

DIRECTIONS: Read the introduction to genre conventions and then match examples from Dashiell Hammett's "The Creeping Siamese" (use bullet pointed summary of moments in the story) to the ideas in any FOUR of the quotations. This is worth fifty percent of the grade.

Genre Conventions

A genre is a type of writing (detective, crime, adventure, etc.), and each genre has its "rules," its conventions. A genre convention, then, are the types of characteristics one would expect to find in a particular genre. For each of the conventions below, match at least one example from "The Creeping Siamese" with the corresponding convention.

Pulp fiction is sensationalized. It's not intended to be realistic.

Hutchison, Don. The Great Pulp Heroes (revised). 1996. New York: Book Republic, 2007.

Say what you will of the great pulp heroes, but they were a beguiling lot. With their narratives yoked to gut emotions, they brought messages of a limitless world of adventure and experience, a great shining universe that was full of color and juice, where heroes were not forced to do homework, mow lawns, go to bed early, or eat up their vegetables. It was all fantasy, of course—heroism rampant with seldom a dull or ugly moment— but it got a lot of readers through some hard times and filled their minds with hope, wonder, and even inspiration (13).

Detective stories are often sexist.

Penzler, Otto. Foreward. The Black Lizard Big Book of Pulps. Ed. Penzler. New York: Vintage, 2007. xi-xiv.

Black Mask seldom used stories in which women were featured, rarely bought stories by women writers, and never had a female series character. The major authors didn't mind writing about women; they merely wrote about them, sometimes with great prominence, as the catalyst for all the ensuing action. Also, in more cases than not, they were the victims, either innocents or bad girls who got what was coming to them (according to the murderer). (xiii)

Pulp fiction is meant to appeal to men.

Hopler, Jay. "Watching the Detectives: Reading Dime Novels and Hard-Boiled Detectives Stories in Context." Journal of Social History 36.2 (Winter 2002): 459-466.

Pulp fiction for working-class readers was less about crime and the process of detection than about the hard-boiled private eye's struggles for autonomy at work, his skill at reading class and social position from details of dress and décor, his manly physical and rhetorical prowess, and his tortured relations with women (461).

Pulp fiction is driven by plot, not characters or ideas.

Steranko, James. The Steranko History of Comics. Reading: Supergraphics, 1970.

Stories were all plot. Characterization was almost non-existent. It would have slowed down the juggernaut velocity of the script. Chapters were epigrammatic and swiftly paced. Paragraphs were terse, never more than a few sentences. Sentences were clipped and precise. Dialogue was always to the point. every single word kept the story moving. Authors composed laconic word pictures that read with furious speed... (16)

Detectives are not motivated by money.

Marling, William. "Characteristics of the Genre: The Hero/Heroine."
[detnovel.com](http://www.detnovel.com/Hero-Heroine.html). June 2007. 17 May 2009. <<http://www.detnovel.com/Hero-Heroine.html>>

These characteristics in sum outline the hard-boiled hero/ine in the classic period of 1920 through 1950. The protagonist was usually a detective of the "private eye" variety, or functionally similar. He or she used special expertise to restore a loss, which could mean finding a missing object or bringing a murderer to justice. They did so for little or no money, often simply for justice.

**If women were not victims to be rescued,
they were likely to be dangerous and manipulative.**

Marling, William. "Characteristics of the Genre: The Femme Fatale." [detnovel.com](http://www.detnovel.com/detnovel.com). June 2007. 17 May 2009. <<http://www.detnovel.com/FemmeFatale.html>>

The femme fatale, defined simply, is an irresistibly attractive woman, especially one who leads men into danger. In hard-boiled fiction, she is usually the protagonist's romantic interest. There have not yet been any hommes fatales (though they abound in gothic and romance fiction). The protagonist's involvement with her may range from mild flirtation to passionate sex, but in the denouement he must reject or leave her, for the revealed plot shows her to be one of the causes of the crime.

Pulp fiction was fast-paced and action-packed.

Smith, Kevin Burton. "All Hail The New Pulp: A Tribute To Blue Murder." [Thrilling Detective](http://www.thrillingdetective.com). 1998. 17 May 2009. <http://www.thrillingdetective.com/non_fiction/e004.html>

But it wasn't just the paper that was rough. Let's face it, a lot of pulp fiction, with its emphasis on fast-moving plots, sex and violence, often at the expense of logic or characterization, just wasn't that polished. Hell, at a cent or less a word, who had time for polishing? But hell, it sure was fun to read. Things happened in those stories. And the action took place in a world the readers could recognize.

DIRECTIONS: In the space below, write a paragraph using **ONE** of the examples above. You must use **BOTH** a portion of the quote about pulp fiction **AND** a quote from the story. This is worth fifty percent of the grade. There is an example on the back.



Example Paragraph (using the dime novel California Joe, The Mysterious Plainsman)

One of the most obvious attributes of dime novels is the highly stereotyped gender-roles of their characters. Over the course of the nineteenth century, the typical heroic male in these novels changes from a rugged individualist who respects (but stands apart) from traditional “womanly” values to a violent alpha-male who lives by the law of the gun (Johnson 501), reacting to what Susan Lee Johnson calls the “late nineteenth-century ‘crisis of manliness’” in which the Western frontier was no longer perceived as an exclusively “male preserve” (497). Although *California Joe, The Mysterious Plainsman* cannot be dated with any certainty (dime novels are often undated and unsigned), it straddles these worldviews, occupying a transitional state between the two extremes. For example, in a curious episode toward the end of the novel, California Joe rescues a white settler, twelve-year-old Maggie Reynolds, held captive in a Cheyenne village. As the rescue occurs during a rare moment of peace between the two cultures, California Joe agrees to pay the Cheyenne ransom: “the ears of the white warrior.” Even though Maggie objects to the gruesome trade (“No, no, let me stay here, for I am happy here; I do not wish to go home!”), California Joe stoically submits to the operation, retrieves the captured child, and returns Maggie home to her grateful parents. Although Maggie is portrayed as completely helpless, notice that California Joe does not intrude upon the Native village six-shooters ablaze. Instead, in a near-parody of the ideal gentleman, California Joe suffers in silence, even replying, “Thankee, Injun,” when the operation is complete. The casual violence is, of course, all the more striking by California Joe’s resignation to its pain, confirming his masculine role as both protector and agent of action within the narrative.

Johnson, Susan Lee. "A Memory Sweet to Soldiers": The Significance of Gender in the History of the American West." *The Western Historical Quarterly* 24.4 (Nov. 1993): 495-51.

Introducing Expert Opinions

- When writing of _____, _____ writes/notes/explains/argues _____
- Explaining how _____, author/critic _____ writes/argues
- In an article/book entitled _____, _____ writes/notes/maintains
- It has been observed that _____. _____ explains by writing/noting _____
- Author/critic _____ claims _____, writing “_____”
- Author/critic believes _____; s/he writes, “_____”
- According to _____

Example Transition Statements to an Example from the Story

- one way/example
- this is like
- for example/instance
- these characteristics can be seen in
- along these lines
- specifically
- thus/hence

