Part suspense thriller, part horror, and part mystery, Psychological Suspense is a unique and very popular genre of novels.

Psychological Suspense

Hitchcock, Alfred. Call # M ALF
Alfred Hitchcock invented psychological suspense; his stories are still fresh and frightening.

Robotham, Michael. Call # ROB
Robotham writes a terrifying series that follows the cases of a detective and psychologist.

Oates, Joyce Carol. Call # OAT
Oates writes dark, gripping, books filled with social commentary and psychological insight.

Smith, Scott. Call # SMI
Smith puts his characters in difficult situations. We squirm as they make all the wrong decisions while trying to work their way out.

McEwan, Ian. Call # MCE
McEwan provides a more “literary” approach to the genre.

Moerk, Christian. Call # MOE
Moerk is a new and promising voice in the genre.

Harris, Thomas. Call # HAR
In Hannibal Lecter, Thomas has created the ultimate serial killer, one which scares us out of our wits, while enticing us to keep turning the pages.

Marshall, Michael. Call # MAR
Marshall ‘s books blend suspense, paranoia, and an oppressive atmosphere.

Du Maurier, Daphne. Call # DUM
Du Maurier took the Gothic tradition of the Bronte’s and moved it terrifyingly into the 20th Century.

Koontz, Dean. Call # KOO
Koontz has sold millions of books that defy genre classification but all deal with the horrors people inflict upon one and other.

LOOK INSIDE FOR DETAILS ON TWELVE MORE AUTHORS!
Keith Ablow has a dark and twisted series that follows psychiatrist and police consultant, Frank Clevenger as he helps track down the perpetrators of some pretty grisly murders. Ablow’s novels are more about the psychology of the villains than they are about the investigations into finding them. Characters reign over action in these graphic novels, but what keeps the readers clamoring for more is Clevenger himself, who may be just as unstable as his clients.

Nicci French is the pseudonym of English journalists Nicci Gerrard and Sean French. Together they write stand-alone and series psychological novels in which the suspense builds relentlessly and the plot twists are both unexpected and highly satisfying. These are novels with strong, but vulnerable female protagonists, who find the killers and sometimes love in the process. Try The Red Room in which the police ask psychiatrist Dr. Kit Quinn to consult on the murder of a troubled young girl. But, no matter the plot, an Ablow novel puts ordinary heroes and heroines in a dangerous situation; the novel then explains how they wriggle their way out. Expect lots of plot twists and graphic descriptions.

Jeff Lindsay has become a best-selling author with his creation of the widely popular and extremely original character Dexter Morgan. Dexter is a serial killer who kills serial killers; it is as simple and as complicated as that. Lindsay’s novels turn the serial killer story on its head by adding an appropriate helping of sardonic humor. Dexter is a blood spatter analyst consultant for the Miami Dade police department, but he is also antisocial and psychotic. Darkly Dreaming Dexter is the first.

Peter Abrahams likes to lead his main character into a situation the reader knows is a bad idea from the start. For example, in End of Story, a young woman who is an aspiring writer agrees to teach a creative writing class at a maximum security prison, where she falls under the spell of a convict in her class. But, no matter the plot, an Abrahams novel puts ordinary heroes and heroines in a dangerous situation; the novel then explains how they wriggle their way out. Expect lots of plot twists and graphic descriptions.

Frances Fyfield writes both series mysteries and stand-alone Psychological Suspense. Her novels are compelling stories of obsession that address social issues such as date rape or spousal abuse; her settings are dark and her heroines tend to be both emotionally and physically damaged. Try Undercurrents. Henry Evans travels back to the small seaside town in England where he lived 20 years ago to investigate, finding a far darker truth.

Val McDermid offers readers strong women characters and provocative stories that explore abuse and other social ills. These are dark, dramatic stories of sick villains and the people who try to understand them in order to stop them. Her main series features Carol Jordan, a policewoman and Tony Hill, a forensic psychologist and profiler. In The Torment of Others, Hill believes that a convicted, and currently incarcerated, killer must be responsible for a recent murder. But how?

Thomas Cook writes satisfyingly creepy tales that consider the issues of morality and justice. His storylines are dark and gripping with complex characters and detailed settings. Like many Psychological Suspense authors, Cook’s novels blend many genres together. Try the Edgar Award winner The Chatham School Affair. The year is 1962 and Elizabeth arrives at a private school for boys where she begins an affair with a married teacher, beginning a chain of events that leads to murder.

Carol Goodman writes lyrical, literary suspense, stand-alone titles. Most of her novels are centered on a past, possible crime that may have connections to the present day. She fills her novels with mythical allusions as she explores the psychology of her characters; placing her characters in a closed environment to add tension. In The Lake of Dead Languages, a woman returns as a new teacher to the small private school in which things start off badly and only get worse. Try 13 Steps Down where an elderly landlord becomes suspicious of her serial killer obsessed tenant.

Ruth Rendell is the reigning queen of Psychological Suspense with her gripping, claustrophic, non-series novels of obsession. The tension in Rendell’s novels is enhanced by her choice to focus on socially isolated, misfit characters. These are disturbing books in which things start off badly and only get worse. Try The Church of Dead Girls. In a small town young girls start disappearing and the citizens, all close friends and neighbors, start turning on each other with disastrous results.

Stephen Dobyns writes psychological thrillers which question the psychology within itself more than what goes on inside the mind of a serial killer. These are dark books which make the reader squirm. Try The Church of Dead Girls. In a small town young girls start disappearing and the citizens, all close friends and neighbors, start turning on each other with disastrous results.

As readers, we are both drawn in by Ripley’s magnetism and repelled by his fiendishness. The Talented Mr. Ripley is the first in the series.

Minette Walters, it has been said, writes elegant, complex, atmospheric, psychological puzzles, featuring unbalanced characters, with ever-building suspense. In a recent title, The Devil’s Feather, a traumatized war correspondent hides from a serial killer, in a rural English cottage.