

From Print to Screen: The Longevity of Mystery Novel Adaptations

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From the vampire craze sparked by *Twilight* to the current popularity of dystopian worlds portrayed in *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent*, adaptations of popular YA novels into television series and movies is nothing new. While these trends come and go, one genre remains: mysteries. From Agatha Christie's *Miss Marple* to Sara Shepard's popular *Pretty Little Liars* series, it is clear that mystery adaptations are here to stay. What makes mysteries so great for the big (or small) screen?

Mystery novels adapt well to TV and film screens because of the nature of mystery stories. Mysteries are full of action and suspense, which are elements that translate well to screen because they draw viewers in, allowing them to become part of the story. Like mystery novels, mystery TV shows and films allow viewers to become engaged through working to piece together clues and solve the mystery. In addition, the mystery genre is often based off of real-time

events, and thus is more realistic than other popular genres that include supernatural elements. This realism allows viewers to connect with the characters and scenarios depicted.

The longevity of mystery adaptations from print to screen can partially be attributed to the timeless nature of the mystery genre. The feeling of suspense is not restricted to a certain time period, and that has allowed classic mystery novels to be reinvented. For example, the classic mystery series *Sherlock Holmes*, originally released in 1887, has been adapted countless times in both film and TV. Recently, there has been a trend in the modernization of the Sherlock Homes story in the BBC series *Sherlock* (2007) and the CBS series *Elementary* (2012) ("8 unconventional Sherlock Holmes adaptations", 2012). Though Sherlock Holmes began as a detective in an era void of any modern technology, the theories and practices of deduction and crime solving have allowed the characters of Sherlock Holmes and his partner Watson to adapt to a modern setting, where technology is integrated into their detective toolkits.

Notably, the popularity of mysteries on screen can also cause a transition from screen to novel. The *Veronica Mars* series is one example; Veronica Mars is a modern day Nancy Drew who investigates crimes in the upper-middle class town of Neptune, California (Jensen, 2015). The TV series that began in 2004 only lasted on air for three seasons before being discontinued. However, after airing, it gained a huge following that eventually led to a Kickstarter-funded movie (Wilson, 2014). In 2014, the creator of *Veronica Mars*, Rob Thomas, wrote the first novel in a series based upon the TV series (Jensen, 2015).

Whether a story begins as a novel, TV show, or film, it is the characters, suspense, and action of mysteries that makes the genre what it is, and that has permitted its continued popularity in all mediums.

References

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