LITERARY GENRES

Fiction

**Types**
- **fantasy**
  - **Setting**: In a place that does not exist in the real world.
  - **Elements**: Events occur that could not happen in the real world.
  - **Characters**: People, animal, or objects are able to do things they cannot do in the real world.

- **fable**
  - **Setting**: In the distant past or a timeless place.
  - **Elements**: A very short story that usually has only 2 or 3 characters.
  - **Characters**: Often the characters are animals or things that talk and act like humans.

- **fairy tale**
  - **Setting**: In the distant past. Often has an open phrase, “Once upon a time…” or “A very long time ago…”
  - **Elements**: A difficult, sometimes seemingly impossible, problem to solve.
  - **Characters**: Often with magical powers; imaginary characters such as dragons, fairies, giants, elves; royal characters such as queens, princes, etc. The granting of wishes often occurs.
  - **Types**
  - Has a happy ending in which good wins over evil.

- **myth**
  - **Elements**: May explain how something in nature looks or works (example: why the spider spins a web).
  - May explain why people behave in certain ways.
  - **Characters**: Often includes gods or goddesses who interact with humans.

**Format**
- **Novel**
  - long fiction
- **Short Story**
  - short fiction
“tall tales”
- **Setting**: in the recent or distant past.

**Elements**
- humorous exaggeration to tell the adventures of a fictional (or possibly nonfictional) character.
- Build upon improbable incidences and unusual problems that are saved in creative ways.

---

**folk tale**

**Elements**
- Stories passed down from one generation to another. Originally told orally. Reflect the culture in which they originated.
- **Characters**: may include animals or inanimate objects that speak. They often teach a moral or lesson in life.
- Some folk tales called trickster tales are about weak people or tiny animals outwitting their stronger enemies.
- Action builds through repetition. Has an exciting climax at the end. Goodness and intelligence win out over evil and foolishness.
- Told from 3rd person point of view.

---

**legend**
- **Setting**: in the past.

**Elements**
- Tells the story of a hero.
- May be based on facts and real history, but through numerous retellings the hero and his or her deeds become larger than life, and some facts are distorted.

---

**realistic fiction**
- **Setting**: a real place or could be a real place.

**Elements**
- The events in the story could happen in real life.
- **Characters**: behave as people do in real life.

---

**historical fiction**
- **Setting**: some specific period of the past.

**Elements**
- A type of realistic fiction. Often, but not always, the story is based on actual historical events and people of the period.
- The plot reflects events or problems of the period.
- The details about clothing, tools, and food are authentic to the period.
LITERARY GENRES

**Nonfiction**

The opposite of fiction.

True.

Real.

**Narrative**

told as a story

**Elements**

- It may span a person’s whole life, or it may tell about an important part of a person’s life.
- An account of an person’s entire life is almost always told in chronological order (in the time order events occurred).
- Contains a variety of important information about the person’s life. Often tells how the person feels and thinks about things.

**biography**

The true story of someone’s life written by someone else.

**Elements**

- It may span a person’s whole life, or it may tell about an important part of a person’s life.
- An account of an person’s entire life is almost always told in chronological order (in the time order events occurred).
- Contains a variety of important information about the person’s life. Often tells how the person feels and thinks about things.

**autobiography**

The true story of someone’s life written by that person.

**Elements**

- see “biography”

**Essay**

short nonfiction

**Expository**

facts; information

**Writing Styles**

**Types**

- Often includes subheads to organize topics.
- Might contain diagrams, photographs and other illustrations.
- Contains information that can be checked by looking at other sources.

**Format**

- Book
  - long nonfiction
- Essay
  - short nonfiction

**Elements**

- It may span a person’s whole life, or it may tell about an important part of a person’s life.
- An account of an person’s entire life is almost always told in chronological order (in the time order events occurred).
- Contains a variety of important information about the person’s life. Often tells how the person feels and thinks about things.
LITERARY GENRES

Poetry

Writing Styles

Sentences are sometimes broken into parts. Each part is on its own line.

Often contains words that rhyme. The lines often have a rhythm or meter.

Words are sometimes repeated.

Sometimes describes things by comparing them with something else. Often uses figurative, descriptive, and sensory language.

Drama

A serious story.

Intended for representation by actors impersonating the characters and performing the dialogue and action.

A situation or succession of events having the emotional effect characteristic of a play.

Identifying The Literary Genre

1.) Is it fiction or nonfiction
2.) What type of writing is it?
3.) What is the format (length)?
4.) What is the writing style?