn't expect them to be exactly the same. You would discover multifarious differences in the plot, the themes, the characters, the writing style, the setting . . . long story short, these books would in no way be the same. Now, that's pretty obvious. We all know that books are different, right? Every single novel differs from any other novel to which you could compare it. However, many books share overarching similarities, and these similarities are what makes up a genre.

#### **SO, WHAT IS A GENRE, ANYWAY? –**

Excellent question. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines a genre as "a category of artistic, musical, or literary composition characterized by a particular style, form, or content." In fiction, a genre is a category of stories that have major similarities in setting, theme, character, etc. You're probably familiar with most of the genres already: science fiction, fantasy, historical fiction . . .

In this course, we're going to solidify your knowledge of the most popular genres—and learn to write in each of them! Easy, right? Let's get started.

## LET'S TALK YA –

Technically speaking, young adult isn't a genre; it's an age range. Books in the YA range are meant for—you guessed it—young adults. Many YA books are actually in another genre. (Think of *Divergent* by Veronica Roth, or *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins. These young adult stories are both in the dystopian genre.) However, like a genre, books in the YA range have their similarities. The protagonist (read: hero) of the story should always be a teenager.

Also, the story will deal in some degree with problems that most teenagers face—growing up, finding your identity, falling in love for the first time, life in high school, taking the SATs, etc. In *Divergent*, the teenage heroine Tris might not be worrying about college exams, but she does run into several of these YA problems. Throughout the course of the story, she falls in love, takes a test that will determine her future “career,” and leaves her family for the first time.

**YA takes a story—any story—and tells it with teenagers in mind. It is meant to be most relatable to your age range—not little kids, not forty-something business professionals, you.** That's why we are starting here. Most likely, this is the branch of writing with which you are most familiar.

## KEY ELEMENTS –

So, how do we write YA? Simple: **write about what resonates with you**, as a young adult. Have a teenage protagonist face issues that you have faced (or are facing), whether those issues occur in Manhattan or on Mars. You may pick any setting and any plot, so long as it contains relatable motifs like the ones we covered in the last paragraph. (We have listed a few more below to help you out.) **When writing YA, focus on making this story meaningful to you or your friends. You need to relate to your characters and their story.** That's right—it's just that simple.

**Classic YA Elements:** coming of age, understanding or expanding faith/beliefs, first love, first breakup, “rebellion” or struggle with authority, teenagers making difficult choices, high school, bullying, college preparation, choosing a career, standing up beliefs, leaving family/home, death of a loved one, betrayal amongst trusted figures, growing away from childhood goals/friends/affinities, working through a challenge without adult assistance

## EXAMPLES –

Here are several novels which have been/are popular or which we consider to be good examples of the YA “genre.” Obviously, this isn’t a comprehensive list of all great YA. If you’d like more options, your local library is a great place to find examples of YA fiction. **You are not required to read any example books during this course. If you are younger, please check with your parents or another trusted adult before reading any of these novels.** So you know, we will not add novels to the examples category that we would not choose to read ourselves. Even so, there may be parts that we would skim.

If you don’t have the time to read these books (and if you don’t mind spoilers), consider looking up summaries of several. Pay attention to those key YA elements we discussed in the lesson, as well as other aspects which you find relatable.

**YA BOOK SUGGESTIONS:** *Alcatraz Versus the Evil Librarians* by Brandon Sanderson, *Alex Rider: Stormbreaker* by Anthony Horowitz, *Divergent* by Veronica Roth, *Dust Girl* by Sarah Zettel, the *Harry Potter* series by J.K. Rowling (note: the later Harry Potter books would probably be closer to YA, since Harry is only 11 in the first book), *Heist Society* by Ally Carter, *Scarlet* by Marissa Meyer, *The Fault in Our Stars* by John Green, *The Game* by Diana Wynne Jones, *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins, *The Lightning Thief* by Rick Riordan, *The Maze Runner* by James Dashner, *The Princess Diaries* by Meg Cabot, *The Rithmatist* by Brandon Sanderson

### Assignment 1: Young Adult

**Write a piece of young adult fiction of 300 words or more.**

It can be a scene from a novel or it can be a complete short story, but **it must demonstrate young adult characteristics like the ones we discussed in the lesson.** The setting and plot are completely up to you, just remember to write about what resonates with you.

Having trouble writing a “resonant” story? Pick a setting and plot that are familiar to you. Do you live in a small town? Set your story in a small town, whether that town is one thousand years in the future or in the present day. Do you have a pet dog that you love? Include a character with a pet dog. These steps aren’t necessary, but it can make the process easier. **I want you to write about what matters to you.**