

American Crime Fiction

@

The County Library, Tallaght

History of American Crime Fiction

1920's—1940's

'Hard boiled' American crime fiction writing was a U.S reaction to the cosy conventionality of British murder mysteries. Some of these works are also referred to as 'Noir Fiction'. Crime fiction novels arose in the 1920's from a mixture of conditions of American life such as the economic boom following WW1 combined with the introduction of Prohibition in 1920-this encouraged the rise of the gangster. At the same time, pulp magazines called 'shockers' were exploiting a ready market of adventure stories. These coupled with opportunities for American writers in the 20's resulted in the start of American Crime Fiction. Many crime fiction writers started their careers writing for 'The Black Mask' magazine.

Regular contributors to the magazine include: Dashiell Hammett, Carroll John Daly, Paul Cain, Raymond Chandler and Horace McCoy.

The main protagonists of these crime fiction books are usually Private Investigators who work alone. These gritty protagonists profile life in 30's/40's America where rules and regulations do not apply to tough guys.

Popular Authors

Hammett and Chandler

Dashiell Hammett wrote all of his novels between 1929 and 1934. His private eyes are often 'half gangster' types that totally reject conventional values. His novels include: 'The Continental Op' and 'Red Harvest'. Hammetts' successor Raymond Chandler started writing in 1933. His protagonist 'Marlowe' moves away from the 'noir' sense of uncertainty in that he provides the assurance of a stable and trustworthy

.

perspective. Chandlers novels include: 'The High Window' and 'Farewell my Lovely'.

James M Cain and McCoy

In the early thirties James M Cain and Horace McCoy arrived in California. The first novels of Cain and McCoy: 'The Postman Always Rings Twice' (1934) and 'They Shoot Horses, Don't They?' (1935), can be seen as the starting place of the L.A. novel.

W.R. Burnett & Paul Cain

W. R. Burnett was one of the first authors to depict crime from the point of view of the gangster. 'Little Caesar' was written in 1929 and filmed in 1930. It was imitated in dozens of early thirties films and novels, amongst them Scarface by Armitage Trail. Paul Cain's 'Fast One' was one of the most brutal and compelling of gangster novels which was originally written for the Black Mask Magazine.

Popular Crime Fiction Authors

W.R Burnett, Paul Cain, James M. Cain, Horace McCoy, Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, Jonathan Latimer, Mickey Spillane, Walter Moseley, James Ellroy, Elmore Leonard, Thomas Harris, Orrie Hitt, James Lee Burke, Sara Paretsky, Linda Fairstein, Carl Hiaasen, Patricia Highsmith, John Katzenbach, Dennis Lehane, Ed Lacy, Martha Grimes, Linda Barnes, Diane Fanning, Lisa Lutz, Chuck Logan, Marvin Albert, Ace Atkins, Ira Berkowitz, Peter Blauner, Sue Grafton, Thomas Perry, Mario Puzo, Kathy Reichs, Elaine Viets, Robert Crais, Michael Connelly, Harlen Coben...

Popular Films adapted from crime fiction novels – 'Film Noir'

Films include: The Maltese Falcon, The Glass Key, Double Indemnity, Mildred Pierce, The Postman always rings twice, The Big Sleep, Murder my sweet, Lady in the lake, Black Angel, Deadline at Dawn, Fear in the night, Little Caesar.

If you would like to borrow any of these titles please ask a member of staff and we can check our catalogue.....see www.southdublinlibraries.ie

Contact Details for The County Library, Tallaght

County Library, Tallaght
Library Square,
Tallaght,
Dublin 24

Phone: 4620073
e-mail: talib@sdublincoco.ie

Opening Hours

Mon—Thurs
9.45am—8.00pm

Fri/Sat
9.45am—4.30pm

Please note that the library closes on the Saturday and Monday of Bank Holiday weekends.