The Golden Age: 1930s & 1940s
British crime fiction flourished in the 'cosy' form of mystery story. In America, the mystery genre developed in a bleaker, more pessimistic form known as 'hard-boiled'.

Cosies
- A clever, usually amateur, sleuth
- 'Playing fair' with the reader: enough clues for the reader to solve the crime themselves
- Often a 'closed-room' setting
- Violence and unpleasantness minimised
- Red herrings or false clues
- A final denouement: revealing the solution

Hard-boiled
- The detective is often a street-wise, gruff, no-nonsense, professional
- Often a 'closed-room' setting
- Violence and unpleasantness maximised
- Red herrings or false clues
- A final denouement: revealing the solution

The Queens of Crime
Four female writers dominated 'cosy' crime fiction during the Golden Age. They were British writers Dame Agatha Christie, Margery Allingham, Dorothy Sayers and New Zealand author Dame Ngaio Marsh.

Agatha Christie
1934 Murder on the Orient Express
A classic 'locked room' murder solved by famous detective, Hercule Poirot. Many of Agatha Christie's novels experimented with plot twists, red herrings and inventive solutions. She was widely criticized for her solution to The Murder of Roger Ackroyd, which broke the rules of 'fair play'.

Dame Ngaio Marsh
1923 The Flame Trees of th
Private Eye Sam Spade has a keen eye for detail, is emotionally detached, and has an unflinchingly determination to achieve his own justice. Raymond Chandler's The Big Sleep is another classic hard-boiled crime story.
Thrillers

Thrillers are a separate but related genre. Thrillers are characterised by the moods they create in the reader, such as excitement, suspense, anxiety or surprise.

Thrillers share some similar literary devices with Mysteries, including plot twists, red herrings and cliffhangers. In many thrillers, the villain is the main character. Thrillers frequently feature crimes, but extend this to contain stories about spies and espionage.

Police procedural

Police procedural dramas are stories which follow the activities of the police as they investigate crimes. Sometimes they involve forensic pathologists as they work with the police. Often the perpetrator’s name is revealed early in the story, and the narrative explores the unravelling of the mystery by the police.

Jo Nesbo, Steig Larsson, Kathy Reichs and Patricia Cornwell are well known police procedural writers.

Legal thriller or Courtroom drama

Legal thrillers (or Courtroom dramas) are a sub-genre where the major characters are lawyers or judges and their clients. The justice system is an important part of these stories. Some well-known legal thriller authors include Erle Stanley Gardner, John Grisham and Richard North Patterson.

Whodunit?

Contemporary mystery authors

Apart from the Classic mystery authors, there are many modern authors who specialise in mystery stories.

- Alafair Tucker
- Anne Casady
- Carolyn Keene
- Sara Shepard
- Jasper Florde
- Anthony Horowitz
- Alexander McCall Smith
- Patrick Ness
- Robin Stevens
- Pseudonymous Bosch
- Lauren Child
- Eoin Colfer
- Michael Buckley
- Alice Hoffman
- Mark Walden
- J C Burke
- Elizabeth George
- Nicci French

The popularity of detective fiction led to the creation of the board game, Cluedo, in 1949