



HISTORICAL FICTION: STAFF PICKS

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THE PREHISTORIC WORLD

Auel, Jean M.

The Clan of the Cave Bear (1980)

After a natural disaster kills Ayla's tribe, members of the Clan of the Cave Bear find her and mistrust her because her blonde hair and blue eyes are different, but she eventually helps them survive. *JFS*

THE ANCIENT WORLD (3500 BC – 600 AD)

Smith, Wilbur

River God: A Novel of Ancient Egypt (1994)

Tanus is the fair-haired young lion of a warrior whom the gods have decreed will lead Egypt's army in a bold attempt to reunite the Kingdom's shattered halves. But Tanus will have to defy the same gods to attain the reward they have forbidden him, an object more prized than battle's glory: possession of the Lady Lostris, a rare beauty with skin the color of oiled cedar--destined for the adoration of a nation, and the love of one extraordinary man. *JFS*

Diamant, Anita

The Red Tent (1997)

The story of Dinah, the daughter of Jacob, is told from her point of view, beginning with the story of her mothers, Leah, Rachel, Zilpah, and Bilhah. These wives of Jacob give her the gifts that are to sustain her through a damaged youth, a calling to midwifery, and a new home in a foreign land. *AS*

McCullough, Colleen

The First Man in Rome (1990)

When the world covered before the legions of Rome, two extraordinary men dreamed of personal glory: the military genius and wealthy rural "upstart" Marius, and Sulla, penniless and debauched but of aristocratic birth. Men of exceptional vision, courage, cunning, and ruthless ambition, separately they faced the insurmountable opposition of powerful, vindictive foes. Yet allied they could answer the treachery of rivals, lovers, enemy generals, and senatorial vipers with intricate and merciless machinations of their own—to achieve in the end a bloody and splendid foretold destiny... and win the most coveted honor the Republic could bestow. *JFS*

MIDDLE AGES TO RENAISSANCE (600 – 1600)

Griffith, Nicola

Hild (2013)

Hild is born into a world in transition. In seventh-century Britain, small kingdoms are merging, usually violently. Edwin of Northumbria plots to become overking of the Angles, ruthlessly using every tool at his disposal: blood, bribery, belief. Hild is the king's youngest niece. She has the powerful curiosity of a bright child, a will of adamant, and a way of seeing the world--of studying nature, of matching cause with effect, of observing human nature and predicting what will happen next--that can seem uncanny, even supernatural, to those around her. *JFS*

Perry, Anne

The Sheen on the Silk (2010)

Anna Zarides arrives in Constantinople in 1273 to prove the innocence of her twin brother Justinian, who has been exiled for conspiring to kill a nobleman. Disguising herself as a eunuch named Anastasius, Anna moves freely, using her skills as a physician to get close to key players in her brother's fate. Then she meets Giuiliano Dandolo, a ship's captain conflicted not only by his own mixed heritage, but by his growing feelings for Anastasius. *JFS*

Christie, Alix

Gutenberg's Apprentice (2014)

Summoned home to Mainz, Germany, by his adoptive father, master scribe Peter Schoeffer becomes the apprentice of Johannes Gutenberg, who's covertly developing a system of movable metal type. Charged with keeping an eye on the wily, unpredictable Gutenberg, Peter initially chafes at his father's orders but soon recognizes the world-changing potential of Gutenberg's press when they begin work on an ambitious project: a printed Bible. But in a 15th-century Europe characterized by economic troubles, political unrest, and religious reform, bringing their masterpiece to completion will require back-breaking labor, utter secrecy, and (most importantly) preventing the reckless Gutenberg from sabotaging his own life's work. *JFS*

Seton, Anya

Green Darkness (1972)

Richard Marsdon marries a young American woman named Celia, brings her to live at his English estate, and all seems to be going well. But now Richard has become withdrawn, and Celia is constantly haunted by a vague dread. When she suffers a breakdown and wavers between life and death, a wise doctor realizes that only by forcing Celia to relive her past can he enable her to escape her illness. Celia travels back 400 years in time to her past life as a beautiful but doomed servant. Through her eyes, we see the England of the Tudors, torn by religious strife, and experience all the pageantry, lustiness, and cruelty of the age. *MR*

REFORMATION AND REVOLUTION (1600 – 1800)

Cornwell, Bernard

The Fort: A Novel of the Revolutionary War (2010)

While the major fighting of the war moves to the south in the summer of 1779, a British force of fewer than a thousand Scottish infantry, backed by three sloops-of-war, sails to the desolate and fog-bound coast of New England. Establishing a garrison and naval base at Penobscot Bay, in the eastern province of Massachusetts that would become Maine, the Scots harry rebel privateers and give shelter to American loyalists. In response, Massachusetts sends a fleet of more than forty vessels and some one thousand infantrymen to "captivate, kill or destroy" the foreign invaders. Second in command is Peleg Wadsworth, a veteran of the battles at Lexington and Long Island, once aide to General Washington, and a man who sees clearly what must be done to expel the invaders. But ineptitude and irresolution lead to a mortifying defeat-and have stunning repercussions for two men on opposite sides: an untested eighteen-year-old Scottish lieutenant named John Moore, who will begin an illustrious military career; and a Boston silversmith and patriot named Paul Revere, who will face court-martial for disobedience and cowardice. *JFS*

Gregory, Philippa

A Respectable Trade (2007)

Bristol in 1787 is booming, a city where power beckons those who dare to take risks. Josiah Cole, a small dockside trader, is prepared to gamble everything to join the big players of the city. But he needs a well-connected wife. Marriage to Frances Scott is a mutually convenient solution. Trading her social contacts for Josiah's protection, Frances finds her life and fortune dependent on the respectable trade of sugar, rum, and slave. Into her new world come Mehuru, once a priest in the ancient African kingdom of Yoruba, now a slave in England. From opposite ends of the earth, despite the difference in status, Mehuru and Frances confront each other and their need for love and liberty. *JFS*

Mitchell, David

The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet (2010)

1799, Dejima in Nagasaki Harbor. Jacob de Zoet, a devout and resourceful young clerk, has a chance encounter with Orito Aibagawa, the disfigured daughter of a samurai doctor and midwife to the city's powerful magistrate. The borders between propriety, profit, and pleasure blur until Jacob finds his vision clouded, one rash promise made and then fatefully broken--the consequences of which will extend beyond Jacob's worst imaginings. *JFS*

REGENCY TO PIONEERS (1800 – 1860)

Lerner, Rose

Sweet Disorder (2014)

Nick Dymond enjoyed the rough-and-tumble military life until a bullet to the leg sent him home to his emotionally distant, politically obsessed family. For months, he's lived alone with his depression, blockaded in his lodgings. But with his younger brother desperate to win the local election, Nick has a new set of marching orders: dust off the legendary family charm and maneuver the beautiful Phoebe Sparks into a politically advantageous marriage. *BM*

Kirkpatrick, Jane

A Sweetness to the Soul (1996)

Jane Herbert is 12 years old when tragedy strikes and sets her on a lifelong search for forgiveness and love. Her wounds need healing - both in her heart and between she and her mother. Jane finds the love of her life in a dreamer 16 years her senior and longs for children. Together they build bridges over rivers and troubled relationships, making peace with their Indian neighbors. On that journey, they discover that to pursue one's dreams with strength, flexibility, and faith brings a sweetness to the soul and touches the lives of others in the process. *MR*

deWitt, Patrick

The Sisters Brothers (2011)

Hermann Kermit Warm is going to die. The enigmatic and powerful man known only as the Commodore has ordered it, and his henchmen, Eli and Charlie Sisters, will make sure of it. Though Eli doesn't share his brother's appetite for whiskey and killing, he's never known anything else. But their prey isn't an easy mark, and on the road from Oregon City to Warm's gold-mining claim outside Sacramento, Eli begins to question what he does for a living-and whom he does it for. *JFS*

CIVIL WAR TO GILDED AGE (1860 – 1914)

Frazier, Charles

Cold Mountain (1997)

Cold Mountain is the tale of a wounded Confederate soldier, Inman, who walks away from the ravages of the war & back home to his prewar sweetheart, Ada. His odyssey thru the devastated landscape of the soon-to-be-defeated South interweaves with Ada's struggle to revive her father's farm, with the help of an intrepid young drifter named Ruby. As their long-separated lives begin to converge at the close of the war, Inman & Ada confront the vastly transformed world they've been delivered. *AS*

Gleason, Colleen

The Clockwork Scarab (2013)

In 1889 London young women are turning up dead, and Evaline Stoker, relative of Bram, and Mina Holmes, niece of Sherlock, are summoned to investigate the clue of the not-so-ancient Egyptian scarabs--but where does a time traveler fit in? *BM*

Boyle, T. C.

The Road to Wellville (1993)

Will Lightbody is a man with a stomach ailment whose only sin is loving his wife, Eleanor, too much. Eleanor is a health nut of the first stripe, and when in 1907 she journeys to Dr. John Harvey Kellogg's infamous Battle Creek Spa to live out the vegetarian ethos, poor Will goes too. So begins T. Coraghessan Boyle's wickedly comic look at turn-of-the-century fanatics in search of the magic pill to prolong their lives--or the profit to be had from manufacturing it. *JFS*

Morton, Kate

The Forgotten Garden (2009)

In 1913, a little girl arrives in Brisbane, Australia, and is taken in by a dockmaster and his wife. She doesn't know her name, and the only clue to her identity is a book of fairy tales tucked inside a white suitcase. When the girl, called Nell, grows up, she starts to piece together bits of her story, but just as she's on the verge of going to England to trace the mystery to its source, her granddaughter, Cassandra, is left in her care. When Nell dies, Cassandra finds herself the owner of a cottage in Cornwall, and makes the journey to England to finally solve the puzzle of Nell's origins. *AS*

FROM WORLD WAR TO WORLD WAR (1914-1945)

Gold, Glen David

Sunnyside (2009)

Sunnyside opens on a winter day in 1916 during which Charlie Chaplin is spotted in more than eight hundred places simultaneously, an extraordinary mass delusion. From there, the novel follows the overlapping fortunes of three men: Leland Wheeler, son of the world's last (and worst) Wild West star, as he heads to the battlefields of France; snobbish Hugo Black, drafted to fight under the towering General Edmund Ironside in America's doomed engagement with Russia; and Chaplin himself, as he faces a tightening vice of complications--studio moguls, questions about his patriotism, his unchecked heart, and, most menacing of all, his mother--to finally make a movie as good as he was. *JFS*

Winspear, Jacqueline

Maisie Dobbs (2003)

Private detective Maisie Dobbs must investigate the reappearance of a dead man who turns up at a cooperative farm called the Retreat that caters to men who are recovering their health after World War I. *BM*

McCrumb, Sharyn

The Devil Amongst the Lawyers (2010)

In 1935, when Erma Morton, a beautiful young teacher, is charged with the murder of her father in a remote Virginia mountain community, the case becomes a cause célèbre for the national press. This journey to a distant time and place summons up ghosts from the reporters' pasts: Henry Jernigan's sojourn in Japan that ended in tragedy, Shade Baker's hardscrabble childhood on the Iowa prairie, and Rose Hanelon's brittle sophistication, a shield for her hopeless love affair. While they spin their manufactured tales of squalor, Carl tries to discover the truth in an economic depression, a deadly flu epidemic, a world contending with the rise of political fanatics, and a media culture determined to turn news stories into soap operas for the diversion of the masses. *MR*

Wein, Elizabeth

Code Name Verity (2012)

When "Verity" is arrested by the Gestapo, she's sure she doesn't stand a chance. As a secret agent captured in enemy territory, she's living a spy's worst nightmare. Her Nazi interrogators give her a simple choice: reveal her mission or face a grisly execution. They'll get the truth out of her. But it won't be what they expect. *MR*