

Genres for Kids Books

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Sci-fi is very different from romantic comedy. Likewise, a fable is quite different from a fairytale. So let's pin-down the fine distinctions between different types of children's book genres.

For a more detailed article on how this can enhance your writing, [go here](#).

Children's book genres.

1. **Fable.** This is usually a short story with few characters, and very often the characters are anthropomorphic - animals who behave and speak like humans. There is always an important social lesson to be learned in a fable.

2. **Fairytale.** In a fairytale, the story always involves magic, a character who is evil, and a happy ending. This is the good versus evil type of story, with other-worldly, mysterious factors. Very often (but not always) fairytales are set in a far-away place a long, long time ago. A princess is oftentimes a key character, but not always. The one character that must be in the story is some sort of evil one, sometimes an evil witch.

Artwork by Ryan McGuire.

2b. **Modern Fairytale.** As these are so popular, it's worth noting that modern fairytales are somewhat

different from traditional fairytales in that this newer genre is usually set in the city. Rather than “Once Upon A Time,” the story is about last Tuesday’s fantastic events. Rather than in a far off place, it’s around the corner.

3. **Myth.** This is an origin story, one that explains how and why something today is the way it is. Myths can explain things in nature, or how the world (or something on it) began, or why people act the way they do. Myths often depict illogical, highly emotional behaviors in the story characters, who are often very flawed and have a lesson to learn. As the character learns it, so do we. If the character fails to learn the lesson, we learn by their tragic mistake.

4. **Folktale.** A folktale is any kind of story that is shared in telling aloud and that has been retold by *many generations*. A folktale can be a tall tale, a fairytale, a fable, myth, legend - even a good ghost story.

The word folktale speaks mostly about the way we tell the story rather than the actual genre. It’s a tale told by folks. Folktales can be and often are written down as well.

5. **Legend.** A legend must have some aspect of real historic information in it - a protagonist who really lived at one point. The historical account becomes then a legend because real events are exaggerated, new magical events are added, and the person is lifted to true heroic status. King Arthur was real but the stories about him are not. Robin Hood was real - but the stories about him are not.

Pirate stories are often legends based on real pirates that existed. These have become so popular, that we now have pirate stories that are fairytales.

6. **Trickster Tale.** This is any kind of story about *any* kind of character (anthropomorphic, human, mythical beast or a deity) who has a higher intellect and greater abilities, and uses these to trick other characters in the story. Most often tricksters are playful rather than malicious and while they cause mischief and sometimes havoc, nothing bad ever really happens to them as a result.

Important to remember: the trickster causes things to happen *but without consequence to the trickster*.

7. **Tall Tale.** A make-believe story that is told as if it were true. Most ghost stories fall under this category.

8. **Poetry and Verse.** These are books with stories that rhyme. It can be absolutely any type of story, but the great thing about poetry books for kids is that they support and strengthen language development and memory skills.

9. **Biography.** A biography should be a historical account of a real person or people in real places. In good biographies, distinctions will be clearly made between legends and real events. Unfortunately, this doesn’t always happen and biographies of famous, important figures are written in a biased and sometimes downright false manner.

10. **Non-Fiction.** These are usually science books. A book about dinosaurs, or about sea animals. These are factual books that sometimes have a fictional character as a guide or narrator.

11. **Concept Books.** These are books that teach a particular concept: the four seasons, how to tell time, how to tie your shoes - things like that. Counting books and ABCs books also fall under the Concept Books category. Concept books usually aren't stories - in that there isn't really a plot and there isn't a protagonist. There will likely be many people in the book, but none of them are actual characters.

12. **Issue Books.** These are stories about difficult real-life situations such as divorce, death of a family member, abuse - things that are difficult to discuss. Most often these stories read as very real and involve human characters but it is fictional. The intention is that the reader learn the lesson along with the character or characters.

There is no magic, and the lines between good and evil are undefined. Bad things can happen to anyone. These are stories that have come about primarily because teachers and social workers recognize a need for them. Sometimes it is easier to talk about our own troubles if we first read about it as someone else's troubles.

13. **Movie Adaptations.** These are books that have been brought onto the market because of a movie's success. These are usually terrible books but they sell really well anyway because people recognize the Brand. Movie adaptations teach kids that movies are better than the book (because the book adaptation of the movie is never as good).

This is not to be confused with movies that are book adaptations, which is something else entirely. For example, Winnie-the-Pooh books - the originals - are great. What we now find on the market are more books about Pooh Bear that are indeed movie adaptations or cartoon episode adaptations.

14. **Old Wives' Tale.** Just to be clear, this is *not* a type of genre. It isn't even a story told by old women. An old wives' tale is a bit of superstitious information, usually a warning about how something will affect you in the future. An example: it's bad luck to hang your hat on the bed.

This entry is part of the series

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