

Understanding

Non-Fiction Genres

There are many different genres of text. Take a moment to think about the text you're reading and you'll be able to make some predictions about how it will deliver its messages.

Genre	Features	Thinking Jobs
Journalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aspires to be “objective,” presenting multiple sources and sides to a story May feature a “delayed lede.” Some articles begin with an anecdote and don’t present a claim until a few paragraphs after the start. Claims are often made by sources, not by the author directly. Headlines are often written by people other than the author. They usually, but not always, reveal the claim. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What’s the opening claim? Does it appear immediately? What sides are presented in this article? Are any missing or not presented until late in the article? Which sources seem the most credible? What do they claim? Where are claims stated in the text? Are they stated directly or provided by a source?
Biography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Profiles a notable or historic figure so that readers can better understand their motivations and accomplishments. May be biased. These texts can selectively focus on certain aspects of a person’s life, picking and choosing the moments that make its point about the type of person they were. Sometimes these texts leave out events that are unflattering to the subject. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do I already know about this time period/person? How might it affect my understanding of the text? What events were chosen in this text? What do they reveal about the subject? What does the author want readers to think/feel about the subject? Is it possible there are other aspects to this story? What could these gaps reveal?
Memoir/ Auto biography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as above, but memoir/autobiography is written by the source themselves. They focus on a single person’s POV, so they are biased. These are types of narrative non-fiction, so should be read for themes. 	
Expository Non- Fiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This non-fiction is designed to teach readers about an issue. Often reads like a “textbook” and sounds authoritative. May include subheadings and info-graphics (e.g. charts, maps) to guide the reader. Good expository non-fiction has lots of research and sources behind it, but these sources sometimes aren’t named. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the primary claim and sub-claims in this document? What claims do the info-graphics make and how do they connect to the text?
Narrative Non- Fiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This type of nonfiction presents factual information in a narrative style. Because it uses narrative structure and techniques to convey its messages, it is typically read for themes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What does reading for the characterization, changes, conflicts and craft reveal about the themes in this text?
Speeches/ Persuasive Essays	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usually come from the POV of a single person, designed to convince an audience they are correct or call them to action. Given with a specific audience in mind. Even if we agree with the speaker, that doesn’t mean the text is persuasive. Some texts rely on manipulating readers (e.g. through emotional appeals) instead of convincing us with logic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do I already know about this time period, the speaker, the audience, or the purpose/occasion? How might that affect my understanding of the text? What are the claims and sub-claims of this text? How sound is this argument? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the text use enough relevant evidence to support its claims? Does the text consider and refute counterarguments? Is this text relying on emotional appeals or generalizations, rather than evidence? When I see the text make a claim, what is it doing to make its case? (e.g. is it providing an anecdote, citing an expert, offering an analogy, etc.)

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Literary Fiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Literary fiction often makes multiple claims about life, society, or humanity. Even though literary fiction writes about a specific case, it's often designed to make broader points about universal topics (love, growing up) or conflicts (freedom v. safety, youth v. experience). Usually literary fiction will resolve or attempt to resolve the main conflicts in the text. Themes can often be found by scrutinizing how the conflict is resolved. Setting and figurative language often take on additional importance – offering clues to themes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have I read for the 4 C's: characterization, conflict/resolution, change, and craft? How do these contribute to potential themes in the text? Have I considered how story elements (setting, motifs, secondary characters, changes in the protagonist) might contribute to potential themes? What does the author's diction (word choice) reveal about their potential themes?
Mystery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often centers on a crime (e.g. theft, murder). There is often a criminal and a heroic detective/crimefighter. The text may present a false clue (called a "red herring") to mislead readers about "whodunnit." Usually there is a twist ending where the truth is revealed. 	Thinking jobs or literary fiction, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do I know about each of the characters? Who appears suspicious? Who seems too "squeaky clean"?
Historical Fiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is set in history and based on real events, but details and characters are fiction. May involve fictional accounts of famous figures. Like literary fiction, geared to make a statement about society or humanity, not just the period of history in which it is set. May only tell aspects of a historical event. 	Thinking jobs for literary fiction, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do I already know about this time period? How might it affect my understanding of the text? What aspect of history is the author highlighting for readers and why? Whose point of view is featured in this text? Who is left out?
Dystopian Fiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Portrays a possible future (or past) world similar to our own. Even if the world seems functioning at first, it is quickly revealed to be a nightmare future. Is often warning about some aspect of current society/culture (e.g. reliance on technology, power of the government) by showing what would happen if it is allowed too much power. 	Thinking jobs for literary fiction, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the "rules" of this world? What aspect of the real world are exaggerated? What might this text be warning against?
Allegory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A text that works as a symbolic story, where characters and setting represent things like political figures, religious systems or philosophical viewpoints. In an allegory, events or characters may represent aspects of our own world. 	Thinking jobs or literary fiction, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What might the various aspects in this text symbolize? What message is it sending?
Science Fiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Portrays a futuristic world or one that imagines new technology. Often explores humanity or moral dilemmas despite having a future or alien setting. 	Thinking jobs or literary fiction, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What can we learn about our world by examining the conflicts in this one?
Fantasy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Portrays an imaginary world, often drawing from mythology about the medieval period (e.g. magic, knights). Often involves a quest or struggle against a greater evil. The elements of fantasy are almost completely made up, but often the characters portray real human struggle. 	Thinking jobs or literary fiction, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What can we learn about our world by examining the conflicts in this one?