

The Civil War through Historical Fiction

The Civil War era is one of the most critical and fascinating in our nation's history. The many books about this period written for young audiences provide a rich context in which to learn about the Civil War itself and to explore more basic issues about the nature of human life and society. Here is your chance to explore some of these books and the genre of historical fiction.

Complete the following activities:

1. Genre Study: Historical Fiction

Many of the books in the list of recommended titles are historical fiction. Discuss in your groups--What do you know about this genre? List examples of historical fiction that you have read in the past.

Historical fiction is based on events that actually happened -- such as the Civil War, the Battle of Gettysburg, and the assassination of President Lincoln -- but the main characters and the specific events in those characters' lives are made up by the author. A writer of historical fiction researches the time and place that will be the setting of a story before he or she begins writing. Besides reading history books, the writer may study personal journals and letters, newspaper articles, photographs, art, and literature from the period. All of these primary sources provide the "flavor" of the historical period so that the writer can make the setting and events come alive for readers.

2. Conduct a book pass. Use the "Book Pass" worksheet to evaluate the books in this collection. You should document at least ten books.

3. Independent Reading. Once you have completed the book pass, chose one of the books to begin reading. Students may read with a partner if more than one student wants to read a particular book. As you read use sticky notes to mark places in your book where you believe the author is including historical facts about the time/ people/ places/ events/ of the Civil War. Be prepared to discuss what you have read with the group and to share any historical information you found in your reading.

