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American Historical Fiction
An Annotated Guide to Novels for Adults and Young
Adults

by
Lynda G. Adamson



ORYX PRESS
1999

The rare Arabian Oryx is believed to have inspired the myth of the unicorn. This desert antelope became virtually extinct in the early 1960's. At that time several groups of international conservationists arranged to have 9 animals sent to the Phoenix Zoo to be the nucleus of a captive breeding herd. Today the Oryx population is over 1,000 and over 500 have been returned to the Middle East.

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For Frank, Frank III, and Gregory

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PREFACE

Historical fiction evokes a particular time period by focusing on a well-known person or even on an ordinary person living in historical times. Through historical fiction, a reader can learn how people traveled, what they ate, and how they established relationships in a time other than the present. Readers often become fascinated with specific times and want to read additional titles with these settings.

The generally accepted definition of historical fiction is that it is about a time period at least 25 five years before it was written. I have espoused a similar definition in other publications, but I no longer think it viable. If the setting is in a time earlier than that with which the reader is familiar, it is historical fiction. Therefore, in *American Historical Fiction: An Annotated Guide to Novels for Adults and Young Adults*, I have included a great many books with settings that are not present day, regardless of when they were written.

This book originally began as an update to the fifth edition of Dickinson's *American Historical Fiction* by Virginia Brokaw Gerhardstein (1986). It has become more. Rather than merely add titles published after 1985, I examined over 5,500 titles listed under the subject heading "Historical Fiction" in the Library of Congress catalog. Since many books that could fit the subject of "Historical Fiction" are not marked as such in the Library of Congress catalog, I also examined the subject listings under "War stories," "Detective and mystery stories," "Romantic suspense novels," "Love stories," "Christian fiction," and simply "Fiction." I also examined the issues of *Library Journal*, *Publishers Weekly*, and *Booklist* published since 1980. After I had created my list, I checked Gerhardstein's book and decided to retain any overlapping titles that are classics, have sequels or prequels, or contain settings rarely reappearing in more recent historical fiction. As a final criterion for inclusion, books had to be either reviewed, or in the case of genres only recently earning the attention of reviewers (Christian fiction or romances, for example), appear with a summary of content in the publisher's catalog. This *Guide*, therefore, will help readers to choose from over 3,300 titles of historical fiction set within the United States in a variety of genres.

Organization

American Historical Fiction is organized according to time periods from prehistory (before the arrival of European explorers) through the recent past. The novels are listed alphabetically by author within the appropriate time period. If the novel spans more than one of the designated time periods, I have sorted the entry by the dates of the time period in which the book begins. If the novel's characters remain in a specific locale, I have used that place, usually a state, as the main setting, which is listed in the Geographic Index. If they travel in a general area such as the West, South, or East, I have designated that area as the setting.

Each entry includes the author; title; date of original publication (and most recently known reprint if applicable); number of pages; brief description of the content, setting, and main characters; genre(s) if applicable; and any award the book may have received. Annotations are descriptive rather than evaluative and include setting, character, and plot, and list relevant sequels or identify series to which books belong.

Since reprints appear erratically, I advise librarians or patrons planning to purchase books to check current citation sources for books, including those online that list and sell out-of-print titles. For almost all books that have been reprinted in large type, I have used

the original date of publication and number of pages.

Young Adult Books

Books designated as "Young Adult" are, in almost all cases, books written for adults that young adults ninth grade and older might enjoy reading. I have included only a handful of books published specifically for young adults; these are excellent books giving an unusual point of view, generally set in a time period few other novels cover. Almost all of the adult books noted as appropriate for young adults come from professional educators' and reviewers' lists in *School Library Journal* and *Booklist*. Since adult mores and opinions about appropriate material for young adults vary, adults who plan to make selections for young adults from this Guide and who have specific concerns about sexual content or language may wish to examine the entire novel. Similarly, other adults may discover books in the Guide not designated as "Young Adult" that they believe teenagers with whom they are acquainted will appreciate. Books designated as "Young Adult" in this Guide will be marked with a diamond (◊) symbol and listed alphabetically by author in Appendix II.

Appendixes and Indexes

Following the main entry section are two appendixes: a list of books that have won awards and the list of books that may be appropriate for young adults. Following these are five indexes: author, title, genre, geographic, and subject.

Genres

To say that a book of historical fiction belongs in a specific genre can be constraining and misleading. War stories can be romances, and romances can be mysteries or adventures. Therefore, a book may have more than one genre that fits its content. Genres and their general definitions for *American Historical Fiction* are

Adventure Story stories filled with action

Allegory stories that can be read on a symbolic level

Bildungsroman (Coming-of-Age) stories in which the protagonist matures, usually by means of a significant event

Biographical Fiction stories focusing on the life of a specific person in which

the author creates dialogue rather than documentation

Christian Fictionstories without explicit sex or obscene language in which the protagonist from a Christian denomination faces challenges based on a faith in God

Domestic Fictionstories focusing on the home life or immediate family situations of a character

Epic Literaturestories with a protagonist who acts heroic against a nationalistic setting

Erotic Literaturestories with graphic sexual encounters

Family Saga-stories about several generations of a family within the same book or over a series of books

Fantastic Literature-stories not known to be true but using characters who have become part of legend

Gothic Fiction stories that include a dark atmosphere or eerie phenomena

Humorous Fictionstories that use humor as a basis for the characters to understand themselves and the world

Jewish Fictionstories focusing on Jews and Jewish culture

Legal Storystories with trials or lawyers as integral parts of the plot

Love Storystories depicting complex love affairs that are not necessarily patterned to have happy endings

Medical Novelstories in which one of the important characters is a healer or physician

Musical Fictionstories in which the protagonist is a musician

Mystery (including Detective Fiction) stories with an unknown factor that must be solved, such as a murder or other crime

Picaresque Fiction stories in which the episodic action moves from place to place without seeming to have a single climax

Political Fiction stories in which the protagonists must cope in some way with a hostile government, or in which political intrigue is an integral part of the plot

Religious Fiction stories in which members of non-Christian religions reveal their faith

Romance stories in which two people fall in love but must overcome difficulties before they can be together

Satire stories that jest about society's mores

Sea Story stories focusing on adventures at sea or taking place on ships at sea

Sports Fiction stories with protagonists interested or involved in a specific sport

Spy Story stories in which espionage drives the plot

Time Travel stories in which a protagonist enters a different time period, which then becomes the main setting

War Story stories that take place during the time of a war when a protagonist either fights on the front or remains at home waiting for a loved one to return

Westerns stories taking place in different locations across America as the frontier moved westward

Sample Entry

Time Period	1815-1845	
	Early Westward Expansion	
Author	Long, Jeff	Publication Information
	499. <i>Empire of Bones</i> . New York: Morrow, 1993. 256 pp.	
Title	Sam Houston wonders if he will be able to succeed in defeating Mexico with the motley group composing the Texas forces of 1836.	
Description	<i>Award(s)</i> : Western Writers of America Spur Award.	Award(s)
	<i>Genre(s)</i> : Biographical Fiction; War Story.	Genre(s)

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MAIN ENTRY SECTION

North America before 1600

“ May be suitable for young adult readers

B

Bohnaker, Joseph J.

“1. *Of Arms I Sing*. Santa Fe, NM: Sunstone, 1989. 182 pp.

Captain Villagr a, in a Seville prison cell, writes about Don Juan de O ate's conquest of the southwest and the pueblo dwellers in the New World and of the fighting among his men after O ate becomes governor of the area.

Genre(s): Adventure Story.

Bruchac, Joseph

2. *Dawn Land*. Golden, CO: Fulcrum, 1993. 317 pp.

A snake bites Young Hunter, and when he tells the oldest Talker, the man realizes that the snake has chosen Young Hunter to protect the Only People as danger approaches.

Genre(s): Domestic Fiction.

C

Coldsmith, Don

3. *Runestone*. New York: Bantam, 1995. 489 pp.

Nils Thorsson comes to Vinland as Leif Eriksson did, and when his companions suffer disaster, he learns to survive in the wilds with the help of a one-eyed Native American.

Conley, Robert J.

4. *The Dark Way*. New York: Doubleday, 1993. 179 pp.

When the Cherokee priest allows his homosexual lover, Two Heads, to choose a sacrificial victim for rain, the Cherokee are horrified, and lose faith in their priests. (*Series: Real People, 2*)

Genre(s): Adventure Story.

5. *The Peace Chief*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998. 336 pp.

After accidentally killing his best friend, the Cherokee Young Pupp is spiritually reborn as Comes Back to Life, and he leads his people during troubles with the Spanish, the French, and the Seneca.

Genre(s): Domestic Fiction.

6. *War Woman*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997. 384 pp.

In 1580, Whirlwind goes to Florida to find her Spanish grandfather with her brother and husband-to-be, but the males become dependent on Spanish liquor, and she grows rich after her people begin mining gold.

Genre(s): Family Saga.

F

Fletcher, Inglis

7. *Roanoke Hundred*. Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs Merrill, 1954. 492 pp.

Sir Richard Grenville tries to establish the colony at Roanoke Island in 1588, but disease and discontent thwart its completion. (*Series*: Carolina, 1)

Genre(s): Biographical Fiction; Family Saga; Romance.

G

Gear, Kathleen O'Neal, and W. Michael Gear

8. *People of the Lakes*. New York: Forge, 1994. 608 pp.

Mica Bird, a young warrior, finds a Mask with great powers, which the spirit of his dead grandfather warns him not to misuse. (*Series*: First North American, 6)

Genre(s): Epic Literature; Adventure Story.

9. *People of the Lightning*. New York: Forge, 1995. 414 pp.

In prehistoric Florida, a young man in a fishing village has the ability to tell the future. (*Series*: First North American, 7)

Genre(s): Epic Literature; Adventure Story.

10. *People of the Mist*. New York: Tor, 1998. 432 pp.

Although Hunting Hawk knows that his granddaughter, Red Knot, loves High Fox, he still promises her in marriage to Copper Thunder, the chief of a rival clan.

Genre(s): Epic Literature; Adventure Story.

“11. *People of the Silence*. New York: Forge, 1996. 496 pp.

Cornsilk and Poor Singer have secrets in their Anasazi pasts that seem to mirror the decline of their civilization. (*Series: First North Americans, 8*)

Genre(s): Epic Literature; Adventure Story.

Gear, W. Michael, and Kathleen O'Neal Gear

“12. *People of the Earth*. New York: Tor, 1992. 608 pp.

White Ash of the Earth People clan has the responsibility of dreaming for her people, and after their many misfortunes and enemy invasions, she advises them to go on a year's journey to the East. (*Series: First North American, 3*)

Genre(s): Epic Literature; Adventure Story.

13. *People of the Fire*. New York: Tor, 1991. 467 pp.

The chief of the Red Hand people watches his people die in a period of severe drought while a false dreamer is in power. (*Series: First North American, 2*)

Genre(s): Epic Literature; Adventure Story.

14. *People of the River*. New York: Tor, 1992. 400 pp.

Near contemporary Cahokia, Illinois, around 1300, Nightshade lives with other Mississippians or Mound-Builders. (*Series: First North American, 4*)
Genre(s): Epic Literature; Adventure Story.

15. *People of the Sea*. New York: Forge, 1993. 425 pp.

When Kestrel becomes pregnant with her lover's twins, her abusive husband Lambkill kills Iceplant, her lover, with a knife, and Kestrel escapes to the coastal home of Iceplant's relatives. (*Series: First North American, 5*)
Genre(s): Epic Literature; Adventure Story.

16. *People of the Wolf*. New York: Tor, 1990. 435 pp.

Runs-in-Light and Raven Hunger, born brothers in the Ice Age clan of the The People, Children of the Father Sun, chose different paths, one being a proud, violent warrior and the other a Dreamer serving his people. (*Series: First North American, 1*)
Genre(s): Epic Literature; Adventure Story.

Gray, Robert Steele

17. *Survivor*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998. 336 pp.

When lightning bolts strike Mark Lewellyn, they transport him from contemporary America to AD 200 where he must survive buffalo herds and warring Native Americans.
Genre(s): Time Travel; Adventure Story.

H

Harrigan, Lana M.

18. *Coma*. New York: Forge, 1997. 384 pp.

Vicente de Vizcarra brings his wife Maria Angelica to New Mexico in 1598, expecting her wealth to fund his pursuit of gold, and during his long absences, she adjusts by having an affair with a Native American.
Genre(s): Political Fiction.

Harrison, Sue

19. *Brother Wind*. New York: Morrow, 1994. 494 pp.

In the sequel to *My Sister the Moon*, Kiin must abandon her tribe and one of her twin sons to return with her husband's killer to his village.

Genre(s): Family Saga.

20. *Mother Earth, Father Sky*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1990. 313 pp.

Chagak flees with her grandfather when enemies destroy her Aleutian Island village in 7000 BC.

Genre(s): Family Saga.

21. *My Sister the Moon*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1992. 449 pp.

In the sequel to *Mother Earth, Father Sky*, Kiin's jealous younger brother kidnaps and rapes her before trying to sell her as a slave to a distant tribe.

Genre(s): Family Saga.

Hunt, Angela Elwell

22. *Roanoke*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1996. 488 pp.

Jocelyn White, a newlywed who dutifully accompanies her husband to the New World, is one of the settlers who founds Roanoke colony. (*Series*: Keepers of the Ring, 1)

Genre(s): Christian Fiction; Romance.

J

Jekel, Pamela

23. *Columbia*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986. 448 pp.

A saga of the Columbia River in the Pacific Northwest begins 9000 years ago, where people such as Ilchee lived, and where archaeologists currently dig.

Genre(s): Family Saga.

24. *Deepwater*. New York: Kensington, 1994. 512 pp.

Leah Hancock's female descendants in North Carolina from 1587 to Reconstruction show their courage and fortitude.

Genre(s): Family Saga.

K

Kaufelt, David A.

25. *American Tropic*. New York: Poseidon, 1987. 463 pp.