This workshop is presented and funded by the Massachusetts Library System (MLS).

Adrenaline Genres

Adventure, Suspense, Thrillers, Romantic Suspense

Appeal characteristics

• Page-turning pace
• Action-filled and cinematic story lines
• Gritty, menacing tone
• Sympathetic protagonists placed in danger
• Resolved ending, with the protagonist safe
ADVENTURE NOVELS….

• star a hero on a mission
  – Overcoming great peril
  – Defeating insurmountable obstacles
  – Saving the world!!!

• are often ongoing series
• feature fast-pacing, nonstop action
• employ gum and paperclips to save the world
• background includes exotic or military settings
• take place in a mostly male world.

Classic Adventure

• Page turning action
• Elaborate frames with historical details
• Exotic locales
• Sympathetic hero
• Dastardly villains
• Multiple plot twists
• Crossover with Mystery, Thriller, Suspense
• Annual titles

Steve Berry

• Page turning action
• Elaborate frames with historical details
• Exotic locales
• Sympathetic hero
• Dastardly villains
• Multiple plot twists
• Crossover with Mystery, Thriller, Suspense
• Annual titles
Bernard Cornwell

- Multiple series
- Historical Details
- Vivid characterizations
- Dark tone
- Polished prose
- Crossover with Historical Fiction

Stephen Hunter

- Action-packed military adventure
- Series and standalones
- Bigger-than-life heroes
- Violent, complex, action-filled plots
- Descriptive landscapes
- Richly detailed background frames
- Crossover with Thrillers and Suspense

Arturo Pérez-Reverte

- Swashbuckling historical adventure series
- Literary treasure hunts in present day
- Missions in both
- Witty, provocative tales
- Compelling characters
- Richly detailed backgrounds
- Crossover with Historical Fiction, Literary Fiction, Thrillers
James Rollins
- Noble heroes battle nefarious villains
- Nonstop action
- Exotic locales
- Secret societies
- Threats to world order
- Maps and illustrations
- Series and standalones
- Crossover with Thrillers

Michael Chabon
- Madcap swashbuckling adventure
- Flawed heroes
- Quest, of a sort
- Crossover with Historical Fiction

Crossover
- Fantasy
- Science Fiction
- Historical Fiction
- Romance
- Thriller
- Suspense
- Western
- Graphic novels
Suspense Novels

“Suspense is not about the things that are happening; it’s about the things that might happen, that threaten to happen.”

Andrew Klavan

SUSPENSE NOVELS...

• often start with a prologue and set up a menacing atmosphere that pervades the story
• offer points of view of protagonist and villain—we know what’s going to happen
• feature a telescoped time frame that speeds the action
• end with confrontation between good and evil
• are told in gritty language with graphic and violent details
Classic Suspense Writers
Frederick Forsyth
Thomas Harris
Mary Higgins Clark

Lee Child
Moral, loner hero, Jack Reacher
Complex, twisted plots
Building suspense and intensity
Dangerous situations and villains
Dark atmosphere
Crossover with Mysteries, Crime Thrillers

Harlan Coben
Started with mystery series starring Myron Bolitar
Standalone suspense
Deadly danger in the everyday
Ripped from the headlines plots
Noble heroes and terrifying villains
Crossover with Mysteries
Jeffery Deaver

Series: Lincoln Rhyme, Kathryn Dance
Standalone suspense
Sympathetic protagonists and terrifying villains
Page turning pace
Cat-and-mouse chases
Danger in the everyday
Crossover with Mysteries and Crime Thrillers

Chelsea Cain

- Novels of obsession and violence
- Star Portland, OR detective and psychopath
- Strong sense of place
- Dangerous, moody tone
- Twisting plots
- Gruesome descriptions
- Fast-paced
- Crossover with Mysteries and Crime Thrillers

James Patterson

Multiple series with many co-authors
4 page chapters
Building suspense
Plot twists
Violence
Compulsively readable
Occasional non-suspense title
Also writes for teens
Crossover with Mysteries and Thrillers
Crossover

- Adventure
- Mysteries
- Psychological Suspense
- Thriller

Thriller types

- Legal
- Political/Espionage
- Medical/Scientific
- Corporate/Financial
- Crime/Caper

THRILLERS...

- move at a breakneck pace
- include extensive backgrounds and jargon
- tell cinematic, action-packed, twisted stories set in worlds of betrayal and conspiracy
- feature sympathetic heroes and heroines against evil villains
- project a gritty, menacing tone
Classic Thrillers

- Rudyard Kipling
- John Buchan
- Ian Fleming
- John LeCarre
- Michael Crichton

David Baldacci

Conspiracy, political intrigue, corruption
Series (Camel Club, Sean King and Michelle Maxwell) and standalones
Dramatic, ripped from the headlines plots
Page-turning action
Moral heroes and despicable villains
Crossover with Adventure and Suspense

Linda A. Fairstein

- Legal series starring Asst. DA Alexandra Cooper
- New York city setting and historical details as frame
- Disturbing crimes and criminals
- Multiple cases and gritty forensics details
- Dark and dangerous
- Crossover with Suspense and Mystery
Alan Furst
- Historical espionage novels, WWII setting
- Bleak and atmospheric tone
- Rich in authentic details and more leisurely paced
- Compelling tales
- Flawed and reluctant heroes
- Crossover with Historical Fiction, Adventure, Suspense

Douglas Preston & Lincoln Child
- Scientific and supernatural thrillers
- Sympathetic protagonists against human and inhuman evils
- Atmospheric and imaginative
- Interesting frames
- Pendergast series together and others alone
- Crossover with Horror, Adventure, Mystery, Suspense

Daniel Silva
- Political/terrorists
- Art restoration and history frame
- Exotic locales
- Sympathetic characters
- Stars Gabriel Allon, sleeper Mossad agent
- Action and planning
- Authentic details
- Crossover with Suspense, Adventure, and Mystery
Crossover

- Mystery
- Adventure
- Suspense
- Historical Fiction
- Science Fiction

Nonfiction Crossovers

Romantic Suspense/Romantic Adventure
Game Changers
Nora Roberts
Sandra Brown

Romantic Suspense/Adventure
• Told from the threatened heroine’s point of view
• Romance and Suspense play equal roles
• Page-turning pace
• Contemporary and historical settings; paranormal elements in both time periods
• Feeling of uneasiness from the first pages
• Lush language of romance but also violence, sex, and profanity
• Read by men and women

Classic Romantic Suspense
Christine Feehan

- Paranormal series
- Contemporary and historical
- Explicit and dangerous, steamy and atmospheric
- Fantasy crossover, detailed mythic worlds

Krentz/Quick/Castle

- Contemporary, historical, futuristic
- Paranormal elements
- Multiple, linked series
- Satisfying blend of edgy atmosphere, deadly danger, building suspense, and romance
- Humor, witty dialog
- Crossover with Adventure, Thriller, Mystery, Historical Romance, Science Fiction

Iris Johansen

- Strong heroines placed in dangerous situations
- Threats that escalate into violence
- Steamy romance and heart-stopping suspense
- Elements of paranormal
- Detailed frames, often medical, psychological, forensic
- Crossover with Adventure, Thriller, Mysteries
Nora Roberts/J. D. Robb
Strong women in difficult situations
Escalating suspense
Explicit violence
Strong sexual themes
Heartwarming relationships with friends and family
Contemporary and futuristic
Crossover with Mysteries and Thrillers

Lauren Willig
• Timelines past and present
• Swashbuckling adventure, spies, intrigue
• Romantic Romps
• Humor and witty dialog
• Builds on Scarlet Pimpernel adventures
• Crossover with Historical Fiction, Adventure, Thrillers

Crossover
• Thrillers
• Adventure
• Science Fiction
• Historical Mysteries
Adrenaline Trends

- More heroines, even in Adventure with Dan Brown-style literary quests

More Trends

- Serial murderers remain popular in Suspense and Romantic Suspense, while tales of terrorists and conspiracies abound in Thrillers

- More technology in the hands of good guys and bad ups the stakes

Trends, cont.

- Increasing evidence of paranormal elements
More Genre-blending and changing

Ready Player One
- SF dystopian near future
- Mysterious puzzle with clues
- Adventure quest
- Literary style and language

The Passage Trilogy
- Apocalyptic setting
- Vampire plague
- Horror?
- Scientific thriller?
More Trends

- Global settings
- Series continue to dominate
- History Rules

W W II Nonfiction

W W II Fiction
More Trends, continued

- Graphic Novels are In
- Fictional Worlds are not kinder, gentler places

Authors to Watch

- Joanna Bourne (Romantic Adventure)
- Becky Masterman (Suspense)
- Roger Hobbs (Suspense)
- Simon Toyne (Thriller)

Adrenaline Genres on the Web

- International Thriller Writers
- The Big Thrill
- Mystery Reader
- Romance Writers of America (Romantic Suspense)
- Romance Novelists Association (Britain)
- RT Book Reviews
Adrenaline Awards

- International Thriller Writers
- RUSA's Reading List, Best Adrenaline Novel
- Mary Higgins Clark Award
- RITA (RWA) award for Best Romantic Suspense
- Romantic Times Reviewers’ Choice Awards

Cross-Genre Web Sites

- Allreaders
- Fantastic Fiction

This workshop is presented and funded by the Massachusetts Library System (MLS).