# The True Crime Genre in Movies and TV Shows (Definition and Examples)

'Mindhunter', Netflix

(…)

## What is True Crime?

True crime is a genre of non-fiction that focuses on real-life crimes, usually violent in nature, and the individuals involved in them. This can include murders, kidnappings, robberies, and other criminal activities.

True crime stories often explore the motivations and psychological factors that drive criminal behavior, as well as the consequences of such actions. They can take many forms, including books, podcasts, TV shows, and documentaries.(…)

## What Are the Tropes of True Crime?

While true crime stories vary widely in content and style, several recurring tropes[[1]](#footnote-1) and themes are common. Here are some of the most common tropes of true crime:

1. **The crime itself:** True crime stories usually focus on a specific crime or series of crimes, and explore the details of how they were committed.
2. **The investigation:** True crime stories often dig into the investigative process, including how law enforcement officers pieced together the evidence to identify suspects and make arrests.
3. **The criminal:** True crime stories often delve into the psyche of the criminal, exploring their motivations, backgrounds, and possible mental health issues.
4. **The victim:**True crime stories often focus on the victims of the crime, and their families and loved ones. They explore the impact that the crime had on their lives.
5. **The trial:** True crime stories often include a trial or court case and explore the legal system's role in bringing criminals to justice.
6. **The resolution:** True crime stories usually provide a sense of closure, either by identifying and punishing the perpetrator or by providing some form of justice for the victim and their family.
7. **The controversy:**Some true crime stories involve controversial elements, such as wrongful convictions, police misconduct, or other ethical concerns.

True crime stories often balance factual accuracy with storytelling techniques to create a compelling narrative that explores the darker side of human nature and the justice system.

## Why is True Crime So Popular in Film and TV?

From the recent Dahmer – Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story show to American Crime Story, true crime has never been hotter in Hollywood. Well, maybe when In Cold Blood came out, but truly it's now. So, why are people diving in head first to this genre?

There are several reasons why.

1. **Human fascination with crime:** Humans have always been fascinated by crime and its causes. True crime stories offer a glimpse into the motivations and psychological factors that drive criminal behavior, which can be both intriguing and educational.
2. **Accessibility**: With the rise of streaming services like Netflix and Hulu, true crime documentaries and TV shows have become more accessible to a wider audience. Viewers can watch multiple episodes in one sitting and become fully immersed in the story.
3. **The power of storytelling:** True crime stories can be incredibly powerful and emotionally compelling. The best true crime stories are often told in a narrative style that keeps viewers engaged and invested in the outcome.
4. **The justice system**: True crime stories often involve the justice system, which can be both fascinating and frustrating. Viewers are drawn to stories that explore the intricacies of the justice system, including its flaws and successes.
5. **Social commentary:**True crime stories can also provide a lens through which to view broader social issues, such as poverty, inequality, and mental health. These stories can shed light on societal problems and spark discussions about how to address them.

True crime has become popular in film and TV because it offers viewers a window into the darker side of human nature and the complexities of the justice system. It allows viewers to explore fascinating and often disturbing stories from the safety and comfort of their own homes. (…)

<https://nofilmschool.com/true-crime-genre-movies-and-tv-shows>

**True crime sub-genres**

Cold cases: deals with unsolved cases, both old and more recent cases, typically murders. The case is examined from new angles, and hitherto unknown evidence or witnesses are presented. The purpose can be to create new public awareness of the case in the hope that it might be solved. However, it may also just be to deliver a compelling and mysterious story.

Case reassessed: deals with cases in which a verdict has been found leading to the accused being either sentenced or acquitted, and where the programme questions the premise of the verdict. Thus, the actual question of guilt is at the centre of this type of true crime. As with *cold cases*, new evidence, perspectives or witnesses is presented here. The purpose may be to get the case re-assessed so that the person found guilty can get the chance to appeal the sentence, or people who were wrongfully acquitted can be brought to justice.

Case retold: tells the story of a crime without a motive of reassessing the case or finding the culprit, but simply because it’s an interesting or sensational story. It may, however, deal with broader societal perspectives or developments in forensics.

1. words, phrases, images etc that are used for an unusual or interesting effect [↑](#footnote-ref-1)