

The ARRT Popular Fiction List

Fifth edition

A Self-Evaluative Bibliography
for Readers' Advisors



Compiled and Published by the Adult Reading Round Table Steering Committee

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Adult Reading Round Table of Illinois

ARRT and The ARRT Popular Fiction List

The Adult Reading Round Table of Illinois (ARRT) was founded in 1984 to promote readers' advisory services and fiction collections in public and school libraries and is dedicated to developing readers' advisory skills and promoting reading for pleasure. Led by a Steering Committee of Chicago-area librarians, ARRT plans and presents readers' advisory training programs, in-depth genre studies, book discussion training, and other professional development opportunities for librarians and library staff, produces a quarterly newsletter, and publishes an annual fiction bibliography or other reader's aid. The ARRT Steering Committee produced a workbook in 1999 designed to help library staff evaluate their knowledge of popular fiction for adults. With the help of Duncan Smith, creator and product manager of NoveList, four levels of "familiarity" were established:

- I have read this author
- I have read about this author (reviews, interviews, articles)
- I have heard of this author (patron requests, other conversations)
- I have never heard of this author

The workbook was updated in 2002, 2007, 2012 and 2015. The current edition (2019) was revised with attention to inclusiveness. Where previous editions of the Popular Fiction Workbook treated "special interests" of some fiction authors as separate categories, this edition recognizes their popularity in the framework of the genres within which they write. Another new feature of the 5th edition is the addition of a "Formats" section to address material specifically popular because of the manner in which it is delivered — audiobook and graphic novel — as well as its literary merit and community interest.

To make this list less daunting, firm constraints were placed on the number of authors included in each category. Only those authors the Committee considered most important, popular, and who are currently writing were included. This meant that many wonderful and worthy authors were omitted. Every effort was made to make the list as unbiased as possible. Librarians are encouraged to add authors of local interest to the list. Authors appear on this list only once, even though many could appear in multiple genres. Please refer to the index to determine the placement of specific authors.

Updated by the members of the 2019 Adult Reading Round Table Steering Committee: Jennifer Asimakopoulos, Mary Constance Back, Ted Balcom, Emily Borsa, Allyson Coan, Monique Flasch, Mike Hominick, Elizabeth Hopkins, Liz Kirchhoff, Margita Lidaka, Lizzie Matkowski, Stacey Peterson, Sonia Reppe, Megan Rosol, Becky Spratford, Nicole Steeves, Bill Stephens, Mary Kay Stiff, Melissa Stoeger, Carrie Straka, Maggie Thomann, Karen Toonen, Greta Ulrich, Emily Vinci, Debbie Walsh.

For more information about ARRT visit: www.arrtreads.org

ARRT and The ARRT Popular Fiction List

This list was designed by the ARRT Steering Committee as an introductory training tool to permit library staff to survey their adult fiction reading experience. It does not cover children's or young adult fiction, although many of the authors listed would be suitable for older teens, and some authors included have also written books for children and teens as well as adult titles. After working through the list, any gaps in reading knowledge will be apparent. The reader can then decide to read reviews, short works, or particularly recommended novels in order to become familiar with those authors. The ARRT Popular Fiction List may also be used to help structure a discussion group or reading plan within an individual library or library system.

Further exploration and training will require in-depth genre study using readers' advisory sources like genre-specific books, articles, and electronic resources available to fiction librarians such as NoveList.

For each category of fiction, there is a brief description of its characteristics and the genres and/or sub-genres under its umbrella. Each is then further described listing key elements and appeal characteristics. The ARRT Popular Fiction List includes those authors felt to be both representative of the category or genre, and considered very popular with readers.

This list is not intended to offer reading suggestions or read-a-likes; other resources may be more helpful to patrons hoping to find authors like their favorites. The Committee's intention is that The ARRT Popular Fiction List will be a straightforward and enjoyable way to evaluate and broaden anyone's reading experience, whether as a library school student or new librarian.

R=I've read this author

RA=I've read about this author (reviews, interviews, etc.)

H=I've heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)

NH=I've never heard of this author

For more information on *The Adult Reading Round Table* visit us at www.arrtreads.org

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FORMAT

Audiobooks

Audiobooks could encompass all fiction genres and subject matters within nonfiction. Those who narrate audiobooks often have a background in acting and have taken great lengths to study the author's words and the intricacies of each character. In this way, the narrator is not only telling a story, but they have created an artform in which listeners become emotionally engaged and can immerse themselves within these vivid worlds.

Unlike the book format, users often enjoy listening to the stories and will place an emphasis on the voice of the narrator. Their preferences could consist of enjoying narrators who use a range of voices, establish memorable voices for the characters, or provide vocal nuances to the story. Additionally, many listeners who are new to the audiobook format may appreciate titles that feature full cast recordings, celebrity narrators, and/or books that are narrated by the author. However, many of those titles are standalones, and do not reflect recurring narrator's styles. The following list focuses on popular narrators who were chosen based on the span of their career, industry recognition, and the richness they bring to the stories.

POPULAR NARRATORS	R	RA	H	NH
MacLeod Andrews				
Edoardo Ballerini				
Scott Brick				
Cassandra Campbell				
Jayne Entwistle				
Susan Ericksen				
Ari Fliakos				
Tavia Gilbert				
Dion Graham				
George Guidall				
Jenna Lamia				
January LaVoy				

(continued on next page)

R=I've read this author

H=I've heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)

RA=I've read about this author (reviews, interviews, etc.)

NH=I've never heard of this author

Audiobooks

(continued from previous page)

POPULAR NARRATORS	R	RA	H	NH
James Marsters				
Robin Miles				
Prentice Onayemi				
Kate Reading				
Barbara Rosenblat				
Juliet Stevenson				
Bahni Turpin				
Simon Vance				
Wil Wheaton				
Julia Whelan				

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Graphic Novels

Graphic novels utilize a creative blend of narrative and visual images to tell their story. Because of this, they often tell sophisticated stories that are accessible to a wide range of readers. Graphic novels can be original works or collections of previously published comics. Although they can encompass fiction, nonfiction (particularly biography/memoir), what gives the format its unique structure is its use of words and pictures arranged in sequential panels.

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
Jason Aaron				
Marguerite Bennett				
Ed Brubaker				
Cullen Bunn				
Kelly Sue DeConnick				
Emil Ferris				
Matt Fraction				
Nicole Georges				
Jody Houser				
Tom King				
Lucy Knisley				
Jeff Lemire				
Marjorie Liu				
Mark Millar				
Matthew Rosenberg				
Greg Rucka				
Gail Simone				
Scott Snyder				

(continued on next page)

R=I've read this author

H=I've heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)

RA=I've read about this author (reviews, interviews, etc.)

NH=I've never heard of this author

Graphic Novels

(continued from previous page)

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
Kelly Thompson				
Brian K. Vaughan				
Magdalene Visaggio				
Mark Waid				
David Walker				
G. Willow Wilson				
Chip Zdarsky				

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SUBCATEGORY

Enduring Authors

Over the past few decades, graphic novels have gained a wider audience and established their place in the literary world, becoming one of the fastest growing formats in publishing. Readers often want to enjoy both ongoing and core titles. Therefore, it is not only important to be familiar with current authors, but also those enduring creators who have won prestigious industry awards and/or their works have remained popular even as they themselves have slowed their output of new materials. Although these enduring authors may not be as prolific as others, or they may only be known for a single title, they have established themselves as essential to the format and are well-respected by readers and industry professionals.

ENDURING AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
Alison Bechdel				
Daniel Clowes				
Robert Kirkman				
Frank Miller				
Alan Moore				
Grant Morrison				
Marjane Satrapi				
Art Spiegelman				
Craig Thompson				
Chris Ware				

R=I've read this author

H=I've heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)

RA=I've read about this author (reviews, interviews, etc.)

NH=I've never heard of this author

CRIME FICTION

A crime story is defined by its plot: a crime is committed, someone investigates the crime, and some resolution to the investigation is reached by novel's end. While not all crime fiction ends with the criminal coming to justice, the reader will always finish a crime novel knowing whodunit and generally why they did it. Readers of the crime genre enjoy compellingly paced stories with investigative elements and relatable protagonists. While not all crime fiction is overtly violent, the trend is towards more gritty and more graphic depictions. Crime fiction includes the genres of mystery, thriller, suspense, and psychological suspense.

Mystery

In a mystery, a crime – usually, but not always, a murder – has been committed but the means, motives, and criminals are in doubt or unknown. The investigator, either professional or amateur, is presented the puzzle of “whodunit,” gathers the clues, and solves the case. Fans require that these stories present all the necessary clues for the solving of the puzzle, i.e. the rule of fair play.

SUBCATEGORY

Amateur Detective

The investigators in these mysteries are not detectives by profession. The appeal focuses on the characters and the act of solving the mystery, not additional outside interests. Although similar to cozies, these may contain more on-stage violence.

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
Donna Andrews				
Nancy Atherton				
M. C. Beaton				
Alan Bradley				
Jill Churchill				
Kyra Davis				
Janet Evanovich				
Anthony Horowitz				
Julie Hyzy				
Julia Keller				

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R=I've read this author

H=I've heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)

RA=I've read about this author (reviews, interviews, etc.)

NH=I've never heard of this author

SUBCATEGORY**POPULAR AUTHORS****R****RA****H****NH****Amateur Detective**

(continued from previous page)

Joe R. Lansdale				
Catriona McPherson				
David Rosenfelt				
Hank Phillippi Ryan				
Denise Swanson				

R=I've read this author**H**=I've heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)**RA**=I've read about this author (reviews, interviews, etc.)**NH**=I've never heard of this author

SUBCATEGORY

Cozy

The hallmark of these mysteries is limited or only off-stage violence, thus creating a gentler atmosphere. The appeal often revolves around the details of a hobby or outside interest of the investigator. For example, the “three C’s of cozies” are cooking, cats, and crafts. The investigator could be amateur or professional. The tone, not the profession, distinguishes these mysteries.

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
Susan Wittig Albert				
Lorna Barrett				
Ellen Byron				
Laura Childs				
Ellen Crosby				
Monica Ferris				
Joanne Fluke				
Alexia Gordon				
Sarah Graves				
Miranda James				
Alexander McCall Smith				
Katherine Hall Page				
Maggie Sefton				

R=I’ve read this author

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SUBCATEGORY

Historical

These mysteries are distinguished by the time period of their setting, which must be set in the past and based on the author's research. Readers of historical mysteries enjoy the setting, which explores historical customs and culture as much as solving the mystery. The presentation of these specific details may create a more leisurely paced investigation. Any type of investigator can be featured.

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
Boris Akunin				
Tasha Alexander				
James R. Benn				
Rhys Bowen				
Fiona Buckley				
Lindsey Davis				
Dianne Freeman				
Kerry Greenwood				
C. S. Harris				
Elsa Hart				
Laurie R. King				
Susan Elia MacNeal				
Sujata Massey				
Abir Mukherjee				
Anne Perry				
Deanna Raybourn				
Laura Joh Rowland				
Amy Stewart				
Victoria Thompson				
Charles Todd				
Jacqueline Winspear				

R=I've read this author

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SUBCATEGORY

Law Enforcement

The investigators in these mysteries work for a law-enforcement agency, most often a police department. The story is framed by the details of investigative procedure. Often, these mysteries are solved by a team working together. The detectives are also bound by the limits of the law as they investigate the crimes.

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
Nevada Barr				
Mark Billingham				
Sara Blaedel				
Cara Black				
C. J. Box				
James Lee Burke				
Linda Castillo				
Ann Cleeves				
Michael Connelly				
Paul Doiron				
Elizabeth George				
Elly Griffiths				
Martha Grimes				
Rachel Howzell Hall				
Craig Johnson				
Ausma Zehanat Khan				
Vaseem Khan				
Camilla Läckberg				
Donna Leon				
Attica Locke				

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R=I've read this author

H=I've heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)

RA=I've read about this author (reviews, interviews, etc.)

NH=I've never heard of this author

SUBCATEGORY**POPULAR AUTHORS****R****RA****H****NH****Law Enforcement**

(continued from previous page)

Denise Mina				
Margaret Mizushima				
Jo Nesbø				
Louise Penny				
Ian Rankin				
J. D. Robb				
Peter Robinson				

SUBCATEGORY**Private Investigator**

The investigators in these mysteries are professionally licensed detectives who works for themselves, not a law-enforcement agency. As opposed to police detectives who tend to work together, the PI is often a lone wolf who uses tactics that may be considered outside the law to catch the criminal. However, despite the methods, the PI is always on the side of moral justice. While some works are considered hard-boiled, that tone is not a requirement.

POPULAR AUTHORS**R****RA****H****NH**

Ace Atkins				
Ken Bruen				
Robert Galbraith				
Kellye Garrett				
William Kent Krueger				
Laura Lippman				
Walter Mosley				
Sara Paretsky				
George Pelecanos				
Spencer Quinn				
P. J. Tracy				

R=I've read this author**H**=I've heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)**RA**=I've read about this author (reviews, interviews, etc.)**NH**=I've never heard of this author

Thriller

Thrillers are crime stories centered around a particular profession. These fast-paced stories include the professional details and jargon as well as the potential dangers faced by those involved in that profession. Loner protagonists operating under their own moral code to fight against a villain seeking absolute power are another common characteristic. Often the villain’s point of view will also be presented.

SUBCATEGORY

Espionage

Thrillers set amongst the action surrounding professional spies, terrorists, and covert government operations. Including authentic details of covert activities appeals to the reader’s intellect; however, these details may also slow the pace. The protagonist’s inability to trust their own allies, handlers, or government is a common element that twists the plot and increases suspense.

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
Jeff Abbott				
Ted Bell				
Alex Berenson				
Barry Eisler				
Alan Furst				
Mark Greaney				
Stephen Hunter				
John Le Carré				
Jason Matthews				
Chris Pavone				
Christopher Reich				
Daniel Silva				
Olen Steinhauer				
Brad Thor				

R=I’ve read this author

H=I’ve heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)

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SUBCATEGORY

Science

These are thrillers that use the authentic application of the scientific method and scientific techniques to solve crime. The most popular stories include crime scene investigators, coroners, doctors, or forensic scientists. As a result of the authenticity, some readers find these stories, particularly those involving autopsies, graphically disturbing. Plots can also include a moral scientist working against an immoral foe using their power to wreak havoc.

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
Robin Cook				
Patricia Cornwell				
Meg Gardiner				
Tess Gerritsen				
Iris Johansen				
Andrew Mayne				
Kathy Reichs				

Legal

These thrillers are set in the world of lawyers, trials, and judges featuring the details, jargon, and people who work in the legal field. While the villains may use legal loopholes to subvert justice, the protagonists generally follow the letter of the law. Even when the protagonists bend the rules, they still follow the spirit of the law as they seek moral justice.

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
David Ellis				
John Grisham				
Allison Leotta				
Phillip Margolin				
Steve Martini				
Lisa Scottoline				
Scott Turow				

R=I've read this author

H=I've heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)

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SUBCATEGORY

Conspiracy

These thrillers are set in a specific world such as politics, business, technology, archaeology, et al. The plot uses the details, jargon, and people of that profession, in a manner that is currently plausible, to frame the story. The common theme underlying these thrillers is the focus on the element of conspiracy to drive the action.

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
Jeffrey Archer				
David Baldacci				
Steve Berry				
Dan Brown				
Ben Coes				
Catherine Coulter				
Clive Cussler				
Joseph Finder				
James Grippando				
Carl Hiaasen				
Gregg Hurwitz				
Greg Iles				
David Lagercrantz				
Mike Lawson				
Brad Meltzer				
Ridley Pearson				
James Rollins				
Taylor Stevens				
Brad Taylor				
Don Winslow				

R=I've read this author

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SUBCATEGORY

Supernatural

These are crime stories featuring supernatural creatures and/or situations. While the monsters fought in these novels are similar to those found in Horror, the focus is on the good guys stopping the menace and overcoming impossible odds. Although the supernatural elements may invoke fear, the reader knows the protagonist(s) will triumph, the ending will be resolved, and evil will be thwarted.

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
John Connolly				
Charlaine Harris				
Darynda Jones				
Dean Koontz				
Jonathan Maberry				
Douglas Preston & Lincoln Child				
M. J. Rose				
Simone St. James				

R=I've read this author

H=I've heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)

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NH=I've never heard of this author

Suspense

Suspense is a crime story that is about all the things that might happen, versus a mystery which is about things that are happening or did happen. Tension is the main appeal of these stories, and nothing is more important than raising it one heart pumping notch at a time. Pressure builds layer upon layer as the hero tries to stop the villain. Compressed time frames, prologues, the villain’s point of view, short chapters with cliffhanger endings, and multiple plot twists are all staples of the genre. Readers expect a resolved ending where justice prevails.

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
A. X. Ahmad				
Linwood Barclay				
Sandra Brown				
Lee Child				
Mary Higgins Clark				
Harlan Coben				
Jeffery Deaver				
Nelson DeMille				
Lisa Gardner				
Heather Graham				
Jane Harper				
John Hart				
Tami Hoag				
Lisa Jackson				
T. Jefferson Parker				
James Patterson				
Lori Rader-Day				
John Sandford				
Zoë Sharp				
Karin Slaughter				
Stuart Woods				

R=I’ve read this author

H=I’ve heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)

RA=I’ve read about this author (reviews, interviews, etc.)

NH=I’ve never heard of this author

Psychological Suspense

Psychological suspense are crime stories sometimes called “whydunits,” as opposed to the “whodunits” of mysteries. The appeal is found in figuring out the psychological underpinnings of the crime and the psychological interplay between characters more than in solving the crime or finding justice. These books put an uneasy atmosphere at the forefront, producing a chill in the reader. However, as opposed to horror, the fear and anxiety come from very real, flesh and blood individuals, not speculative sources. Tension in these novels builds, the atmosphere is nightmarish, the chills do not let up, and the plot resolutions are disturbing and ambiguous. Unreliable narrators and ambiguous endings are hallmark elements of this subgenre.

SUBCATEGORY

Dark Psyches

These books are filled with serial killers, stalkers, and evil masterminds. They play with the psyches of their victims and the reader. These are usually literary novels filled with darkness, plot twists, and obsession.

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
Sharon Bolton				
Joy Fielding				
Nicci French				
Tana French				
Jennifer Hillier				
Caroline Kepnes				
Kanae Minato				
Sarah Pinborough				
Lisa Unger				

R=I've read this author

H=I've heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)

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NH=I've never heard of this author

SUBCATEGORY

Domestic

Domestic psychological suspense is generally family or relationship centered. The protagonist may be the hero, the villain, or even both. The psyches that are toyed with involve the immediate family of the central character, and the threat to the family unit itself increases the nightmarish quality. The true villain will be identified but could escape punishment or consequences. The central question of “whydunit” may remain debatable.

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
Megan Abbott				
Alafair Burke				
JP Delaney				
Gillian Flynn				
Greer Hendricks & Sarah Pekkanen				
Mary Kubica				
Shari Lapena				
Clare Mackintosh				
Megan Miranda				
B. A. Paris				
Riley Sager				
Leila Slimani				
Chevy Stevens				
Peter Swanson				
Wendy Walker				
Ruth Ware				

R=I've read this author

H=I've heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)

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NH=I've never heard of this author

GENERAL FICTION

General fiction has at its core a wide audience appeal covering universal themes that focus on family issues, coming of age, relationships, political intrigue, and more. This category might encompass other genre elements (e.g., historical, adventure, romance, mystery), but those characteristics are utilized mainly to illuminate the central plot, character, or setting and to bring the novel to life as opposed to being the primary focus of the novel.

Literary Fiction

Literary fiction features well-developed characters in the midst of complex situations and conflict over universal dilemmas. These novels often focus on language and original or experimental form. In order to make this list less daunting, we have split it into two groups: American (writers born in the United States) and International (authors born outside of the United States).

SUBCATEGORY	POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
Literary, American	Amy Bloom				
	Michael Chabon				
	Teju Cole				
	Michael Cunningham				
	Jennifer Egan				
	Louise Erdrich				
	Jonathan Franzen				
	Cristina García				
	Roxane Gay				
	Andrew Sean Greer				
	Lauren Groff				
	Peter Heller				
	Cristina Henríquez				
	Dara Horn				
	Tayari Jones				

(Continued on next page)

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NH=I've never heard of this author

SUBCATEGORY**POPULAR AUTHORS****R****RA****H****NH****Literary, American**

(continued from previous page)

Barbara Kingsolver				
Nicole Krauss				
Jhumpa Lahiri				
Rebecca Makkai				
Emily St. John Mandel				
Claire Messud				
Ottessa Moshfegh				
Celeste Ng				
Viet Thanh Nguyen				
Téa Obreht				
Tommy Orange				
Ann Patchett				
Richard Powers				
Annie Proulx				
Richard Russo				
George Saunders				
Lionel Shriver				
Donna Tartt				
Anne Tyler				
Thrity Umrigar				
Jesmyn Ward				
Colson Whitehead				
Hanya Yanagihara				

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SUBCATEGORY**POPULAR AUTHORS****R****RA****H****NH****Literary, International**

Isabel Allende				
Kate Atkinson				
Julian Barnes				
Paulo Coelho				
Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni				
Emma Donoghue				
Esi Edugyan				
Mohsin Hamid				
Kazuo Ishiguro				
Ha Jin				
Herman Koch				
Ian McEwan				
Haruki Murakami				
Michael Ondaatje				
Arundhati Roy				
Zadie Smith				
Colm Tóibín				
Luis Alberto Urrea				
Mario Vargas Llosa				
Sarah Waters				
Jeanette Winterson				

R=I've read this author

H=I've heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)

RA=I've read about this author (reviews, interviews, etc.)

NH=I've never heard of this author

Pop Fiction

Pop fiction blends the lines of commercial and literary fiction. These books are character-driven and contain quality writing with straightforward prose. Universal themes and the accessible style appeal to a wide audience, making these novels favorites for book club discussions. Popular discourse and media buzz often surround pop fiction titles.

SUBCATEGORY	POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
General	Rumaan Alam				
	Fredrik Backman				
	Chris Bohjalian				
	Eric Jerome Dickey				
	Dave Eggers				
	Kristin Hannah				
	Kevin Kwan				
	Mary Monroe				
	Edward Kelsey Moore				
	Liane Moriarty				
	Jojo Moyes				
	Tom Perrotta				
	Jodi Picoult				
	Gary Shteyngart				
	Graeme Simsion				
	Curtis Sittenfeld				
	Emma Straub				
	Amor Towles				
	Meg Wolitzer				

R=I've read this author

H=I've heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)

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NH=I've never heard of this author

SUBCATEGORY

Relationship Fiction

This subcategory of pop fiction is typically written and read by women, and features female protagonists who confront issues that matter in women's lives. Some books might be characterized by a romantic tone or have suspense and mystery elements. The main theme, however, is of a woman overcoming and learning from crisis and emerging triumphant.

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
Mary Kay Andrews				
Elizabeth Berg				
Meg Cabot				
Emily Giffin				
Jane Green				
Kristan Higgins				
Elin Hilderbrand				
Marian Keyes				
Sophie Kinsella				
Elinor Lipman				
Debbie Macomber				
Anna Quindlen				
Kimberla Lawson Roby				
Danielle Steel				
Nancy Thayer				
Jennifer Weiner				
Lauren Weisberger				

R=I've read this author

H=I've heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)

RA=I've read about this author (reviews, interviews, etc.)

NH=I've never heard of this author

Historical Fiction

This genre appeals to readers wanting to escape contemporary life and immerse themselves in a past time period. Set in the past and based on the author’s research, it is characterized by a measured pace that allows for enough detail to get a flavor of day-to-day lives of ordinary people. It offers insights into famous characters or significant time periods of history. The best authors meld their research seamlessly into the story. There are crossovers with other genres, but the past setting is integral to the story.

SUBCATEGORY

Traditional

These books have straightforward narration centered on a famous person or on everyday characters caught up in pivotal events. They are more leisurely paced and may be longer than the average novel.

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
Marie Benedict				
Melanie Benjamin				
Jenna Blum				
Tracy Chevalier				
Jennifer Chiaverini				
Jamie Ford				
Margaret George				
Philippa Gregory				
Yaa Gyasi				
Alice Hoffman				
Martha Hall Kelly				
Christina Baker Kline				
Hilary Mantel				
Paula McLain				
Madeline Miller				
Kate Morton				

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R=I’ve read this author

H=I’ve heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)

RA=I’ve read about this author (reviews, interviews, etc.)

NH=I’ve never heard of this author

SUBCATEGORY**POPULAR AUTHORS****R****RA****H****NH****Traditional**

(continued from previous page)

Kate Quinn				
Tatiana de Rosnay				
Lisa See				
Amy Tan				
Adriana Trigiani				
Alison Weir				
Lauren Willig				
Lisa Wingate				

SUBCATEGORY**Sagas and Epics**

These books contain large sprawling stories—usually centering on a family or geographical area—and follow the story over a large time frame, with the relationship of the characters being paramount.

POPULAR AUTHORS**R****RA****H****NH**

Barbara Taylor Bradford				
Bernard Cornwell				
Jennifer Donnelly				
Ken Follett				
Diana Gabaldon				
John Jakes				
Min Jin Lee				
Edward Rutherfurd				
Penny Vincenzi				

R=I've read this author**H**=I've heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)**RA**=I've read about this author (reviews, interviews, etc.)**NH**=I've never heard of this author

Urban Fiction

Urban fiction focuses on mostly young contemporary African American or Latinx characters dealing with poverty, crime, drugs, and street life in urban and inner-city areas. The books are known for their frank realism and explicit language, with uncompromising descriptions of sex and violence.

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
Ashley & JaQuavis				
Wahida Clark				
De'nesha Diamond				
La Jill Hunt				
Clifford "Spud" Johnson				
Joy Deja King				
K'wan				
Michel Moore				
Nisa Santiago				
Sapphire				
Sister Souljah				
T. Styles				
Kiki Swinson				
Nikki Turner				
Omar Tyree				
Carl Weber				
Zane				

R=I've read this author

H=I've heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)

RA=I've read about this author (reviews, interviews, etc.)

NH=I've never heard of this author

Gentle Reads

Gentle reads are feel-good books that do not contain profanity, explicit sex, or violence. They reflect conventional values and end satisfactorily. They tend to be hopeful, are often laced with humor, and are evocative in projecting a comfortable sense of well-being.

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
Mitch Albom				
Sarah Addison Allen				
Sandra Dallas				
Richard Paul Evans				
Fannie Flagg				
Jan Karon				
Ann B. Ross				
Nicholas Sparks				

R=I've read this author

H=I've heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)

RA=I've read about this author (reviews, interviews, etc.)

NH=I've never heard of this author

Christian Fiction

Like gentle reads, Christian fiction lacks explicit violence, language, or sex — but Christian fiction also features an overtly Christian worldview. It frequently features characters who overcome adversity using faith-based moral values.

SUBCATEGORY

Biblical Themes

These books retell major stories of the Bible and/or re-imagine familiar Biblical figures in traditional and contemporary settings.

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
Charles Martin				
Francine Rivers				
William Paul Young				

SUBCATEGORY

Contemporary

These books take on spiritual and religious themes in a contemporary landscape, usually featuring hopeful endings.

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
Kristin Billerbeck				
Philip Gulley				

R=I've read this author

H=I've heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)

RA=I've read about this author (reviews, interviews, etc.)

NH=I've never heard of this author

SUBCATEGORY

Suspense

Christian suspense offers pulse-pounding tales of good versus evil interwoven with elements of scripture.

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
Terri Blackstock				
Ted Dekker				
Dee Henderson				
Frank Peretti				
Joel C. Rosenberg				

SUBCATEGORY

Romance

In these stories, the spiritual journey of the characters and development of a romantic relationship are inherently intertwined and are rooted in Christian belief systems.

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
Wanda E. Brunstetter				
Suzanne Woods Fisher				
Shelley Shepard Gray				
Karen Kingsbury				
Beverly Lewis				
Tracie Peterson				

R=I've read this author

H=I've heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)

RA=I've read about this author (reviews, interviews, etc.)

NH=I've never heard of this author

SUBCATEGORY

Historical

These novels feature characters in historical settings. They can range from fast and adventurous to leisurely and introspective, but all stress a Christian viewpoint.

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
Melody Carlson				
Robin Jones Gunn				
Julie Klassen				

R=I've read this author

H=I've heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)

RA=I've read about this author (reviews, interviews, etc.)

NH=I've never heard of this author

ROMANCE.

Romance fiction appeals to the emotions of its readers who are drawn into the love story with its inevitable happy ending. Storylines feature misunderstandings between characters or involve outside circumstances that force them apart. In the end, all difficulties are overcome and the lovers are united. Most characters are portrayed as strong and independent, and the ultimate fulfillment of their relationship is the focus. Settings may be historical, contemporary, or futuristic. Relationships may be portrayed gently, sensually, or erotically. Due to the importance of e-publishing in the romance industry, this list includes some popular, e-published only or e-published initially, romance authors.

SUBCATEGORY

Contemporary

Romance fiction set in the present day with characters readers recognize as living in contemporary society and with whom they may identify. Issues may be included in the story, but the driving force is the romantic relationship and there MUST be a happily ever after.

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
Rochelle Alers				
Melissa Brayden				
Emma Chase				
Alyssa Cole				
Sonali Dev				
Marie Force				
Lori Foster				
Jasmine Guillory				
Talia Hibbert				
Helen Hoang				
Julie James				

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R=I've read this author

H=I've heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)

RA=I've read about this author (reviews, interviews, etc.)

NH=I've never heard of this author

SUBCATEGORY

Contemporary

(continued from previous page)

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
Alexa Martin				
Christina Lauren				
Susan Mallery				
Priscilla Oliveras				
Susan Elizabeth Phillips				
Alisha Rai				
Penny Reid				
Jill Shalvis				

R=I've read this author

H=I've heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)

RA=I've read about this author (reviews, interviews, etc.)

NH=I've never heard of this author

SUBCATEGORY

Historical

Historical romances are set in the past and based on the author's research. Attention to historical detail and accuracy vary with each author. These books are often written in series with sequential treatment of family members or friends.

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
Mary Balogh				
Kelly Bowen				
K. J. Charles				
Loretta Chase				
Tessa Dare				
Lorraine Heath				
Elizabeth Hoyt				
Piper Huguley				
Eloisa James				
Sabrina Jeffries				
Beverly Jenkins				
Lisa Kleypas				
Stephanie Laurens				
Sarah MacLean				
Courtney Milan				
Julia Quinn				
Vanessa Riley				
Cat Sebastian				
Joanna Shupe				

R=I've read this author

H=I've heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)

RA=I've read about this author (reviews, interviews, etc.)

NH=I've never heard of this author

SUBCATEGORY

Erotic Romance

Erotic romance combines traditional romance novel tropes with explicit erotic encounters. The focus is on the development of a romantic relationship through sexual attraction and activity. The sex is front and center of the plot but the happily ever after (HEA) or happily for now (HFN) endings are expected. In contrast, erotica stories are about the sexual journey of the characters and not necessarily about their romantic and emotional relationship. HEA are not a required part of erotica, although they can be included.

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
Maya Banks				
Shayla Black				
Jaci Burton				
Sarah Castille				
Sylvia Day				
Helen Hardt				
E. L. James				
Lorelai James				
Jodi Ellen Malpas				
Meghan March				
Tara Sue Me				
Tiffany Reisz				
Naima Simone				
Rebekah Weatherspoon				

R=I've read this author

H=I've heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)

RA=I've read about this author (reviews, interviews, etc.)

NH=I've never heard of this author

SUBCATEGORY

Paranormal

Vampires, elves, fairies, shape-shifters, ghosts, witches, angels, demons, and any other-worldly creatures romance writers can conjure make up this sub-genre of romance which often overlaps with urban fantasy. While most romance conventions apply, the happily ever after may be more protracted than usual, stretching over several books in a series.

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
Ilona Andrews				
Amanda Bouchet				
Kresley Cole				
Christina Feehan				
Laurell K. Hamilton				
Larissa Ione				
Sherrilyn Kenyon				
Lora Leigh				
Kathy Lyons				
Lynsay Sands				
Gena Showalter				
Nalini Singh				
J. R. Ward				

R=I've read this author

H=I've heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)

RA=I've read about this author (reviews, interviews, etc.)

NH=I've never heard of this author

SUBCATEGORY

Romantic Suspense

A mixture of high-octane adventure and romantic relationship. Romantic suspense stories have elements of thrillers, mysteries, and suspense novels but the romance takes center stage and the plot is propelled both by the threat of danger and the promise of romance.

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
Jackie Ashenden				
Suzanne Brockmann				
Piper J. Drake				
Brenda Jackson				
Jayne Ann Krentz				
Lora Leigh				
Kat Martin				
Dani Pettrey				
Karen Robards				
Nora Roberts				
Kit Rocha				
Katie Ruggle				
Julie Ann Walker				

R=I've read this author

H=I've heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)

RA=I've read about this author (reviews, interviews, etc.)

NH=I've never heard of this author

SPECULATIVE FICTION

Speculative fiction explores the wide world of “what if.” The appeal for readers is in the otherworldly quality of the stories. They like to follow the characters into a setting where the impossible is possible. The intricate world-building in these novels often means the elaborate settings are used in long-running series. In speculative fiction the “what-if” could arise by magic, science that is not yet possible, a supernatural monster, or anything else the author can dream up. The speculative genres and the authors who write them also have a tendency to overlap and blend with each other; however, most readers of these genres both understand and expect this. Fans crave stories which ask them to look at their current world from a different perspective. The speculative fiction genres include: science fiction, fantasy, horror, and other explorations of the unreal.

Science Fiction

Science fiction is speculative fiction based on science and technology. The science may seem improbable, but it is plausibly extrapolated from our current understanding of the physical and material world. Although typically set in the future, science fiction stories give insight to the historical moment of their creation. The appeal of the genre is often the intellectual exploration of traditional ideas in non-traditional settings.

SUBCATEGORY

Alternative History/Time Travel

Alternative histories explore events that diverge from actual world history (such as a different side winning a war). Alternative history sometimes blends with time travel, which involves characters from the past, present, or future moving backward or forward in time.

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
Adam Christopher				
Sarah Gailey				
Lavie Tidhar				
Peter Tieryas				
Harry Turtledove				
Connie Willis				
Ben Winters				

R=I've read this author

H=I've heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)

RA=I've read about this author (reviews, interviews, etc.)

NH=I've never heard of this author

SUBCATEGORY

Dystopian

Dystopian fiction takes place in unhappy, often isolated, societies where totalitarian control tends to result in deprivation and severe oppression. Dystopias typically serve as critiques for modern-day political, social, religious, and environmental policies.

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
Margaret Atwood				
Paolo Bacigalupi				
Pierce Brown				
Cory Doctorow				
Sylvain Neuvel				
Malka Older				
Nicholas Sansbury Smith				
Johanna Sinisalo				
Daniel H Wilson				
Leni Zumas				

R=I've read this author

H=I've heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)

RA=I've read about this author (reviews, interviews, etc.)

NH=I've never heard of this author

SUBCATEGORY

Hard Science Fiction

The well-researched technical detail is fundamental to the story and its appeal in this subgenre. Hard science fiction can be set on Earth as well as in space. The author focuses on explicit explanation of the science behind the ideas with an almost nonfiction-like level of detail, creating a sense of realism. Common topics in this subgenre include terraforming, robots, and artificial intelligence.

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
Stephen Baxter				
Ted Chiang				
Blake Crouch				
Mary Robinette Kowal				
Nancy Kress				
Ann Leckie				
Cixin Liu				
Ken MacLeod				
Kim Stanley Robinson				
Neal Stephenson				
Andy Weir				
Martha Wells				

R=I've read this author

H=I've heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)

RA=I've read about this author (reviews, interviews, etc.)

NH=I've never heard of this author

SUBCATEGORY

Military

These books feature war in a science fiction setting, usually focusing on battles as well as the everyday human details of military life rather than the technology of warfare. Protagonists are often heroic commanders.

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
David Drake				
Joe Haldeman				
Marko Kloos				
Yoon Ha Lee				
Elizabeth Moon				
S. M. Stirling				
David Weber				

R=I've read this author

H=I've heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)

RA=I've read about this author (reviews, interviews, etc.)

NH=I've never heard of this author

SUBCATEGORY

World-Building

These stories feature world-building details told on an epic scale, usually focusing on the culture, technology, and environment of planets or galactic empires. Space operas can fall into this category.

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
Charlie Jane Anders				
Elizabeth Bear				
Becky Chambers				
C. J. Cherryh				
James S. A. Corey				
Kameron Hurley				
Ian MacDonald				
Alastair Reynolds				
John Scalzi				
Rivers Solomon				
Charles Stross				
Catherynne M. Valente				

R=I've read this author

H=I've heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)

RA=I've read about this author (reviews, interviews, etc.)

NH=I've never heard of this author

Fantasy

Fantasy is speculative fiction based on magic or myth. Internally consistent rules support the manifestation of magical beings and actions. For fans, the appeal is in the immersive, highly detailed world-building and intense emotional connections. Fantasy tones run the gamut from grimdark to farcical. Many fantasy authors write long-running series.

SUBCATEGORY

Epic Fantasy

Sweeping fantasies often feature quests, swords, sorcery, and fully developed worlds. Traditional Tolkien-esque epics have distinct heroes and villains, but recent works have begun to eschew explicit “swords and sorcery” in favor of morally complex characters who span cultural experiences.

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
Joe Abercrombie				
Kristen Britain				
Marlon James				
Erika Johansen				
Guy Gavriel Kay				
R. F. Kuang				
Fonda Lee				
Ken Liu				
George R. R. Martin				
Patrick Rothfuss				
Brandon Sanderson				
Tad Williams				

R=I've read this author

H=I've heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)

RA=I've read about this author (reviews, interviews, etc.)

NH=I've never heard of this author

SUBCATEGORY

Mythical Fantasy

This fantasy is rooted in mythology, folklore, fairy tales, or actual historic events from all over the world, created to tell the stories that explain who we are and how we got there. The setting can be in any time period but always features fantastical events, magic, or beings interwoven into a close-to-real setting that can often give the story an authentic, historic feel.

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
Katherine Arden				
S.A Chakraborty				
Zen Cho				
Neil Gaiman				
Max Gladstone				
Theodora Gross				
Deborah Harkness				
Seanan McGuire				
Silvia Moreno-Garcia				
Erin Morgenstern				
Naomi Novik				
Helen Oyeyemi				
C. L. Polk				
Tasha Suri				
Molly Tanzer				
Helene Wecker				
J. Y. Yang				

R=I've read this author

H=I've heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)

RA=I've read about this author (reviews, interviews, etc.)

NH=I've never heard of this author

SUBCATEGORY

Urban Fantasy

Magic and its practitioners living in a contemporary city landscape. Elements of noir and romance are common to urban fantasy.

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
Ben Aaronovitch				
Kelley Armstrong				
Robert Jackson Bennett				
Anne Bishop				
Patricia Briggs				
Jim Butcher				
Bryan Camp				
C. Robert Cargill				
Jasper Fforde				
Lev Grossman				
Kim Harrison				
Kevin Hearne				
Richard Kadrey				
Chloe Neill				
Daniel O'Malley				
Daniel José Older				
Chuck Wendig				

R=I've read this author

H=I've heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)

RA=I've read about this author (reviews, interviews, etc.)

NH=I've never heard of this author

Horror

Horror is a story in which the author manipulates the reader’s emotions by introducing situations in which unexplainable phenomena and unearthly creatures threaten the protagonists and provoke terror in the reader. Readers of horror may have a preference as to the type of monster (i.e., vampire, zombie, witch, etc...) and to the level of sex and gore they can handle; but ultimately, they all want to be scared by the story.

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
Ania Ahlborn				
Lauren Beukes				
Ezekiel Boone				
M. R. Carey				
Nick Cutter				
Tananarive Due				
Christopher Golden				
Stephen Graham Jones				
Grady Hendrix				
Joe Hill				
Jonathan Janz				
Alma Katsu				
Brian Keene				
Stephen King				
Victor LaValle				
Alison Littlewood				

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R=I’ve read this author

H=I’ve heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)

RA=I’ve read about this author (reviews, interviews, etc.)

NH=I’ve never heard of this author

Horror

(continued from previous page)

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
Josh Malerman				
Robert McCammon				
Jennifer McMahon				
Adam Nevill				
Laura Purcell				
Hye-young Pyun				
Mary SanGiovanni				
Guillermo del Toro				
Paul Tremblay				
David Wong				

R=I've read this author

H=I've heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)

RA=I've read about this author (reviews, interviews, etc.)

NH=I've never heard of this author

Further Explorations of the Unreal

The genres encompassed by the Speculative Fiction umbrella have always overlapped, but with one of the three main genres taking a leading role. Over time, genre blending has resulted in the emergence of distinct subgenres which are hybrids of the larger speculative genres. Readers of these blended speculative subgenres enjoy stories where the unreal can come from a mixture of magic, horrific creatures, and science—and are interested in the space where they all can work together. Authors of these hybrid subgenres must work twice as hard as their binary cousins to build their worlds, making sure readers feel confident that the rules are consistent within the two [or more] frameworks they have created.

SUBCATEGORY

Science Fantasy

These authors mix what readers will find in science fiction and fantasy, resulting in stories where magic and science, instead of being in opposition, work in tandem. Because of its mix of science fiction and fantasy elements, Steampunk is included here. Not surprisingly, this in-between space is also where you can find a higher concentration of diverse authors looking to probe the boundaries of classic genre classifications.

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
Gail Carriger				
Beth Cato				
Genevieve Cogman				
Nicky Drayden				
N. K. Jemisin				
Sam J Miller				
Nnedi Okorafor				
Cherie Priest				
Rebecca Roanhorse				
V. E. Schwab				
Jo Walton				

R=I've read this author

H=I've heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)

RA=I've read about this author (reviews, interviews, etc.)

NH=I've never heard of this author

SUBCATEGORY

Weird Fiction

Although weird fiction traces its roots back to the 19th century, the term was popularized by H.P. Lovecraft in the 1920s. Today's weird fiction is more than just an homage to a Lovecraftian aesthetic. These stories actively blend tropes common to horror, mythical fantasy, and science fiction with an intent to disorient both protagonist and reader, creating feelings that run the gamut from confusion and dread to wonder and enlightenment.

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
Ramsey Campbell				
Keith Donohue				
Ruthanna Emrys				
Jeffrey Ford				
Nick Harkaway				
Jonathan Howard				
Jeremy Robert Johnson				
Caitlin Kiernan				
Kelly Link				
Carmen Maria Machado				
China Miéville				
David Mitchell				
Sarah Perry				
Karen Russell				
Samanta Schweblin				
Robin Sloan				
Jeff VanderMeer				

R=I've read this author

H=I've heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)

RA=I've read about this author (reviews, interviews, etc.)

NH=I've never heard of this author

SUBCATEGORY

End of a World

Whether the world ends via science, magic, or horrific monsters, fans are drawn to this subgenre for similar reasons. End of a World fiction is often bleak, violent, filled with loneliness, and existential questions of what it means to be human, but the themes of human resilience and hope are also present. End of a World stories can be apocalyptic, focused on stopping or preventing the disaster or post-apocalyptic, concerned with how people, often just small bands of survivors, learn to exist in the nearly annihilated, post-technology future. The trends in End of a World fiction often reflect current geopolitical fears and threats.

POPULAR AUTHORS	R	RA	H	NH
Omar El Akkad				
Justin Cronin				
Holly Goddard Jones				
Peng Shepherd				
Carrie Vaughn				
Adrian J. Walker				
Karen Thompson Walker				

R=I've read this author

H=I've heard of this author (patron or colleague comments)

RA=I've read about this author (reviews, interviews, etc.)

NH=I've never heard of this author

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