

MYSTERY/THRILLER/CRIME

Definition: This category includes novels in which a mystery, puzzle, chase, or search, particularly in the realm of crime, is central to the main plot. In **mystery novels**, a crime typically is committed early on, and the story focuses on discovering who committed the crime and why. Subgenres include cozy and hard-boiled mysteries; police procedurals; medical, scientific or forensic mysteries; and legal or courtroom dramas. In **thrillers**, the focus often is on stopping a crime or event beforehand, capturing the villain(s), solving/resolving the issue, and/or preventing another, potentially more devastating crime or event from occurring. Subgenres include political thrillers (set against the backdrop of a political power struggle); epic thrillers (perhaps threatening an entire community, city, or country); and psychological thrillers (in which the threat is more contained—for example, to the protagonist, her partner, and/or other family members). In **crime novels**, the focus typically is on the contest of wills between protagonist and villain. Subgenres include certain types of police procedurals, “noir” books with a morally compromised hero, and perhaps even a mystery/thriller blend. Entries must have a minimum of 40,000 words to qualify for judging.

Judging Guideline: In this category, the major focus is on catching criminals, saving the day, and solving crimes. All entries must include significant themes, characters, situations, or other content about women or sapphically aligned nonbinary people who are romantically and/or sexually attracted to women or sapphically aligned nonbinary people. For GCLS purposes, no love story or personal issues for the main character(s) should ever constitute the main plot (though minor subplots of romance or personal issues may exist). If the novel includes two interwoven plot lines – a significant romance and a complex storyline involving elements of suspense, intrigue, adventure, and/or dramatic events—the book belongs in Romantic Blend. Supernatural thrillers should not be entered in this category but in Science Fiction/Fantasy or Paranormal/Occult/Horror.

Evaluation Items:

1. Thinking back on the GOLDIE entry you are about to judge, what were your overall impressions, positive and/or negative?

Using a 10-point scale where “1” means you “Totally Disagree” and “10” means you “Totally Agree,” please indicate how much you disagree or agree that each of the following statements describes this GOLDIE entry.

2. The opening of this novel draws readers into the story and makes them want to read further.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

3. The premise of this novel does not depend too heavily on implausible coincidence or far-fetched circumstances that are inappropriate for this type of book.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

4. This novel has enough conflict—that is, obstacles standing in the way of characters achieving their goals—to keep readers interested.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

5. The plot of this novel is free of holes and logical inconsistencies—dropped story lines, puzzling disappearance of characters, underdeveloped or contrived story elements, actions leading to illogical consequences, etc.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

6. This novel is appropriately paced. The story moves along smoothly without being too spare, rushed, saggy, bloated, or cluttered with unnecessary detail.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

7. By the end of the novel, the author(s) has reasonably resolved all important plots, subplots, and character conflicts other than those clearly intended to remain unresolved.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

8. This novel features compelling, three-dimensional main characters with credible strengths and flaws.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

9. Secondary and/or minor characters are appropriately developed and do not detract from the main characters or plot.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

10. The characters in this novel are portrayed in a believable way—dialogue is reflective of age and social class, actions are consistent with personalities, career levels are age-appropriate, backstories help deepen reader understanding, etc.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

11. This novel has engaging, natural-sounding dialogue that brings the characters to life.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

12. This novel is written in an engaging style. The story flows smoothly, with a sufficient variety of sentence structure and length; the language is fresh, vivid, and original; word choices are effective and fit the style, tone, and mood of the novel; etc.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

13. This novel is virtually free of factual errors, incorrect spelling, poor punctuation and grammar, unnecessary repetition, paragraph structures that don't make sense, and confusing or missing dialogue tags that make it difficult to know who is speaking.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

14. The novel does not jump unnecessarily from the “head” of one character to another within a given scene or describe things a given character can't possibly know, see, hear, or feel. Point-of-view transitions within a scene, if any, are clearly signaled to the reader.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

15. This novel has an effective balance between “showing” what happens (via actions, dialogue, and/or vivid details from a given character's point of view) and “telling” what happens (via explanations and summary).

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

16. This novel has a distinct sense of time and place that skillfully captures the mood, tone, and setting of the story.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

17. This novel has elements (stories, characters, themes, settings, evocative writing, a distinct voice, enjoyable confusion, etc.) that will linger in the reader's mind long after the book is finished.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

18. This novel includes significant themes, characters, situations, and/or other content about women who are attracted to women or sapphic individuals.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

19. Characters of various races, classes, cultures, ethnicities, sexual orientations, gender identities, physical or mental abilities, etc. portrayed in this novel are presented in ways that avoid offensive stereotypes.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

20. Fans of mysteries, thrillers, and/or crime novels will absolutely want to read this book, maybe even more than once.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

21. Details relevant to this mystery, thriller, and/or crime novel are skillfully woven throughout the book's plot, dialogue, and other character interactions.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

22. The author(s) successfully uses one or more techniques appropriate to this mystery, thriller, and/or crime novel—red herrings, shadowed clues, overt clues, unexpected plot twists, an inciting incident or turning point, etc.—to engage the reader. Remember, a quality book might employ only one or two such techniques and still be highly engaging to readers.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

23. This mystery, thriller, and/or crime novel employs imaginative, innovative, and/or unique ideas to put a surprising or unexpected twist on often-used stereotypes, themes, and approaches.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

24. This mystery, thriller, and/or crime novel contains sufficient suspense, tension, and/or increased risk for the protagonist(s) to keep readers keenly interested in finding out what happens next.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

25. The author(s) concludes this mystery, thriller, and/or crime novel in a satisfying way.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

26. This GOLDIE nominee is a splendid example of high-quality books in the **Mystery/Thriller/Crime** category.

Totally Disagree									Totally Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

27. Please summarize your overall thoughts about this book. Constructive criticisms, if any, would be especially helpful. An edited version of your insights and those of other judges—absent any identification—may be shared with the author(s).