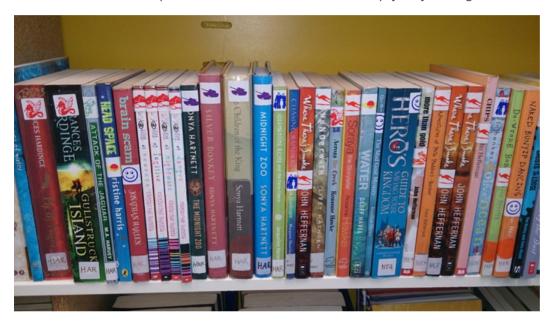# Genre Labelling

*By Melanie Mengel*

We are a small primary school in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) and during the mid-year stand-down break I undertook the task of adding genre labels to all of our fiction chapter books.

We are a school of avid readers and as a solo teacher-librarian; I struggled to keep up with the readers' advisory demands of my students. My most common requests were for a fantasy story or a mystery or a book about an adventure. Logically, my thoughts turned to the genrefication of our collection to enable the books to recommend themselves to the students, essentially lightening my load and freeing me up to help the more reluctant readers latch on to something of interest.

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The approach I took was to leave books shelved in alphabetical order by surname on the existing shelving, and affix a sticker towards the top of the spine depicting the genre. This way the children are able to use the genre label for quick identification but shelving is still as efficient as it was before. It also meant that the process was much faster as I did not have to physically rearrange the collection.
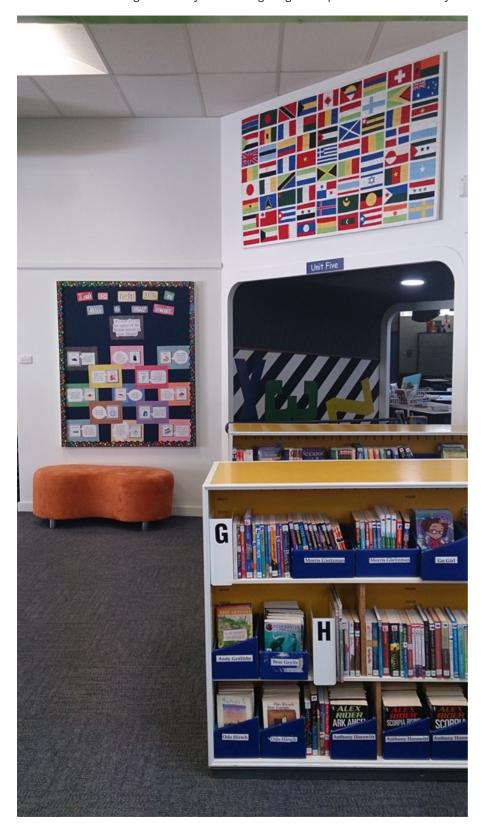


I worked on my own using my laptop and barcode scanner to help identify the genre using the subject headings on our LMS. There were some titles that I was able to classify without the need to check the catalogue, just using my knowledge of the book and the blurb. Each shelf took approximately one hour to decide on the correct genre, apply the new sticker, cover the sticker with a barcode protector, and replace on the shelf.



The genres that I have used for our collection are; fantasy, adventure, humour, real life, history, war, scary, science fiction, Australian, sports, mystery, classic fiction, and short stories. The stickers I used came from the Raeco collection and I am really happy with the way they look. I am about to order some Graphic Novel labels too.

There were only a few books that I encountered that did not easily fit into one of these categories. Most fit neatly into one genre though there were a few that could have slotted into a number of categories. I chose the one that seemed most pertinent, but the kids know that they can just let me know if I did not get it quite right. Most of our short story collections received a short story label as well as a more specific genre label.

To help the kids with remembering what each label stands for, I enlarged the images of each label and created a display about them. Many students are seen during their library time reading the genre explanations and then they head into the collection to find something new.



The children have been very enthusiastic about the new labels and it has definitely improved the circulation of our collection. It also frees up the time spent helping students select appropriate books as more of them are able to search independently. The teachers have also found it useful when searching for read-alouds and other titles for classroom use. They have begun to set genre studies and homework tasks challenging children to read titles from genres that they would not normally select.

All the best if you decide to undertake the process of genrefication. It is a time consuming process, but well worth it in the end.

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