

# A Taxonomy of Literary Genre

Literature comes in a very wide variety of forms, and how we approach and comprehend each piece of literature depends to some extent on what form the literature takes. Writing can take the form of labels, informational texts, narrative forms, descriptive forms, and on and on. There are works of pure fiction, fantasy, and fables. There are more expository texts, historical fiction, and realistic fiction. There are poems, lyrics, epics, and sonnets. There are short stories, news articles, encyclopedic articles, and human-interest stories. There are journals, diaries, memoirs, and now there are blogs.

As experienced readers, we are familiar with text in all its different forms, and we are able to discriminate between different genres and styles. However, our students have not learned to discriminate and approach different types of text in appropriate ways.

Developing an understanding the various different forms of literature takes time, and students need a great deal of interaction with text in each of the different genres in order to become familiar with literary forms.

There are hallmarks and signs that one piece of text is fantasy, another is fiction, another is realistic or historical fiction, and another is a narrative account of actual events. Learning to search for these different hallmarks and signs takes years of practice with support from teachers.

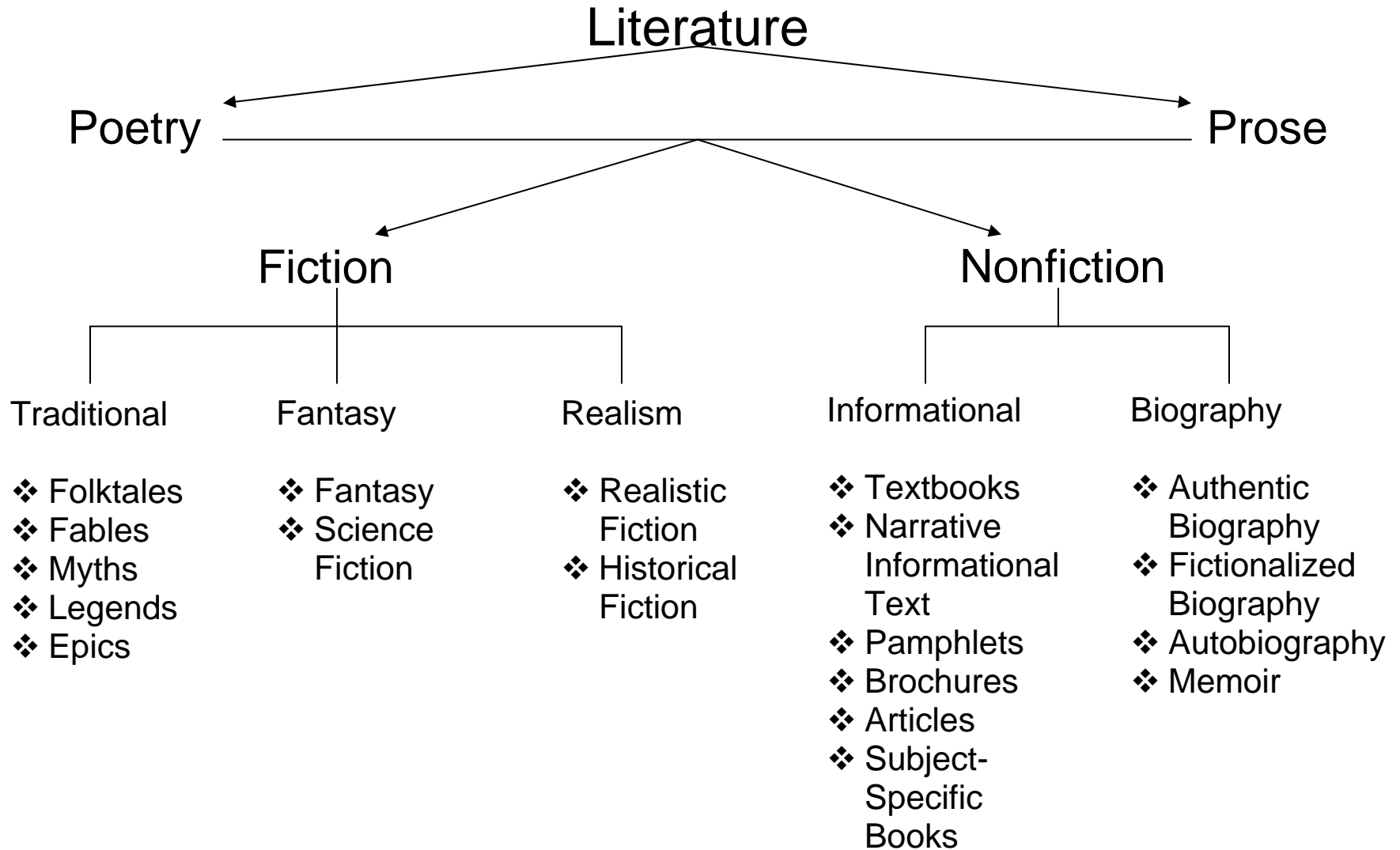
Starting in the early grades, teachers should be introducing literature in different genres, discussing the hallmarks of each genre, teaching students how to discriminate among genres, and helping students to keep the classroom library organized by genre.

The knowledge and understanding related to genre would, of course, be different at kindergarten than it is at 5th grade, but teachers should still expect students to speak intelligently about genre in an age-appropriate manner.

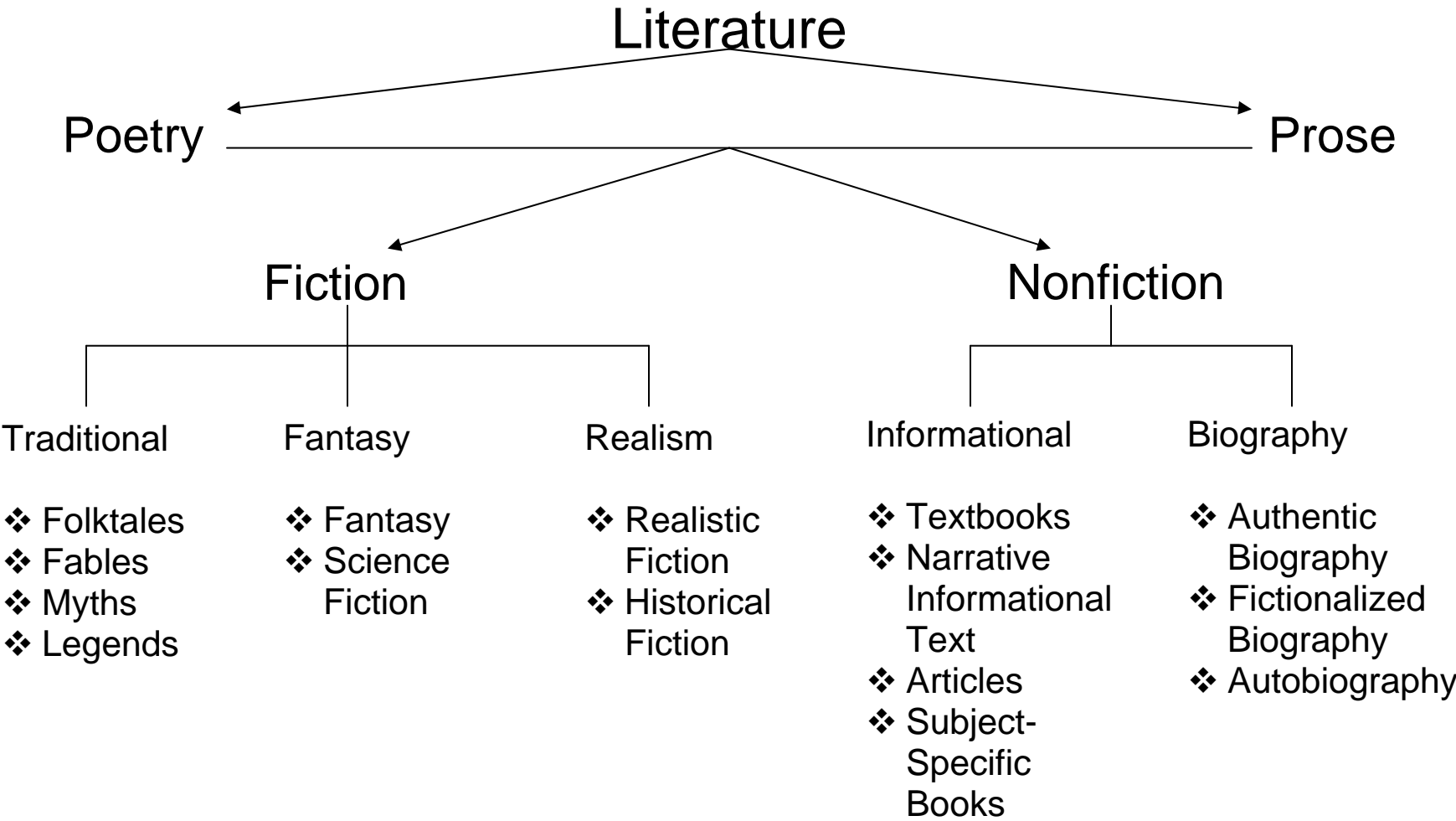
Students have an easier time developing an understanding of genre when the terms used to describe genres are used consistently. When 1st grade students learn that a piece of text is "fantasy," and then find out that same piece of text is "fiction" in 2nd grade, and then learn that same piece of text is a "fable" in 3rd grade -- well, you can imagine how they get confused.

To encourage vertical alignment and consistency, we are providing the Genre Taxonomy posters for each grade level (below). Teachers are encouraged to display these posters in their classrooms, and challenge students to use each genre term appropriately. Kindergarten students would be expected to, for example, divide books into realistic literature and fantasy. By 3rd Grade, students should be able to make more subtle distinctions between, for example, fantasy and science fiction. By 5th grade, students should understand the difference between, for example, fables and folktales.

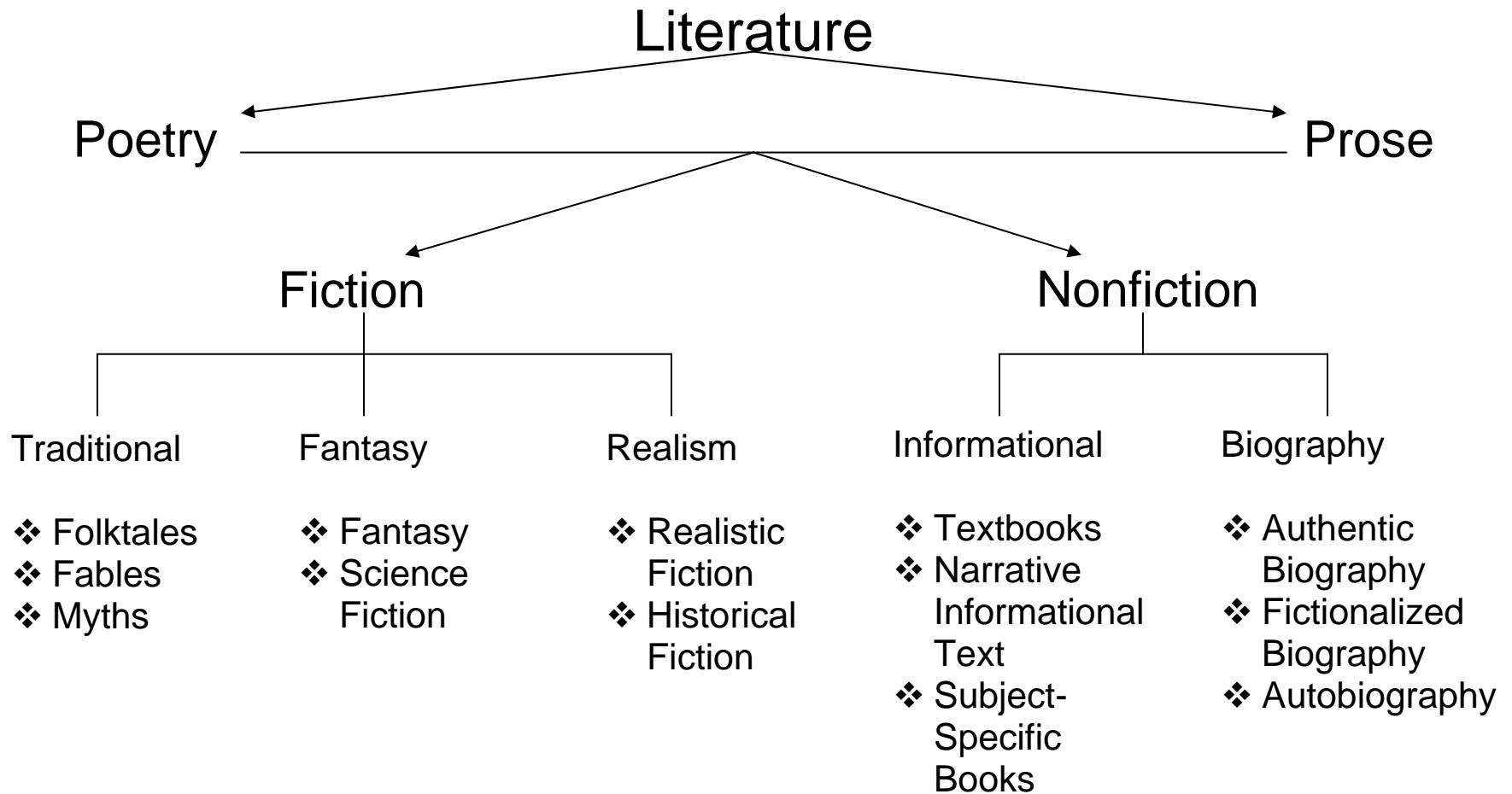
# Fifth Grade Genre Taxonomy



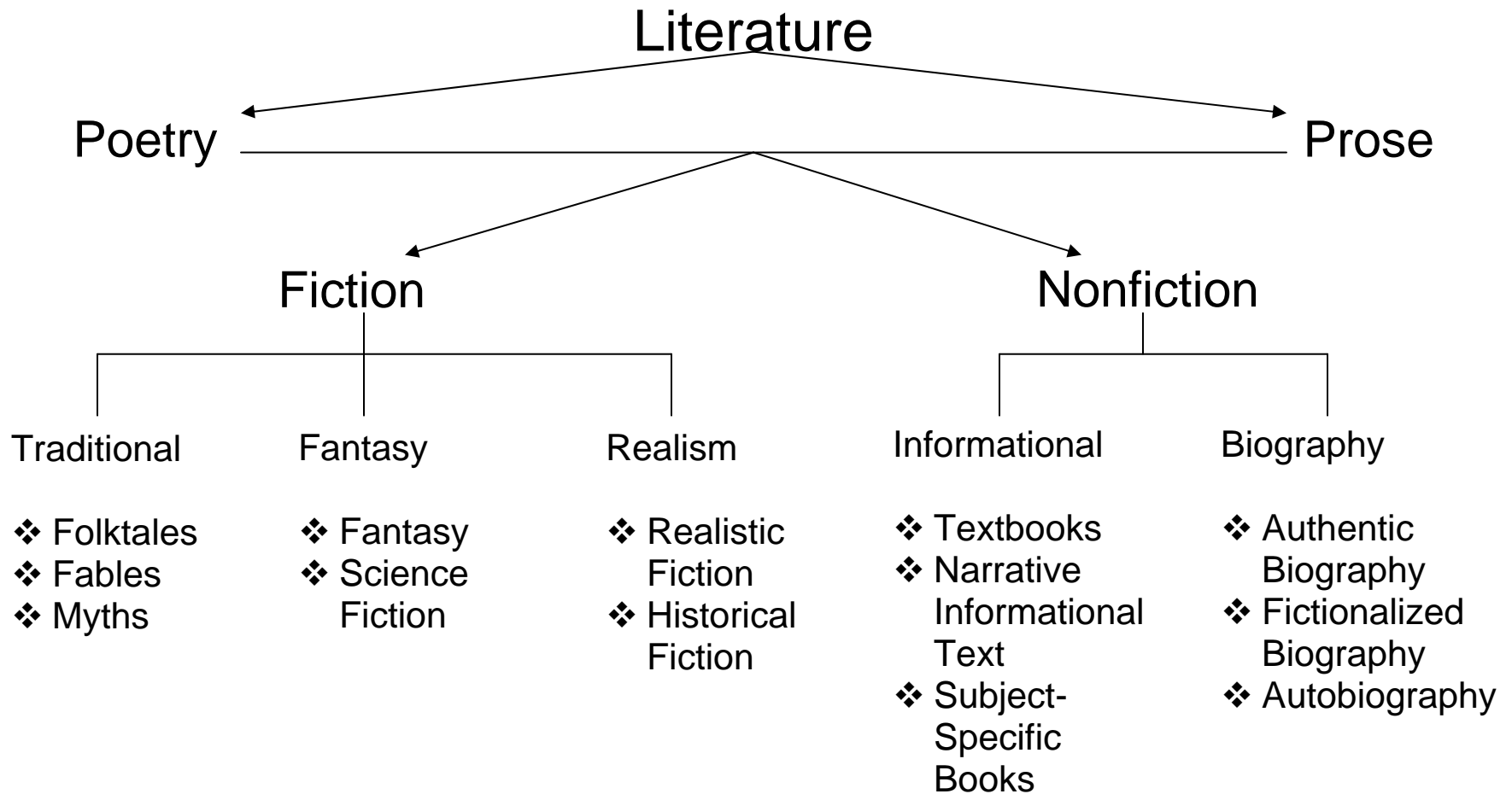
# Fourth Grade Genre Taxonomy



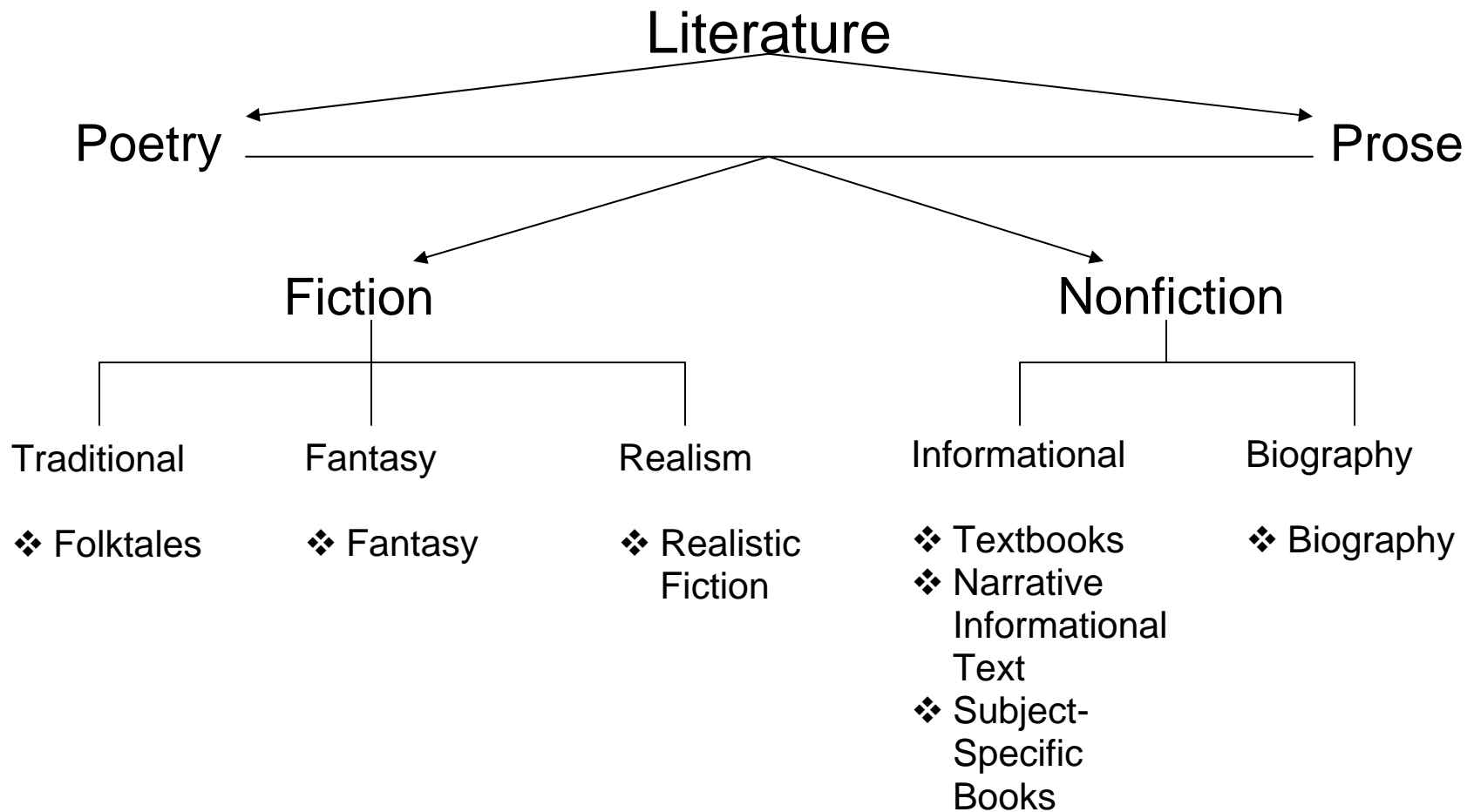
# Third Grade Genre Taxonomy



# Second Grade Genre Taxonomy



# First Grade Genre Taxonomy



# Kindergarten Genre Taxonomy

