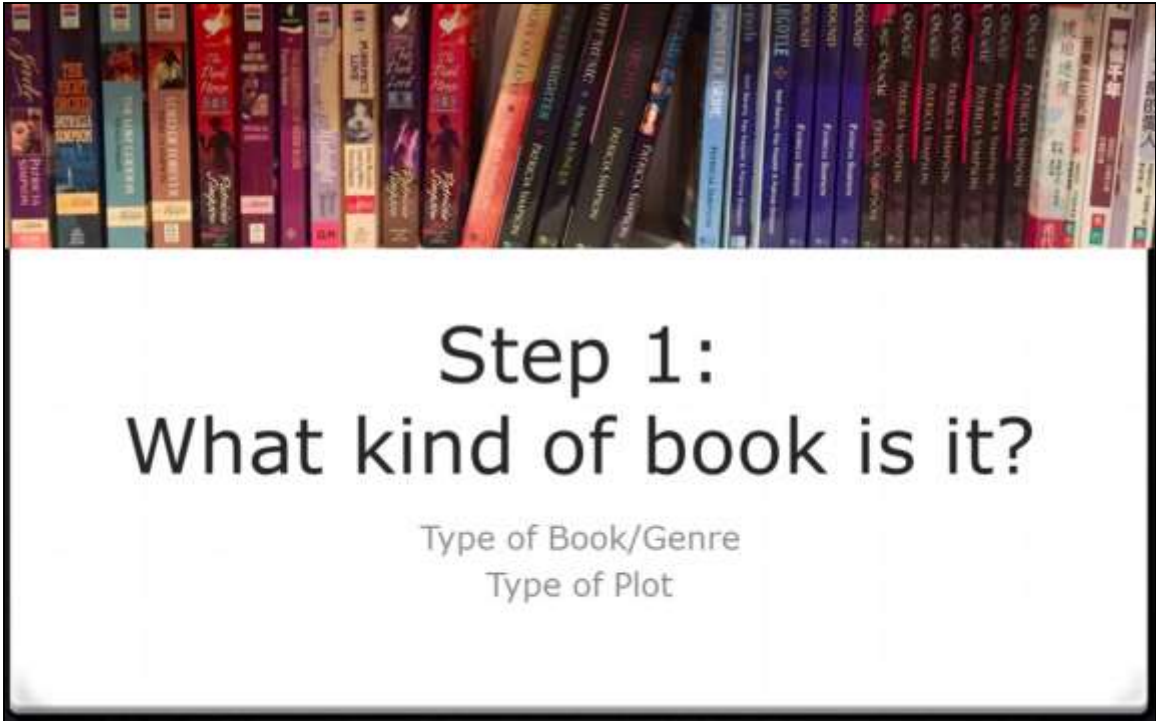




Welcome back to Start a Book in 5 Easy Steps.

I'm Patricia Simpson.



Step 1 is easy. Each time I start a novel, I ask myself what kind of book I'm writing. What kind of elements it has to contain to satisfy readers, and how many words I have to write. I'm not just an artist. I'm a business person. So I don't want to waste precious time writing extra words. Life is short!

In this section, we will look at types of books and genre requirements and then explore different plot types.

Goals of this lesson...

- Make your book marketable by writing a definite type of book.
- Explore plot types and learn what elements they should contain.



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Make your book marketable by writing a definite type of book.

Explore plot types and learn what elements they should contain.

Define your type of book

- Contemporary or historical?
- Literary fiction?
- Young adult sci-fi?



Define your book type. Start with where you would find it in a bookstore.

Is it a contemporary or historical? Literary fiction? Young adult sci-fi? You **HAVE** to know what kind of book you're writing.

A lot of young writers will tell me, I don't know what kind of book mine is. It's not really a paranormal because there's futuristic in it, and some time travel, and it flips from the contemporary world into the past. It's this and that, it's that and this--

Make Your Book Marketable

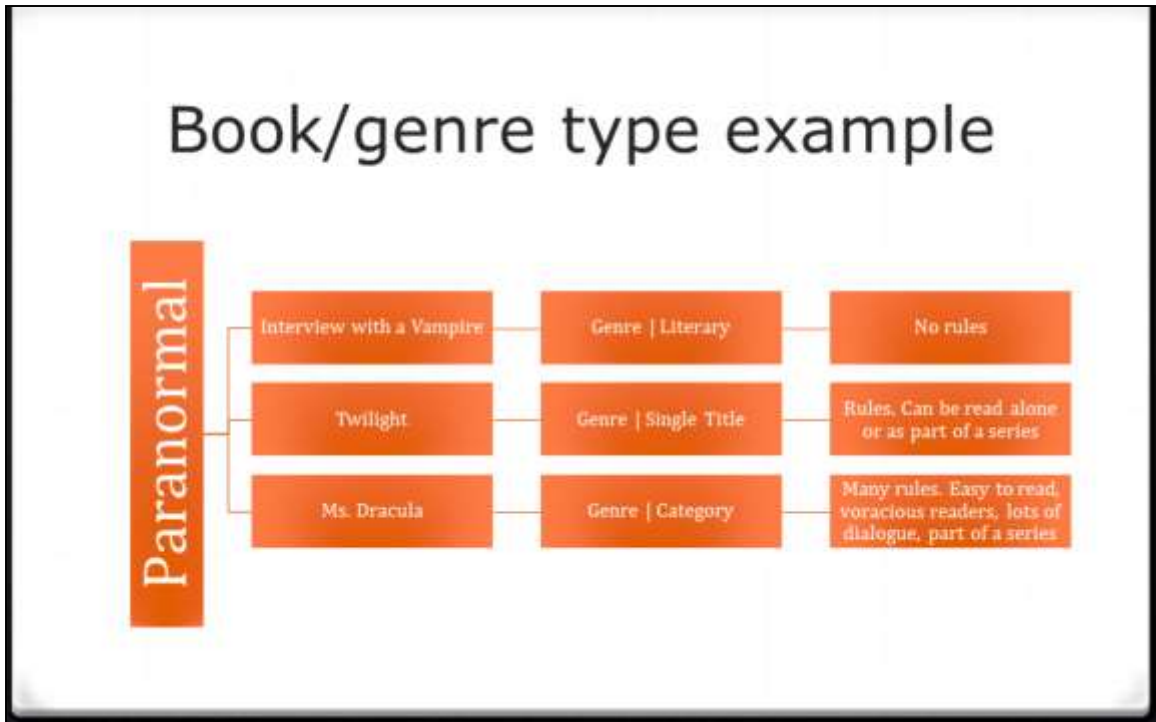


- Help your agent, publisher and bookseller know where to shelve your book.
- Don't "blend" types until you know enough to break rules.

Again. If you want to publish a novel, always keep in mind that your job is to write a good book, but it's also your job to make the buying and selling of your book easy for editors, agents and marketing people. They have to know what kind of book you are writing so they can sell it. If you give a confusing description of your book to them, they won't know how to define it. They won't know how to market it. They would have to read your entire book and come to their own conclusion. Believe, they don't want to read your entire book. They want easy answers.

A lot of young writers say, "My book defies definition. It's just that good." No, it probably isn't. When starting out, it's usually best to stay within the boundaries. Rule breaking comes later.

So what to do if your paranormal story has more than just paranormal elements in it? Pick a genre and define it that way so New York knows how to handle it. Plus, you can always say, "It's a paranormal with a twist." I guarantee an editor's ears will perk up if you say that. Why? Because editors are always looking for something new and something different. They just need to know how to define your book so they know what type of reader will pick it up.



Here's an example of a book type with associated genre types. In this example, my book type is a paranormal. If I were writing *Interview with a Vampire*, I would write the book for a literary audience and I could write with abandon because there is only one rule to follow. And that is? Write a really great book.

If I were writing *Twilight*, I would be writing a single title paranormal book. Single titles come with certain rules. That means the reader expects certain things, like an ending. A single title must be able to stand on its own and have a satisfying conclusion. It can belong to a series, but can be enjoyed alone.

If I were writing *Ms. Dracula*, this would be a category romance with readers of that genre. Let me tell you, these readers are voracious! I had one reader tell me that all they read is dialogue, because the other stuff is boring. So that's the kind of reader you should have in mind when you write a category type of book. These readers also have prodigious memories and expectations. You have to follow certain rules, write a really satisfying ending, and focus on snappy dialogue. These books are often part of a numbered series and are really quick reads.

Book type/genre requirements

Read widely in the genre you write in so you know what readers expect.

- Different endings.
- Different word count.
- Different covers.



If you're planning to write a book, you should read widely in your genre so you know what readers and publishers expect. Each type of book has a different type of ending, word count and cover.

For instance, in a romance novel, you have to have a happy ending or readers get really upset!

If you're writing literary fiction, you can have happy endings or sad ones.

Some categories of genres have different word counts as well.

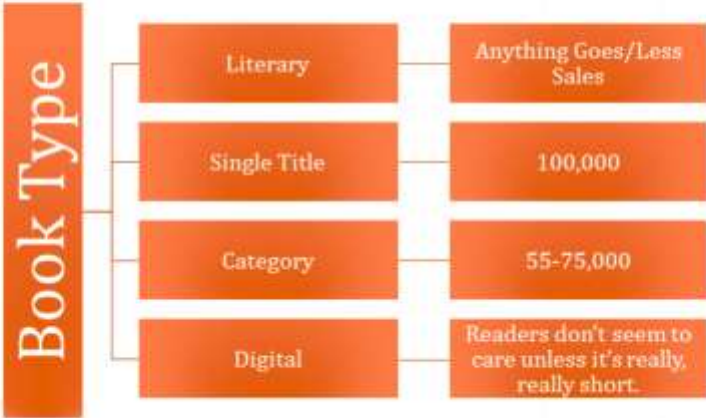


Different types of books have different endings.

A genre type of book usually has a definite ending, such as the Happy Ever After of a romance novel.

A literary book can have a nebulous ending. Literary readers like to think about the ending and don't require all the threads to be tied up in a neat little bow.

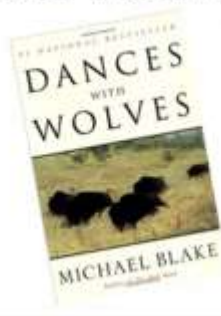
Requirement: Word Count



Requirement: Covers

Literary Audience

- Can be any kind of visual treatment.



Genre Audience

- Must be recognizable as reader's "brand"



Different types of books have different covers. A literary type of reader will be turned off. A genre reader uses the cover to make a buying decision. If they recognize the cover as part of their brand (a Regency romance or a western), they know at a glance that the book will suit them.



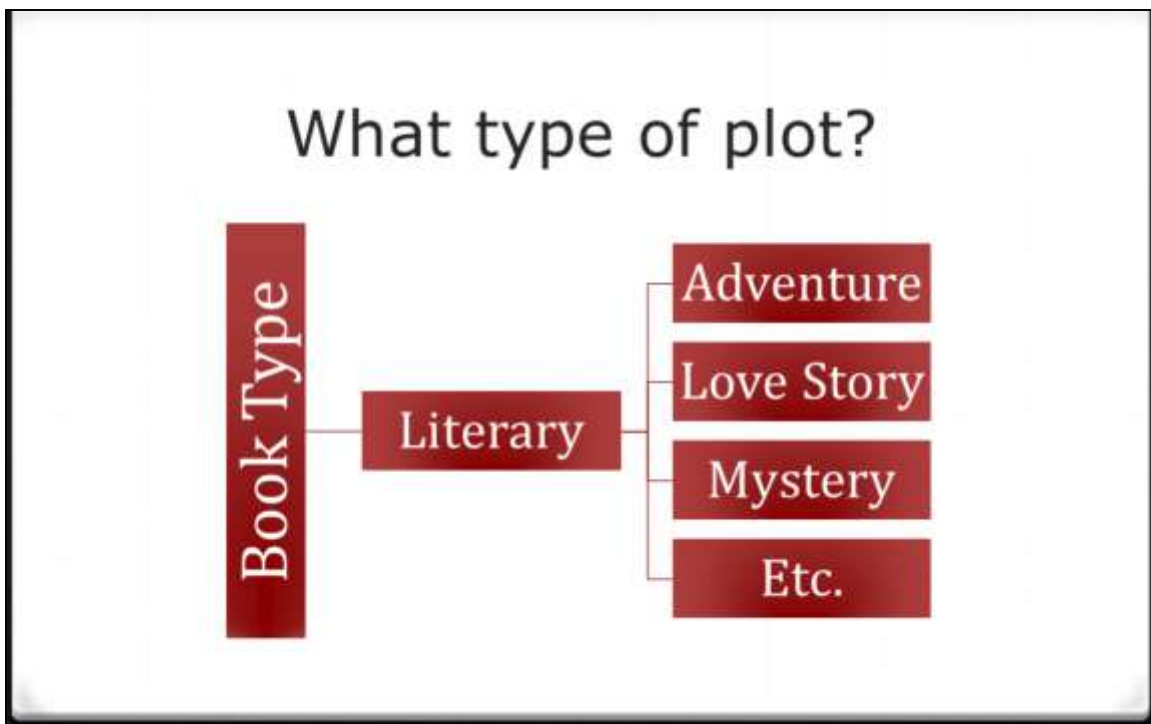
And whatever you do, don't ever...ever...kill the cat.



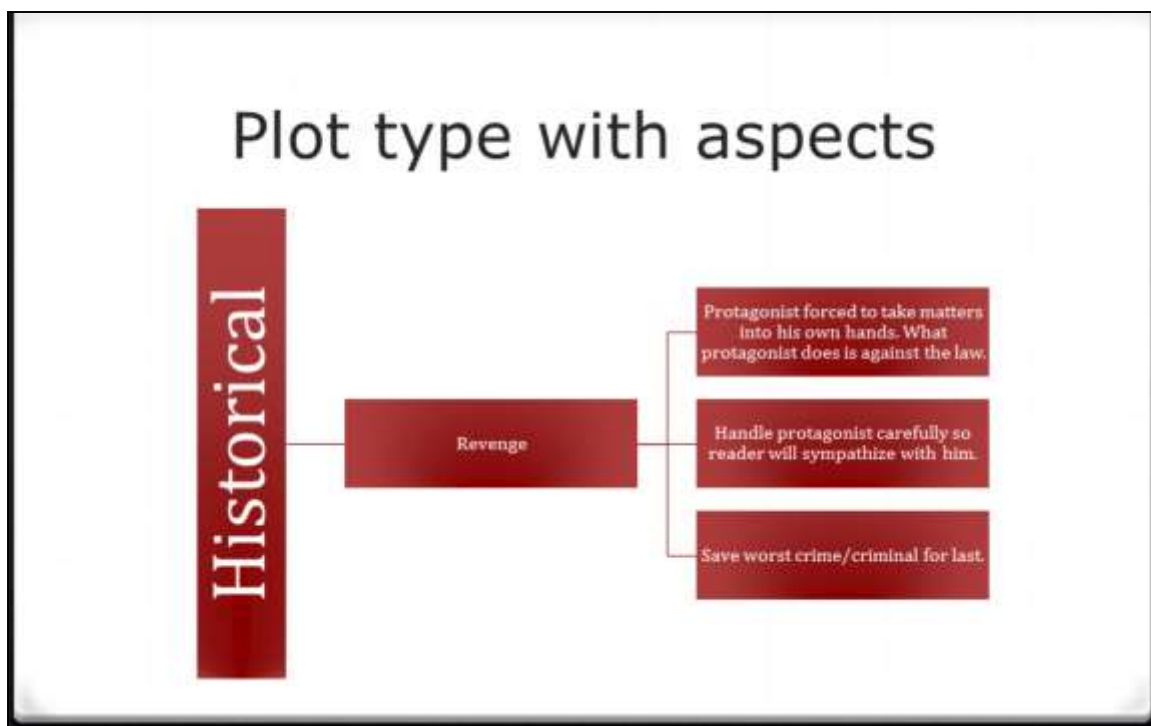
Once you know what type of book you're going to write, then define what plot you will be developing. Did you know there are only a score or so basic plots? It's true. And each basic plot type contains certain elements that will satisfy readers of that type of book.

Now you might say, "Plot type? That sounds like a formula. I'm not writing a book using a formula!" Well, you won't be using a formula. I could assign a certain plot type to ten writers, and the story each of them would write would be very, very different from each other. Why? Because each of us has our world view, our way of seeing things and our own voice. Your book will not be like any another writer's, even if you start with the same sentence.

At the end of this section, you'll get a chance to look at various plot types, read their definitions and see the elements each plot should contain. For now, let's see how a book type fits with a plot type.



Here's an example of how a book type, genre and plot type fit together.



Say you are thinking of writing an historical novel. You are thinking it's going to be about some sort of revenge.

In the revenge plot, the protagonist retaliates for an injury (real or imagined) perpetrated by the villain. This plot is very satisfying to readers because people believe that injustice often goes unpunished.

Aspects of this plot:

Protagonist forced to take matters into his own hands. Usually what the protagonist does is against the law in some way.

Handle protagonist character carefully so the reader will sympathize with him.

Save worst crime/criminal for last.

Revenge Plot Example

- Hero uses an imposter to dupe a wastrel earl.
- Hero watches clan murdered, helps rebels, has devoted employees and struggles not to care.
- Worst crime: heroine's death.



In my historical novel, Imposter Bride, the hero wants revenge on the man who murdered his clan and stole his heritage.

His illegal move is using an imposter as marriage bait.

The villain has gambled all his money away and thinks he is marrying into a wealthy family.

Once the villain has no way to pay his debts, he will be forced to sign over the estate to the hero.

How did I make the hero sympathetic?

He watched his entire family be killed by the villain.

He sacrificed everything to rise from nothing.

He helps rebels elude English persecution.

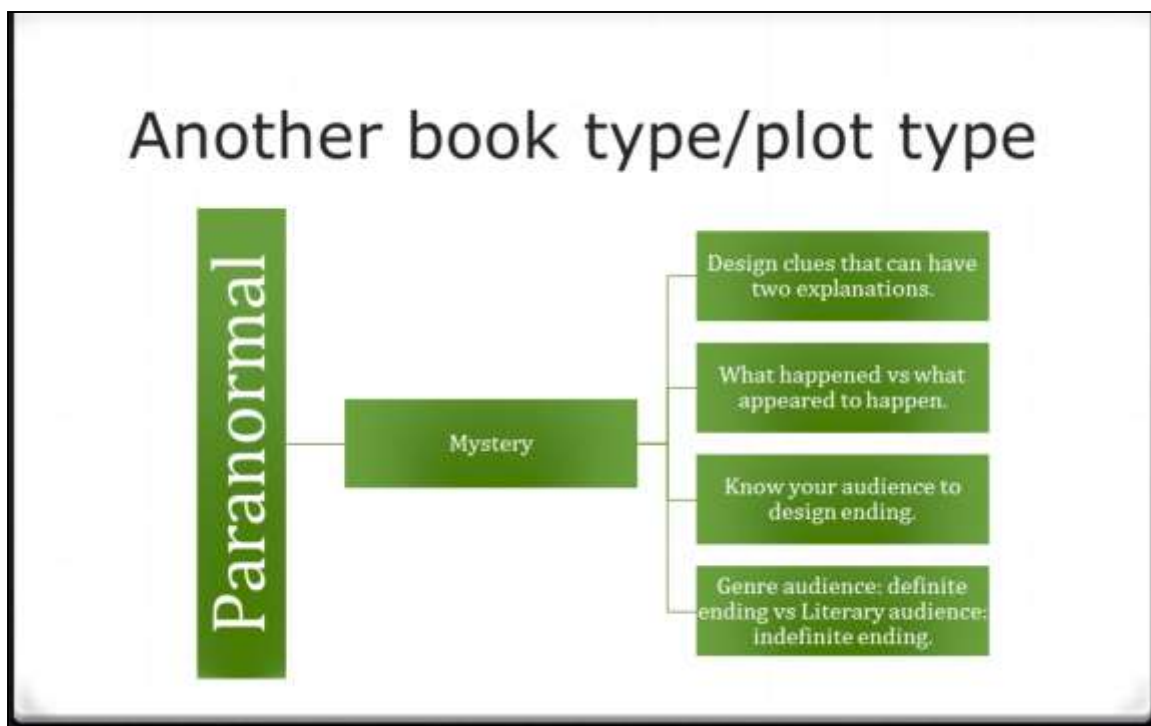
And most of all he struggles not to care when we all know that he really, really does.

What was the worst crime of all at the end?

The villain forces the heroine to jump from a castle and end her life.

At that dark moment, the hero drops everything to avenge the death of the

woman he loved.



Let's look at another example.

What if you are thinking of writing a paranormal novel, but you are stuck and can't get past chapter 5. Maybe you need to look at the type of plot you think you're using. Let's say your paranormal book is based on the mystery plot. Check yourself to see that you are including essential elements. The elements may spark you enough to get going again. Or you might realize what you're writing isn't a mystery at all. And that's why you're stuck.

The mystery plot is usually a physical treatment that has an answer in full view for the reader to see if they are clever enough.

Aspects of this plot:

Design clues that can have two explanations. Camouflage clues so they aren't obvious.

What happened vs what appeared to happen.

Know your audience to design ending.

Genre - Definite solution/Literary - No real answer

Mystery Plot Example

- Two women or a ghost could be the witch. Which one is it?
- Hero thinks his medieval lover betrayed him. But did she?
- Ending: definite.



In my time travel novel *Spellbound*, the plot revolves around the question of “If the hero (who is a ghost) finds an ancient psalter and completes his quest, will he be released from a magical spell and become human?”

My clues? Two women or another ghost could be the witch who put a spell on the hero. Which woman is it?

What happened vs what appeared to happen: Hero thinks his medieval lover betrayed him. But did she?

Ending: definite.

What's YOUR plot type?

Explore plot types or
get inspired with PlotSpinner.

So, do you have a type of book in mind? Good. But do you know what kind of plot you're writing?

Use the activity in the next section to explore different types of plots. You might be surprised to discover you aren't really writing an Adventure plot. You're writing an Underdog plot.

PlotSpinner

Web Object

Address:

<http://patriciasimpson.com/plotspinner/class-login.aspx>



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