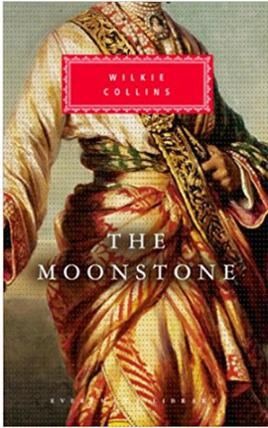


# Crime/Mystery Genre



The terms *detective story*, *mystery*, *crime novel*, and *thriller* tend to be employed interchangeably to describe the literary mystery genre.

The detective story thrills the reader with mysterious crimes, usually of a violent nature, and puzzles his reason until their motivation and their perpetrator are, through some triumph of logic, uncovered. The detective story and mystery are in fact synonymous, but the thriller frequently purveys occasional emotional thrills, even without mysteries, like the 007 spy stories of Ian Fleming, for example.

The detective novel began as a respectable branch of literature, pioneered by American author Edgar Allan Poe in “Murders in the Rue Morgue” (published in 1841). Poe was drawn toward gothic settings and dark,

thrilling prose, and the genre suited his point of view, as well as satisfying a growing middle class with both the literacy and disposable income to purchase popular literature. With the coming of the Sherlock Holmes stories of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, at the beginning of the 20th century, the form became a kind of literary subspecies, despite the intellectual brilliance of Holmes’s detective work and the high literacy of Doyle’s writing.

In this genre, the fearless and intelligent amateur detective, or private investigator, or police officer has become a typical hero of the modern age. And those qualities that good mystery or thriller writing calls for are not to be despised, since they include economy, skillfully sustaining suspense, the ability to “hide” clues along the way, an array of characters — any of whom may have committed the crime — and very artful plotting.

The reader of crime/mystery/thriller novels is normally — like Sherlock Holmes himself — a deductive reasoner, one who enjoys a challenge, and one who pays very close attention to detail. Major authors in this genre include:

- Agatha Christie (British)
- Dorothy Sayers (British)
- Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (British)
- Dashiell Hammett (American)
- John Le Carre (British)
- Mickey Spillane (American)
- Wilkie Collins (British)
- Ian Fleming (British)
- G.K. Chesterton (British)

