



Using Novels to Teach History

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Presenter

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Workshop Objectives

- What are historical novels
- Why use historical novels to teach history
- How to find appropriate historical novels
- How to vet novels for accuracy
- How to use novels to teach history

Research and discussion

Literature guides

Study guides



What Are Historical Novels?

- A novel “having as its setting a period of history and usually introducing some historical personages and events.”
- **Merriam-Webster Dictionary**



What Are Historical Novels?

- “[H]istorical novel, a novel that has as its setting a period of history and that attempts to convey the spirit, manners, and social conditions of a past age with realistic detail and fidelity (which is in some cases only apparent fidelity) to historical fact.”
- Actual historical personages or a mixture of fictional and historical characters
- Single historical event or “a broader view of a past society in which great events are reflected by their impact on the private lives of fictional individuals.”
- **The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica (online)**



What Historical Novels Are ... and Are Not

- **British historical fiction writer Jill Paton Walsh: “a novel is a historical novel when it is wholly or partly about the public events and social conditions which are the material of history....”**
- **The novel’s history has to be accurate. Historians often feel that historical fiction does not pay enough attention to historical detail.**
- **“Costume” novels “plunk fictional characters in a historical setting, but they do not participate in public events or interact with other characters to reveal social conditions or ...tendencies of a particular era.”**
- **Source: Herz**



Summary : What Historical Novels Are

- ◊ **Historical setting**
- ◊ **Historical people**
- ◊ **Social conditions**
- ◊ **Historical accuracy**
- ◊ **Historical details**



Using Novels to Teach History—Why?

- **“Why Historical Fiction Matters: The History That Lies Beyond Pure Fact” Steven Mintz, University of Texas**
- **Historical novels can**
 - **“transport us to another era” and show us “history’s vast panorama” - novelist Margaret George**
 - **“lay bare history’s human side”**
 - **“enter into the past’s emotional interior and psyche”**
 - **“explore people’s motives”**



Using Novels to Teach History—Why?

- Mintz, continued

- “The historian will tell you what happened. The novelist will tell you what it felt like.” - E. L. Doctorow



Using Novels to Teach History—Why?

- “Using Historical Fiction in the History Classroom”
Sarah K. Herz, Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
- Another understanding of the past
- Imagination and figurative language involve students in the past
- Interesting characters and drama engage students on an emotional basis
- Student involvement



Using Novels to Teach History—Why?

- Herz, continued
- Students become interested in the story
- They begin to draw inferences about what life was like in the past
- They absorb historical details without even realizing they are being instructed
- Versus textbook memorization



Using Novels to Teach History—Why?

- Herz, continued
- Students must understand historical events to understand the story.
- Retention is easier because historical facts are understood within the story
- Relevancy of history
- Study of the past helps understand the present



Summary: Using Novels to Teach History—Why?

In summary research suggests:

- Novels engage student interest
- Novels invite students into an emotional involvement with history
- Novels aid student retention



Selecting Novels

- ◊ Read the reviews of trusted influencers or reviewers
- ◊ Use church libraries
- ◊ Purchase at Christian bookstores and home school conferences
- ◊ Ask a homeschool friend for recommendations
- ◊ Read the book!



Selecting Novels

- Newbery Medal winners:
 - “Rifles for Watie”
 - “The Door in the Wall”
 - “The Bronze Bow”
 - “Johnny Tremain”
 - “Island of the Blue Dolphins”



Selecting Novels

- Other books
 - Picture books – ages 4-8
 - Chapter books – ages 6-9
 - Middle grade – ages 8-13
 - Young adult – ages 13-18



Selecting Novels

- ◊ *I Can Read* series

- ◊ Level 1

- ◊ Level 2

- ◊ Level 3

- ◊ Level 4



Selecting Novels

- Carol Kerney Books
 - *The Triplet Adventures* series
 - *The Ancient World ALIVE!* series
 - *The Young Benjamin Franklin* series
 - *Time Flies* series



The Triplet Adventures

- “The Secret of the Ancient Cave” – Paleolithic times
- “Danger in the Egyptian Tomb” – ancient Egypt
- “Mesopot-What?” – ancient Mesopotamia
- “The Case of the Missing Coosh” – ancient Kush
- “Seeking Nehemiah” – ancient Israel
- “Treasure Is Where You See It” – ancient Greece
- “India Alone!” – ancient India
- “Clay Horses, Clay Warriors” – ancient China
- “The Buried Shard” – ancient Rome



The Ancient World ALIVE!

- Companion books to *The Triplet Adventures*
 - “Gena of the Cave” (Paleolithic)
 - “Falcon of the Sky” (Egypt)
 - “The River Runs Wide” (Mesopotamia)
 - “From the Land of Iron to the Shining Sea” (Kush)
 - “By the Shores of the Weeping River” (Israel)
 - “The White Stone, The Black Stone” (Greece)
 - “The Stupa” (India)
 - “The Terracotta Stallion” (China)
 - “**Arcilla of Pompeii**” (Roman)



Time Flies

- “The Mayflower Compact”
- “Colonial Charters”
- “The Declaration of Independence”
- “The Articles of Confederation”
- The Constitution”
- “The Bill of Rights”



The Young Benjamin Franklin

- Six years in the life of the young Ben Franklin
 - “Ben at Ten”
 - “Ben at Twelve”
 - “Ben at Fifteen”
 - “Ben at Sixteen”
 - “Ben at Seventeen”
 - “Ben at Eighteen”



Summary: Selecting Novels

- Research novels using trusted sources
- Read the novel ahead of using with your students



Checking Accuracy

- Reference sources:
 - Textbooks, encyclopedias, nonfiction books, biographies etc.
- ...and Internet from reliable sources
- Guidelines for using historical fiction
 - Setting
 - Characters
 - Plot (story line)
 - Theme
- Source: Herz



Summary: Checking Accuracy

- Use reliable sources to check the novel's accuracy
- Discuss any discrepancies in the novel with your student



How to Use Novels to Teach History

- ◊ Research and discussion
- ◊ Literature guides
- ◊ Study guides



How to Use Novels to Teach History: Research and Discussion

- Research and discussion



How to Use Novels to Teach History: Literature Guides

- Literature Guides to many novels are available for purchase:
 - Amazon ([amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com), search on “literature guide” and “book’s title”), \$7 to \$11
 - Teachers Pay Teachers ([teacherspayteachers.com](https://www.teacherspayteachers.com)), search on “literature guide” and “book’s title”), online product, prices vary



How to Use Novels to Teach History: Literature Guides

- ◊ Samples

- ◊ “Mini-Guide for Middlers: Rifles for Watie”
- ◊ ‘Novel Study Packet for ANY BOOK”



How to Use Novels to Teach History: Study Guides

- Study Guides are like literature guides but may have less emphasis on literature and more on history
- Search Amazon.com and teacherspayteachers.com for “Study Guides”
- Study Guides are included within Carol Kerney Books
- Create your own Study Guides to use with historical novels



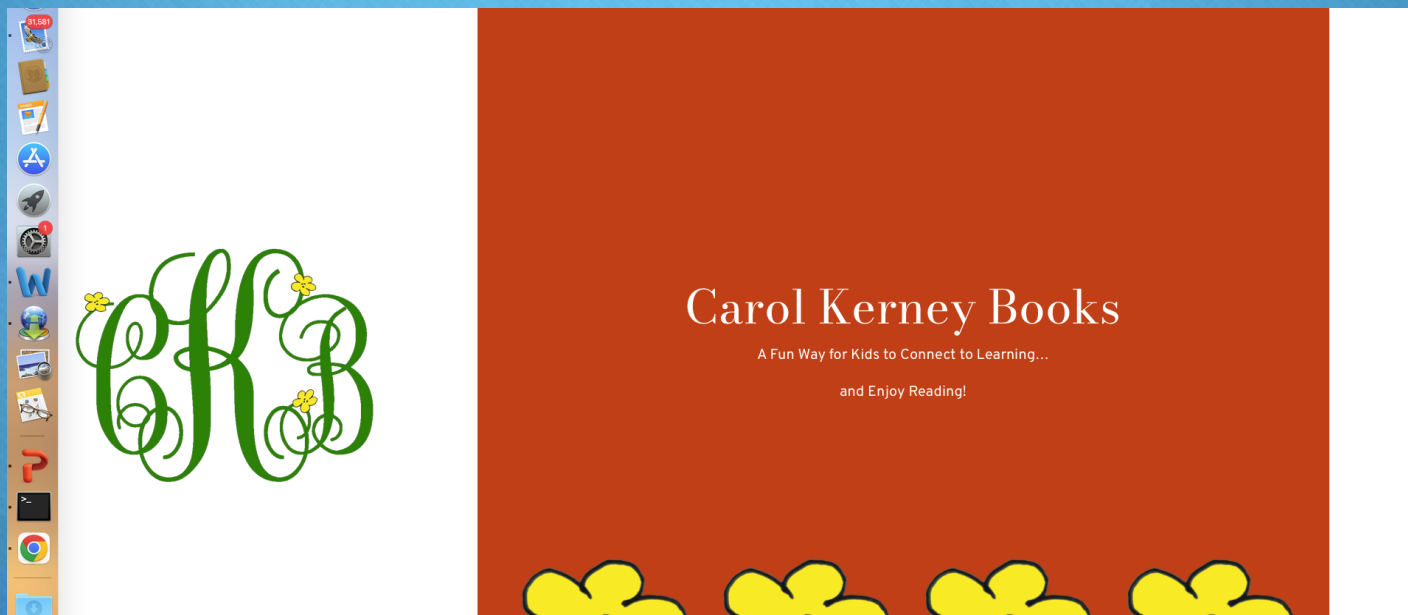
How to Use Novels to Teach History: Study Guides

- Model Study Guide

- Learning Objectives—what you want the student to remember about the novel
- Teaching Hints—what other resources you can use
- Creative Activities—fun activities to reinforce the learning
- Student Assessment—“checking up” on what the student learned
- Answer Key—answers to the student assessment

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