

Go through and find your genre via the fun, nostalgic “choose your own adventure” method. You will receive at least one of nineteen possible results. Why *at least* one? Because you have the option to complete the activity up to three times, if more than one of the options for the first question appeals to you.

As you go through this exercise, click on the answer that best describes your writing. Please note: It’s important to click on your answer to jump ahead to the next question in the series. If you just keep scrolling down the page, you’ll end up answering some questions that don’t apply to you, and only clicking through will get you to an end result.

**Choose a starting path by picking the element most important to your writing.** If more than one of these options is important to you, choose one path now and come back and choose another after finding your initial result. Should you choose to follow more than one path, we’ll whittle down your results and discuss mixing genres in the next chapter. Okay, now pick your path.

1. [The intended audience’s age, background, or belief structure.](#)
2. [The setting or world of my novel.](#)
3. [The actual plot or story within my novel.](#)

**Which of the following age groups best describes your target audience?**

1. [Children who have not yet learned to read.](#)
2. [Early readers, probably still in elementary school.](#)
3. [Tweens](#)
4. [Teens](#)
5. [18+, but not \*too\* 18+. My audience may still be in college or may be in their late-teens to mid-twenties.](#)
6. [Any age group that thinks the story sounds interesting and wants to give it a try.](#)

**Which of the following best describes the goal of your writing?**

1. [To represent the struggles and triumphs associated with life as a woman.](#)
2. [To represent the experiences of characters who are not part of the mainstream culture.](#)
3. [To glorify God and show how fulfilling a faithful life can be.](#)

**Which subculture does your writing represent?**

1. [Characters who are from countries other than my own or who are from a non-White ethnic background.](#)
2. [Characters who are members of the LGBTQ community.](#)

**Does your writing represent the world as it actually is or as it was in the past?**

1. [Yes](#)
2. [No](#)

**Does your writing take place in a world that closely resembles our own, but has secrets hidden beneath the surface?**

1. [Yes](#)
2. [No](#)

**Does the world in your writing feature advanced technology that has not yet been invented in our own?**

1. [Yes](#)
2. [No](#)

**Does the main action of your writing take place more than fifty years ago?**

1. [Yes](#)
2. [No](#)

**Do major historic events that took place twenty or more years ago feature prominently in your writing?**

1. [Yes](#)
2. [No](#)

**Finish the sentence: Readers will flip through my pages quickly, because...**

1. [There are so many questions, and they'll want to keep reading to find the answers.](#)
2. [They're kind of afraid to stop. They need to reach the ending, or they might be too scared to do anything else.](#)
3. [They want to find out how the characters will overcome their next big obstacle.](#)
4. [They want to live vicariously through the characters.](#)

**What about your writing excites readers most?**

1. [They want to know if the characters will accomplish their missions before it's too late.](#)
2. [They enjoy the nonstop action and larger-than-life situations the characters find themselves in.](#)
3. [They enjoy falling in love \(or finding sexual gratification\) alongside the characters.](#)

**What about your writing excites readers most?**

1. [The race against time, or the thrill of the chase.](#)
2. [The intrigue of the book's central secret and their desire to figure it out.](#)

**What about your writing excites readers most?**

1. They want to know if the characters will accomplish their missions before it's too late.
2. They enjoy the nonstop action and larger-than-life situations the characters find themselves in.

**What about your writing terrifies readers most?**

1. The stakes are high, and they worry the protagonist might not accomplish his mission in time.
2. What about it doesn't terrify them? The antagonist is a truly deranged guy, one I'm pretty sure they wouldn't want to meet in real life.

## You're Probably Writing Picture Books

Children's picture books feature illustrations along with their words, are generally quite short, and avoid complex vocabulary. These books help readers develop skills like counting or color recognition, making readers laugh with silly storylines or rhyme schemes, and often feature a central lesson or moral to the story. It's easy to spot a picture book, but let me give you some examples anyway: *The Berenstain Bears*, the Llama Llama books, and my daughter's favorite—*Clifford, the Big Red Dog*.

### **What do you want to do next?**

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- [Learn more about what my results mean.](#)

## You're Probably Writing Lower Grade

Lower grade fiction is for children who read independently but are not quite ready for the more mature issues or longer page counts of middle grade. Lower grade stories often feature characters who are between the ages of seven and twelve years old and approaches issues important to readers of that age group, like school, family, and friends. A couple of great examples from my childhood are the Goosebumps and Baby-Sitter's Club series for the upper end of this age range and The Baby-Sitter's Little Sister or Bunnacula series for the younger end.

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## You're Probably Writing Middle Grade

Middle Grade fiction is written largely with the tween community in mind. Characters are generally between the ages of twelve and fifteen, and page counts start to climb closer to those of full-length novels. These stories often feature coming-of-age stories as their protagonists are going through the emotional and confusing stage of puberty. Popular middle grade books include *Diaries of a Wimpy Kid* as well as the Percy Jackson series by Rick Riordan.

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## You're Probably Writing Young Adult

Young adult fiction has always had a good following, but its popularity in recent years has exploded due to the mega-success of franchises like *Harry Potter*, *Twilight*, and *The Hunger Games*. YA novels generally feature protagonists who are high school aged and deal with themes such as love, finding one's identity, and—yes—even saving the world.

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## You're Probably Writing New Adult

New adult is a relatively new genre, but it's already making huge waves. The best description I've heard of this genre is "*Harry Potter* meets *Fifty Shades of Grey*." New adult is for readers who are in their late-teens to mid-twenties, and it combines the relatability and easy reading of the young adult genre with no-holds-barred, mature adult themes. Think young adult with slightly older characters and probably a lot more sex.

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## You're Probably Writing Women's Fiction

Awesome! That's what I write too. Women's fiction is a subset of the larger genres contemporary or literary fiction—it all depends on how you tell your story, and we'll discuss style more in the following chapter. On the lighthearted side of this genre, you have “chick lit” like *Bridget Jones's Diary*, and on the more serious side, you have the works of Nicholas Sparks and—my personal favorite—Liane Moriarty. A common misconception is women's fiction is synonymous with romance. That is so not true. Romance has its own rules, the most important of which is the “happily ever after or happily for right now.” If you've read Nicholas Sparks, you know women's fiction can feature far grimmer endings. Some women's fiction doesn't even feature a love story as part of the central plot, but all members of this genre feature issues important to women and that affect women's lives.

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## You're Probably Writing Inspirational Fiction

Inspirational fiction is the proper name for religious or Christian fiction. These stories feature God-fearing characters—predominantly Christian—who live according to the values of their faith or who, after making a series of unfortunate mistakes, experience a profound conversion to that lifestyle. Books can be clean or “sweet” without necessarily falling into this genre. The defining feature of inspirational fiction is the open and favorable discussion of religion within the context and themes of the story. A good example is the Left Behind series.

### **What do you want to do next?**

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## You're Probably Writing Multicultural Fiction

I agree it kind of sucks that books focused around any non-White or foreign character are automatically classed into a genre of their own. I like to think of multicultural fiction as a flavor rather than a genre of its own. If you got this result, please go back and choose at least one other path to see what kind of storylines are featured in your multicultural novel. Some of my favorite works of multicultural fiction come from Toni Morrison and Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

### **What do you want to do next?**

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## You're Probably Writing LGBT Fiction

I agree it kind of sucks that books focused around or heavily featuring characters from the LGBT community are automatically classed into a genre of their own. I like to think of LGBT fiction as a flavor rather than a genre of its own. If you got this result, please go back and choose at least one other path to see what kind of storylines are featured in your LGBT novel. Popular authors of LGBT fiction include David Levithan and Michelle Tea.

### **What do you want to do next?**

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## You're Probably Writing Historical Fiction

Historical fiction is a subset of the literary fiction genre, which we will discuss in greater detail in the next chapter. From romance to mystery to fantasy to adventure, historical fiction often crosses into a number of other co-genres. Its most important aspect is the creation of a robust, believable, and thoroughly researched setting that reflects the world as it once was. Authors in this genre can truly write about any period of time, although certain historic periods, such as World War II and the age of the governess, tend to be far more popular than others. Popular historical fiction titles include *The Book Thief*, the *Outlander* series, and *The Other Boleyn Girl*.

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## You're Probably Writing Contemporary Fiction

I'll be honest here. Contemporary fiction is kind of a catch-all genre. It has a great deal of overlap with the literary fiction genre, which will be discussed in great detail in the following chapter. However, not all contemporary fiction is also literary fiction. Regardless of any other classifications a contemporary novel may have, these books tend to be incredibly thought-provoking and great book club picks. They often push the boundaries of convention and leave lasting impressions on their audience. Great examples of contemporary novels include the works of John Irving, Salman Rushdie, and Ian McEwan.

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## You're Probably Writing Science Fiction

Science fiction is an incredibly diverse genre. From space operas to alternate histories to steampunk, the boundaries of this genre reach as far as the author's imagination. The only hard and fast rule is the world, actions, characters, inventions, and plot must be scientifically plausible. Popular science fiction reads include *Dune*, *Ender's Game*, and the works of Isaac Asimov. The popular dystopian genre is also a subset of science fiction.

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## You're Probably Writing Fantasy

The fantasy genre is best defined by its vivid world-building and larger than life characters. These characters often include non-human races, although this is not a requirement. The practice of magic is also a common component of the genre. Great examples of fantasy include *The Lord of the Rings*, *Game of Thrones*, and *Wheel of Time*.

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## You're Probably Writing Paranormal or Urban Fantasy

The paranormal genre does not require vampires, werewolves, or fey. It only requires a hidden supernatural underbelly to the real world as we know it. Urban fantasy is another variation of the paranormal genre, featuring similar themes and elements but amidst the backdrop of a metropolitan area. Paranormal stories can take place anywhere. Popular paranormal novels include *Twilight*, *The Iron King*, and the Sookie Stackhouse books. Popular urban fantasies include *City of Bones*, *The Dresden Files*, and *American Gods*.

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## You're Probably Writing Mystery

The mystery genre kind of defines itself. Stories in this genre revolve around a central puzzle that the protagonist—and readers along with him—must solve. This puzzle could include a murder, a heist, or some other unexplained event. Popular mysteries include any Sherlock Holmes, Agatha Christie, or Nancy Drew adventure.

### **What do you want to do next?**

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## You're Probably Writing Thriller

The thriller genre keeps the reader at the edge of her seat as she watches the protagonist overcome extraordinary obstacles in a race against time. Of all the genres, this one relies on a quick and compelling plot more so than any of the others. The nature of each story varies widely according to its designated subgenre. Popular thrillers include *Gone Girl* and *The Da Vinci Code*, as well as the works of Lee Child, Tom Clancy, and John Grisham.

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## You're Probably Writing Horror

The horror genre really makes the reader *feel*, and usually that feeling is terror. In horror, the antagonist is every bit as—if not *more*—important than the protagonist. The horror element may represent a subtle or coming evil, or it may result in out-and-out bloodshed and mass hysteria. A popular subset of this genre (and a surprising array of others) has been the zombie apocalypse, and many bestselling horror novels eventually find their way to the big screen. Examples include *The Exorcist*, *American Psycho*, and pretty much anything by Stephen King.

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## You're Probably Writing Adventure

Adventure novels tend to be larger than life. They involve lots of wham-bam and don't usually require a lot of extra thinking on the reader's part the way a mystery or thriller might. The good guys almost always prosper in this genre, and it translates very well to the big screen. Classic adventure novels include *Treasure Island*, *The Call of the Wild*, and *Journey to the Center of the Earth*. Adventure also features prominently in young adult and middle grade fiction.

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## You're Probably Writing Romance

Year after year, romance proves to be one of the most popular genres among readers, and for good reason. This genre lets the reader fall in love alongside its protagonists. Who doesn't love that feeling? Sometimes spicy, sometimes sweet, a requirement of this genre is the main characters find a "happily ever after" or at least a "happy for right now" ending. Popular romances include *Pride and Prejudice*, the *Outlander* series, and the works of authors such as Danielle Steele, Nora Roberts, and Bella Andre.

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## The Final Word on Genre

So what do you think about your results? Hopefully, they're in line with your expectations. If not, do a little digging into both the genre you just chose and the genre you thought you'd been writing all along.

Each genre also has a number of subgenres, so I encourage you to learn more about those and drill down your brand even further. For the most up-to-date list of subgenres plus an easy way to access tons of research material, I suggest you check out the bestseller lists on Amazon. Go to [the home page for Kindle eBooks](#), then scroll past the deals, features, and new releases until you find "Kindle eBooks" in the left sidebar with a long list of fiction genres and nonfiction topics beneath it.

If you don't immediately see your genre, try clicking "Literature and Fiction." As you click to open each bestseller page, a new list of subgenres will populate in the left sidebar. Keep going by selecting your subgenre until Amazon doesn't offer any further options.

They are constantly honing and updating these lists, which makes them an excellent place to start. Even better? The most popular books in each of those subgenres are listed too. Reading books in the genre you write is incredibly important when it comes to understanding the rules of your genre and the preferences of your target audience.

As always, Google—or any other search engine of your choice—is another great source of information, search "how to write" + your genre, and see what comes up.

Writing reference guides are also helpful. Beyond the usual suspects like King's *On Writing* or Strunk & White's *Elements of Style*, you can also find books written specifically about the rules and style of your genre. Be sure to check them out.

You also won't want to miss the [Exclusive Extras](#) section in the back of this book. There you will find "A Quick List of Words Readers Associate with Each Genre." This document provides a list of terms and phrases readers use when trying to find a book like yours, and offers a great place to start when it comes to crafting your book description.