

Historical Fiction – Open a window to the past

When I say “historical fiction”, do you think: dry, boring, not my type of book, or have I grabbed your attention? Hopefully the latter but if not, don’t stop reading yet. Lately I have read some fantastic historical fiction that has opened my eyes to astonishing adventures and captivating characters. Historical fiction doesn’t mean slow-pacing or no action. The books I’ve listed below have suspense, mystery, humor, and characters you want to read about.

Even picture books can offer a glimpse of the past, as seen in **Elsie’s Bird** by Jane Yolen. A truly touching book about Elsie, a little girl who moves to the Nebraska frontier after the death of her mom. At first she feels isolated and misses the sounds of Boston, but then her canary escapes and Elsie truly experiences the beauty of the prairie for the first time. Another picture book with a nostalgic feel is **Miss Dorothy and Her Bookmobile** by Gloria Houston. Dorothy dreams of being a librarian in a beautiful brick library. When she grows up, she marries a farmer and lives in a place without a library. The community buys her a bookmobile and Dorothy travels all over the area to share her love of books.

Ready for chapter books? We have plenty of titles to choose from but here are just a select few to whet your appetite. First, there’s **The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate** by Jacqueline Kelly. Calpurnia is an 11-year-old girl with 6 brothers. Her family lives in Texas in 1899, when girls were expected to cook and learn needlepoint. The problem? Calpurnia loves science and has no interest in being a proper lady. We also have several choices for fans of mystery. **Danger in the Dark: Houdini & Nate** by Tom Lalicki begins with the story of Nathaniel Fuller’s friendship with Harry Houdini. Nate is 13 years old and lives in New York at the beginning of the 19th century. A great combination of mystery and historical fiction. Also, we have two different series on the world of Sherlock Holmes. Nancy Springer’s series stars Enola Holmes, the much younger sister of Sherlock Holmes. In the first book, **The Case of the Missing Marquess**, their mother disappears and Enola sets out to find her after her brothers Sherlock and Mycroft threaten to send her to boarding school. Enola is a brave, resourceful, intelligent girl who, at times, feels lonely and struggles under the social conventions of Victorian England. If you’re interested in Sherlock himself, check out Shane Peacock’s series. The first book is **Eye of the Crow** and Sherlock is thirteen years old. It is 1860s London and Holmes is implicated in a murder. Now he must find the real killer before it’s too late.

The teen area has excellent choices for anyone looking for an introduction to historical fiction. Check out the heartbreaking story found in **Revolution** by Jennifer Donnelly. It ties the present with the French Revolution in such a mesmerizing way. How about 1815 London? You’ll love **Wrapped** by Jennifer Bradbury. Adventure and mystery abound in this book set during the time of England’s obsession with Egypt and unwrapping mummies. I really like books with a science or medical theme and I found two that I couldn’t put down. **Queen of Hearts** – such a beautiful book – tells of the fear and uncertainty that surrounded the diagnosis of tuberculosis during World War II. Another

book, **Deadly**, by Julie Chibbaro spins a heartfelt tale around the story of Typhoid Mary in 1906. Both books have such strong female characters. How about something scary? Then you definitely need to pick up **The Monstrumologist** by Rick Yancey. One of my all-time favorites, this is a superb story that needs a historical background but it isn't the focus of the story. Rather, the reader is pulled into the horrific world of Will Henry. His story takes place in the late nineteenth century while he is an apprentice to a monstrumologist – a doctor who studies monsters. A compelling horror story, not for the faint of heart.

Even if these books don't strike a chord, the library has many other historical fiction books for you to check out. So open a window to the past and see what the library has to offer!

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