

Task for *Evil Genius*

The thriller genre

Thriller is a genre of literature with numerous subgenres such as: the spy thriller, the action thriller or the political thriller. Thrillers are defined by setting a consistent tone of mystery throughout the narrative which is emphasised by **suspense, gnawing tension** and feelings of **paranoia**.

The introduction of a good thriller always sets the clues that are slowly unfolded through the rest of the book, with a number of **plot twists** keeping the responder in a state of anticipation as the plot builds towards a climax. The thriller will often feature kidnappings, conspiracy or **red herrings; cliffhangers** are used extensively. In most thrillers there will be a **vital piece of information** that is concealed from the reader until the very last stages of the narrative.

Homer's *Odyssey* is one of the oldest stories in the Western world and is regarded as an early prototype of the thriller with epic poems such as *Beowulf* and fairy tales such as *Little Red Riding Hood* conforming to the same narrative form. Thrillers usually feature a flawed but likeable **protagonist** who has, or develops, a strong moral code while the **villain** of the piece – a nasty, immoral and fiendishly clever antithesis to the main character – will definitely influence the narrative, but might not always be obvious until the plot unfurls.

A well-written thriller will have an ending that leaves the audience re-thinking everything they had assumed about the plot so far. Standard thrillers will have the protagonist overcoming evil and restoring justice but more modern writers of the genre like to leave the ending more ambiguous not just because there might be a potential sequel but also to get the reader really thinking about the moral of the story.

1. Find definitions for the following terms:

paranoia: _____

plot-twist: _____

red herring: _____

cliff-hanger: _____

protagonist: _____

antithesis: _____

2. The following chart follows a basic formula for an essay body paragraph. Use your reading journal to help you identify elements of the thriller in the narrative.

Charting the Thriller in *Evil Genius*

Identify	Effect	Example	Link
Protagonist			
Suspense			
Paranoia			
Plot twist(s)			
Villain(s)			
Cliff-hanger			