

Literary Genres

Prose <small>(latin <i>prosa</i>, or <i>proversa oratio</i> 'straightforward discourse')</small>	Verse <small>Poetry (medl. <i>poetria</i>, based on greek <i>poetes</i> 'doer, creator') in general</small>	Drama <small>(greek <i>dran</i> 'to act')</small>
<p>Novel <small>(ital. <i>novella</i>, 'tale, piece of news')</small> A long fictional narrative written in prose. e.g. Samuel Richardson's <i>Pamela</i></p> <p>Novella <small>(ital. 'tale, piece of news')</small> Basically, the novella is a fictional narrative of indeterminate length (a few pages to two or three hundred), restricted to a single event, situation or conflict, which produced an element of suspense and leads to an unexpected turning point. e.g. Hemingway's <i>The Old Man and the Sea</i></p> <p>Short Story A short fictional narrative written in prose. Developed and established in Britain from the second half of the 18th century. e.g. Henry James' <i>Daisy Miller</i></p>	<p>Epic A long narrative poem (frequently extending to several books) on a great and serious subject, such as the deeds of warriors and heroes. It incorporates myth, legend, folk tale and history. e.g. Homer's <i>Odyssey</i>, The Old English <i>Beowulf</i> and Milton's <i>Paradise Lost</i></p> <p>Dramatic Poetry, monologue or dialogue, written in the voice of a character assumed by the poet. e.g. Browning's <i>My Last Duchess</i></p> <p>Lyric Originally, a song performed in ancient Greece to the accompaniment of a small harplike instrument called a lyre (<i>lyra</i>). The term is now used for any fairly short poem in the voice of a single speaker, although that speaker may sometimes quote others. A lyric usually expresses the feelings and thoughts of a single speaker (not necessarily the poet himself) in a personal and subjective fashion. e.g. Chaucer's <i>Poems</i> and Shakespeare's <i>Sonnets</i></p>	<p>Tragedy <small>(greek 'Goat song')</small> A drama in which a character (usually a good and noble person of high rank) is brought to a disastrous end in his or her confrontation with a superior force (fortune, the gods, social forces, universal values), but also comes to understand the meaning of his or her deeds and to accept an appropriate punishment. Often the protagonist downfall is a direct result of a fatal flaw in his or her character. e.g. Sophocles' <i>Oedipus Rex</i> and Shakespeare's <i>Hamlet</i></p> <p>Comedy <small>(greek <i>komos</i> 'revel, merrymaking')</small> A broad category of dramatic works that are intended primarily to entertain and amuse an audience. Comedies take many different forms, but they all share three basic characteristics: (1) the values that are expressed and that typically present the conflict within the play are social and determined by the general opinion of society (as opposed to universal and beyond the control of humankind, as in tragedy); (2) characters in comedies are often defined primarily in terms of their society and their role within it; (3) comedies often end with a restoration of social order in which one or more characters take a proper social role. e.g. Dante's <i>Divine Comedy</i> and Shakespeare's <i>Midsummer Night's Dream</i></p>