

# BARTON

## LIBRARY

*Dare to Know*

### Psychological Fiction

*Fiction in which the thoughts, feelings, and motivations of the characters are of equal or greater interest than the external action of the narrative.*

An expansive genre in which the inner lives of characters, including their mental, emotional, and spiritual state, is depicted. This emphasis on the human mind and characters' psychological motivations drives the plot forward. Characters may represent various ideas, values, principles, or ideologies to explore aspects of a societal issue or public debate, and the narrative delves into their multi-layered personalities and motivations. Psychological thrillers can feature a protagonist who becomes involved in a situation that threatens his or her sanity or mental state. These stories often emphasize the psychological distress or delusional states of its characters, usually due to a harrowing mystery or suspenseful situation, and is told through the viewpoint of psychologically unstable characters. These unreliable narrators serve as a plot device that is useful for bending perceived reality and imparting a sinister tone. The lies, contradictions, delusions, fragmented memoirs, and delayed revelations add to the tension and dramatic twists of the plot. Psychological drama may depict a protagonist's mental struggles in response to challenges in their relationships, careers, or lives generally. Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), George Eliot's *Mill on the Floss* (1860), Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), W. Somerset Maugham's *The Moon and Sixpence* (1919), F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925), Virginia Woolf's *To The Lighthouse* (1927), Lloyd C. Douglas's *Magnificent Obsession* (1933), Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940), Albert Camus's *The Plague* (1948), Graham Greene's *The End of the Affair* (1951), Patricia Highsmith's *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1955), John Barth's *Floating Opera* (1956), William S. Burroughs's *Naked Lunch* (1959), John Updike's *Rabbit, Run* (1960), Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962), Shirley Jackson's *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* (1962), Yukio Mishima's [\*The Sailor Who Fell from Grace with the Sea\*](#) (1965), Daniel Keyes's *Flowers for Algernon* (1966), Joyce Carol Oates's *A Garden of Earthly Delights* (1967), and Daphne du Maurier's *The House on the Strand* (1969) are classic examples.

### Common Elements

Interior thoughts, feelings, and motivations
Limited amounts of external action
Deeply complex and flawed characters
Darker sides of human behavior

Mental health
Addictions
Unconscious instincts and desires
Internal conflict
Guilt
Fear
Jealousy
Paranoia

Obsession
Intricacies of the mind
Inner monologues
Flashbacks
Substance abuse
Trauma
Crime
Moral dilemmas
Ethical decisions

## Benefits of Reading

Demonstrates to readers the complexities of the human mind
Permits readers to deeply explore characters' mental states
Offers readers instances for psychological insight and empathy

Allows readers to glimpse the minds of types of people they might never encounter
Prompts readers to question what drives characters to ...
Enables readers to become more sensitive to other peoples' thoughts, desires, and compulsions

## Modern Literary Examples

<i>An Anonymous Girl</i> (2019) by Greer Hendricks
<i>Atonement</i> (2001) by Ian McEwan
<i>Before I Go to Sleep</i> (2011) by S. J. Watson
<i>Behind Closed Doors</i> (2016) by B. A. Paris
<i>Big Little Lies</i> (2015) by Liane Moriarty
<i>The Bridge</i> (1986) by Iain Banks
<i>Child of God</i> (1973) by Cormac McCarthy
<i>Cul-De-Sac</i> (2015) by Joy Fielding
<i>The Driver's Seat</i> (1970) by Muriel Spark
<i>Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine</i> (2017) by Gail Honeyman
<i>Exhibit Alexandra</i> (2018) by Natasha Bell
<i>The Fifth Business</i> (1970) by Robertson Davies
<i>Foregone</i> (2021) by Russell Banks
<i>Freefall</i> (2019) by Jessica Barry
<i>The Girl on the Train</i> (2015) by Paula Hawkins
<i>Give Me Your Hand</i> (2018) by Megan Abbott
<i>Her Body and Other Parties</i> (2017) by Carmen Maria Machado
<i>Horns</i> (2010) by Joe Hill
<i>The Hours</i> (2002) by Michael Cunningham

<i>The Hungry Tide</i> (2005) by Amitav Ghosh
<i>The Ice Queen</i> (2005) by Alice Hoffman
<i>In the Clearing</i> (2020) by J. P. Pomare
<i>The Lake, the River, and the Other Lake</i> (2005) by Steve Amick
<i>Let Me Lie</i> (2018) by Clare Mackintosh
<i>Life of Pi</i> (2001) by Yann Martel
<i>Mrs. Caliban</i> (1982) by Rachel Ingalls
<i>Never Let Me Go</i> (2005) by Kazuo Ishiguro
<i>No Country for Old Men</i> (2005) by Cormac McCarthy
<i>The Queen's Gambit</i> (1983) by Walter Tevis
<i>Revenge of the Middle-aged Woman</i> (2001) by Elizabeth Buchan
<i>The Secret History</i> (1992) by Donna Tartt
<i>Shutter Island</i> (2003) by Dennis Lehane
<i>The Silent Patient</i> (2019) by Alex Michaelides
<i>A Simple Plan</i> (1993) by Scot Smith
<i>The Sinner</i> (2007, 2017) by Petra Hammesfahr
<i>Solo Faces</i> (1979) by James Salter
<i>Something Borrowed</i> (2004) by Emily Giffin
<i>The Story Keeper</i> (2014) by Lisa Wingate
<i>The Stranger</i> (2020) by Harland Coben
<i>Unraveling Oliver</i> (2017) by Liz Nugent

*Waterland* (1983) by Graham Swift

*The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* (1997) by  
Haruki Murakami

---