

Crime Fiction Addiction

Issue 04 February 2024

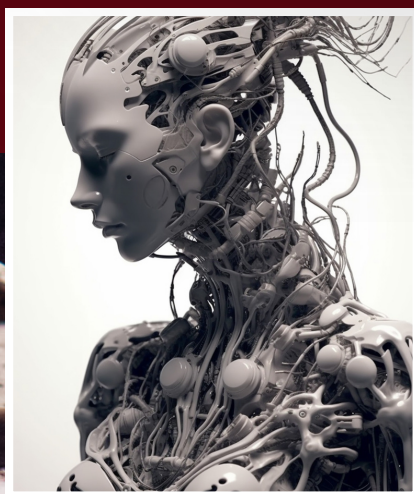
In this issue:

- Unsolved mysteries - true crime stories
- Unmasking the Intriguing World of Crime Fiction Subgenres
- Writing: Plotting and Pacing: Creating Engaging Story Arcs and Maintaining a Good Rhythm



True Crime

Unsolved Mysteries



Subgenres

Crime Fiction



Story Arcs

Writing



Welcome

Dear Fellow Crime Enthusiast!

Welcome to issue #5 of the "Crime Fiction Addiction" newsletter, dedicated to all things crime and crime fiction.

This month, we'll look into the captivating universe of crime fiction subgenres, peeling back the layers of mystery and suspense that keep us on the edge of our seats. Additionally, we delve into the art of storytelling, focusing on the essential elements of plotting and pacing.

I'd love to hear from you. If you'd like to contribute, do get in touch and don't forget to enter to win a free signed copy of 'Justified'. Send me your pics, something you're writing or your thoughts on anything discussed in this newsletter.

Most of all, thank you for being here.



Wendy

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Exploring the Nuances: A Comprehensive Guide to Crime Fiction Subgenres

Whether you're online book shopping, in store or at the library, you'll have noticed that there's a diverse range of stories which fall under the heading of 'crime fiction'.

Compelling narratives with gripping plots, intense suspense, and characters that both captivate and confound have fascinated readers since the debut of Edgar Allan Poe's detective story, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," which shocked and enthralled Victorian audiences in 1841.

In the present day, with the rise of trending crime fiction sub-genres and the proliferation of crime-based TV series, movies, and true-crime podcasts, an increasing number of readers are drawn to stories centred around murder, misadventure, and the challenge of solving a puzzle.

Today, I'm delving into the intricate world of crime fiction subgenres. Beyond being handy categorisations, each subgenre presents a unique narrative approach that explores the complexities of the human condition, societal structures, and the intricacies of crime-solving.

Do you like a cosy tale or are you searching for the next hard-boiled masterpiece? Here's a closer look at some of the branches of crime fiction.

Classic Whodunits:

The epitome of deductive reasoning, classic whodunits present intricate puzzles that challenge readers to unravel the enigma alongside the detective. Characterised by clever plotting and meticulous clues, this subgenre, popularised by Agatha Christie, engages the reader in a cerebral exercise of deduction.

"Murder on the Orient Express" by Agatha Christie is a classic example of a whodunit with a clever and intricate plot. This iconic novel features the legendary detective Hercule Poirot as he solves a murder mystery aboard the luxurious Orient Express.

Hardboiled Noir:

Transcending the glossy veneer of traditional crime fiction, hardboiled noir thrusts readers into the underbelly of society. With morally ambiguous protagonists navigating the shadows, this subgenre explores themes of corruption, despair, and the inherent darkness that resides within the human psyche.

"The Maltese Falcon" by Dashiell Hammett is a hardboiled classic featuring private detective Sam Spade. Spade becomes entangled in a web of crime and deceit while searching for a valuable statuette in a novel known for its gritty atmosphere and morally ambiguous characters.

Cosy Mysteries:

Offering a departure from the gritty realism of noir, cosy mysteries provide a charming respite. Set in quaint locales with amateur sleuths at the helm, these narratives intertwine crime-solving with the everyday, often incorporating themes of community, warmth, and small-town dynamics.

This subgenre even has its own sub-subgenres! Think culinary capers set in bakeries and restaurants, animal and pet sleuths or amateur detectives solving mysteries in rural communities. They all share the cosy tropes of quaint locations, minimal violence or gory details, and often quirky, lovable characters.

"The Cat Who Could Read Backwards" by Lilian Jackson Braun features journalist Jim Qwilleran who, with the help of his Siamese cat Koko, investigates a murder involving the art world. The feline detective adds a delightful twist to the mystery.





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Police Procedurals:

For those fascinated by the intricacies of law enforcement, police procedurals offer an authentic portrayal of investigative processes. From forensic examinations to methodical case-solving, this subgenre immerses readers in the meticulous world of police work, highlighting the challenges faced by those upholding the law.

"The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo" by Stieg Larsson features journalist Mikael Blomkvist and hacker Lisbeth Salander who become entangled in a complex investigation that spans decades. The novel intricately weaves together elements of journalism, legal procedure, and detective work.

Psychological Thrillers:

The exploration of the human psyche takes centre stage in psychological thrillers. Characterised by intricate character studies, unreliable narrators, and plot twists that challenge perceptions, this subgenre delves into the psychological nuances that accompany criminal behaviour, blurring the lines between victim and perpetrator.

"Gone Girl" by Gillian Flynn is a great example of this subgenre. This psychological thriller explores the disappearance of Amy Dunne and the subsequent media frenzy.

The narrative delves into the complexities of marriage, deception, and the unreliability of perception.

Historical Mysteries:

Bridging the gap between crime fiction and historical fiction, this subgenre transports readers to different eras. Whether it's the intrigue of ancient civilizations, the gas lit streets of Victorian London, or the post-war complexities of mid-20th century America, historical mysteries provide a rich backdrop for compelling whodunits.

"The Name of the Rose" by Umberto Eco is a historical mystery which combines elements of theology, philosophy, and crime-solving. The Franciscan friar William of Baskerville investigates a series of murders set in a 14th-century Italian monastery.

Legal Thrillers:

In the courtroom, justice unfolds in legal thrillers. Legal manoeuvring, ethical dilemmas, and courtroom drama form the crux of this subgenre, offering a unique perspective on crime through the lens of legal professionals navigating the complexities of the judicial system.

"A Time to Kill" by John Grisham features attorney Jake Brigance who defends a black man accused of murdering two white men who assaulted his daughter. This legal thriller explores racial tension, justice, and the legal system.

The richness of crime fiction lies in its diversity, allowing readers to explore narratives that align with their preferences and intellectual curiosities. Each subgenre offers a distinct lens through which to examine crime, justice, and the human experience.



Once Upon A Time...

The Art of Crafting Engaging Story Arcs and Maintaining a Dynamic Rhythm

In storytelling, captivating your readers and keeping them hooked from start to finish is the primary goal. Even if you're telling a story to your friends, you still want to keep their attention until you reach the finale.

One way to achieve this is in fiction writing is by creating engaging story arcs and maintaining a good rhythm throughout your narrative. By employing effective techniques, you can ensure that your story flows seamlessly, keeps readers invested, and delivers a satisfying reading experience. Here are some tips for crafting compelling story arcs and mastering the rhythm of your narrative.

Establish Clear Goals and Stakes:

To lay a solid foundation for your story, it is crucial to establish clear goals for your protagonist and convey the consequences of success or failure. This creates a compelling driving force that propels the plot forward and keeps readers invested in the outcome.

Create Conflict and Obstacles:

Conflict is the lifeblood of storytelling. Introduce challenges, conflicts, and obstacles that the protagonist must overcome, providing opportunities for growth and development. This not only adds depth to your characters but also keeps the story dynamic, gripping the reader's attention.

Use Rising Action:

Craft a compelling narrative by gradually building tension through the rising action. Increase the stakes and intensify conflicts as the story progresses, creating a sense of anticipation and ensuring that readers are captivated by each turn of events.

Vary the Pace:

To maintain reader interest and prevent monotony, it is essential to vary the pace of your story. Alternate between moments of high intensity and slower, reflective moments. This ebb and flow in pacing creates a balanced rhythm and keeps readers engaged throughout the narrative.

Incorporate Plot Twists:

Surprise your readers with unexpected plot twists that challenge their expectations. Well-placed plot twists inject excitement and reinvigorate the story, leaving readers eager to discover what unfolds next.

Use Cliffhangers:

End chapters or sections with suspenseful moments or unanswered questions to leave readers craving more. Cliffhangers create anticipation and propel readers forward, ensuring they eagerly turn the pages to uncover the next twist or resolution.

Show Character Growth and Development:

Characters that evolve and undergo personal growth resonate deeply with readers.

Allow your characters to change and learn from their experiences, providing emotional depth and investment for the audience.

Use Foreshadowing:

Plant subtle hints or clues early on in the story that foreshadow future events or revelations. This technique builds anticipation, creates a sense of cohesion, and rewards attentive readers.

Trim Excess and Maintain Focus:

Streamline your narrative by eliminating unnecessary elements that may detract from the pacing and focus of the story. Each scene, event, or subplot should serve a purpose in advancing the main plot, ensuring a smooth and engaging reading experience.

Test and Revise:

Seek feedback from beta readers or critique partners to evaluate the pacing of your story. Adjustments may be necessary to maintain a balanced and engaging pace throughout the narrative. Embrace the iterative process of testing and revising to refine your storytelling skills.

Crafting engaging story arcs and maintaining a good rhythm is a delicate art that requires skill and finesse. By implementing these techniques, you can plot your story effectively and ensure a compelling pace that keeps readers engrossed from beginning to end.



Unveiling the Mystery of the Bell Witch Haunting

Ever heard the chilling legend of the Bell Witch, a Southern US folklore tale that unfolded in 19th century Tennessee?

Farmer John Bell Sr. and his family, residing along the Red River near Adams, found themselves under siege by a mostly invisible entity from 1817 to 1821.

This rustic setting became the stage for a haunting that defied the bounds of reality. From 1817 to 1821, the Bell family faced an unseen force capable of speech, altering the physical environment, and even shape-shifting. Some accounts even claimed clairvoyance and superhuman speed, adding layers of mystery to the haunting.

The legend revolves around strange occurrences, from the apparition of peculiar creatures to mysterious voices, knocking sounds, and even physical attacks on the Bell children. The entity, named Kate, showed both malevolence and moments of kindness, making the haunting all the more perplexing.

In 1894, newspaper editor Martin V. Ingram penned the "Authenticated History of the Bell Witch," becoming the first full-length record of the legend.

Despite subsequent scepticism, some view Ingram's work as a glimpse into 19th-century beliefs in the region.

Even now, the Bell Witch's legacy persists through contemporary artistic interpretations in film and music.

"The Bell Witch: An American Haunting" by Brent Monahan

This novel, published in 1997, is a fictionalised account of the Bell Witch haunting. It blends historical details with supernatural elements, offering a compelling narrative inspired by the legend.

"The Bell Witch: The Full Account" by Pat Fitzhugh

Pat Fitzhugh, a researcher and expert on the Bell Witch legend, wrote this book to provide a comprehensive and detailed examination of the haunting based on historical records and eyewitness accounts.

"An American Haunting" (2005):

This horror film, directed by Courtney Solomon, is loosely based on the Bell Witch legend. It stars Donald Sutherland and Sissy Spacek and presents a fictionalised account of the events surrounding the haunting.

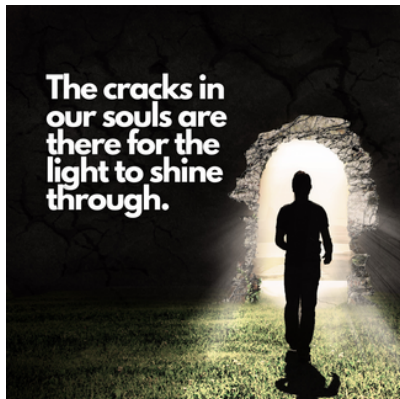
"The Bell Witch Haunting" (2004):

This independent horror film, directed by Ric White, claims to be a documentary-style retelling of the Bell Witch legend. It combines elements of re-enactments, interviews, and alleged found footage to explore the haunting.

Was it a malevolent spectre or a product of 19th-century imagination?

Ink & Intrigue: Memorable Quotes, News & Gripping Reads

Quote



Why do we love flawed characters? Maybe it's because they remind us that no one is perfect, and that imperfections can be sources of strength as well as weakness. They feel more human, more relatable, and have a unique allure that captivates readers across genres.

Flaws add depth and complexity to characters, making them more interesting and realistic. It's through their flaws that they face challenges, make difficult choices, and experience personal growth. This journey of self-discovery creates a compelling narrative arc that keeps readers engaged. Like in the "Harry Potter" series. The flawed character of Severus Snape is initially portrayed as a cold and bitter individual. However, as the story unfolds, his complex backstory and hidden motivations are revealed, challenging readers' initial perceptions and evoking a range of emotions.

True Detective Series 4



Have you been watching True Detective?

I'm a huge fan of this show, especially the first season, so I couldn't wait to watch 'Night Country'.

Night Country appears to check numerous boxes on the intrigue scale. Drawing inspiration from the recently resolved Dyatlov Pass incident, where an avalanche was the culprit, the season unfolds as an investigative journey into the gruesome deaths of a team of scientists. Discovered naked, frozen, and seemingly terrified in the tundra near the small town of Ennis, Alaska, the plot thickens.

Ennis, dominated by Iñupiat residents grappling with polluted black water from a mining plant, is gripped by its annual sunless polar night, intensifying tensions as the local police commence their inquiry.

Sheriff Danvers (Foster) and Trooper Navarro (Reis) navigate their strained history while attempting to solve the murders.

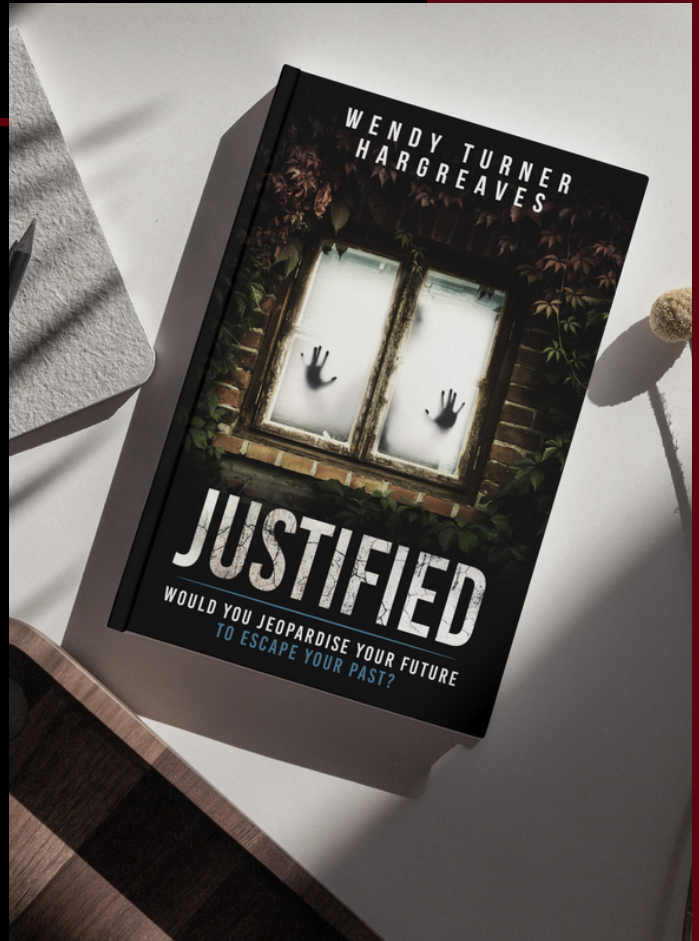
The unsolved killing of an Iñupiat activist unexpectedly intertwines with the current crime, compelling the women to set aside their differences and collaborate in unravelling the interconnected web of mysteries.

I love the focus on the two tough female cops and how their relationship evolves throughout the series. There are some solid performances from an impressive cast, including a cracking American accent from Christopher Eccleston.

Overall though, I was disappointed. I found the series repetitive, overly drawn out in places and at times confusing. Too many loose threads for me.

What did you think?

Win a FREE Signed Copy of "Justified"



Fancy a Freebie?

If you enjoy a twisty crime thriller, here's your chance to win a signed copy of "Justified."

Simply comment on the page where you're reading this newsletter or post, or pop me an email to wendy@retroriver.co.uk

The winner will be announced in next month's issue, so don't forget to subscribe if you haven't already.

Good luck!

Wendy

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Last month's winner was Christian Hunter from Conway UK. Congrats Christian! Your copy is on its way to you. Enjoy!

NEXT MONTH

- Unsolved mysteries - true crime stories
- The Power of Setting: How does Location Enhance Crime Fiction?"
- Writing: Building Immersive Worlds and Evoking the Right Mood
- News, quotes and recommendations from your favourite genre



Did you enjoy the opening of 'Justified' in the first issue? If you'd like to carry on reading, here's the [link to buy](https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B08XJZJZJZ) on Amazon. If you missed it, you can read it on my website. Go to <https://wendyturnerhargreaves.com/newsletter>

Would you like to contribute?

Please get in touch if you'd like to contribute in any way - I love hearing from readers and other authors. You can also get in touch via one of my social media channels.



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