

HOT TOPICS AND THEMES IN HISTORICAL FICTION: A Reading List

EIU Academy of Lifelong Learning
List prepared by Sarah Johnson (sljohnson2@eiu.edu)

World War I

P.S. Duffy, *The Cartographer of No Man's Land* - Canadian man fighting overseas in WWI, & his son on the home front
Anna Hope, *Wake* (also 1920s) - three women endure the aftermath of WWI in England
Allegra Jordan, *The End of Innocence* - cross-class romance between two Harvard students, one American, one German
Thomas Keneally, *The Daughters of Mars* - two Australian sisters become WWI nurses
Mary-Rose MacColl, *In Falling Snow* - Australian nurses work at a field hospital in WWI France
Jennifer Robson, *Somewhere in France* - romantic WWI novel set in France
Anita Shreve, *Stella Bain* - an American woman suffers from amnesia after being found on a French battlefield
April Smith, *A Star for Mrs. Blake* - five "Gold Star Mothers" (who lost their sons in WWI) return overseas in the '30s
Charles Todd, Ian Rutledge series - shell-shocked WWI veteran solves crimes for Scotland Yard
Jacqueline Winspear, *The Care and Management of Lies* - standalone WWI novel from author of Maisie Dobbs series

The Roaring '20s

Duncan Alderson, *Magnolia City* - family saga set in '20s Texas
Jamie Ford, *Songs of Willow Frost* - Chinese-Americans in 1920s and '30s Seattle
Therese Anne Fowler, *Z: A Novel of Zelda Fitzgerald* - the story of Zelda told in her "own voice"
Suzanne Hayes and Loretta Nyhan, *Empire Girls* - two sisters in New York City in the '20s
Paula McLain, *Circling the Sun* - aviator Beryl Markham in colonial Africa
Mary Miley, *The Impersonator* and *Silent Murders* - historical mysteries set during Prohibition and the Jazz Age
Deanna Raybourn, *A Spear of Summer Grass* and *City of Jasmine* - woman's adventures in colonial Africa and Syria
Suzanne Rindell, *The Other Typist* - mystery set in '20s New York City
Erika Robuck, *Call Me Zelda* - Zelda and F. Scott Fitzgerald
Renee Rosen, *Dollface* - story of a flapper in 1920s Chicago
Genevieve Valentine, *The Girls at the Kingfisher Club* - 12 sisters in Roaring '20s Manhattan
Sarah Waters, *The Paying Guests* - suspense novel set in post-WWI London

Downton Abbey-style Sagas (see also WWI)

Barbara Taylor Bradford, *Cavendon Hall*
T.J. Brown, *Summerset Abbey* series
Sherri Browning, *Thornbrook Park*
Cate Campbell, *Benedict Hall* and others
Elizabeth Cooke, *Rutherford Park* and *The Wild Dark Flowers*
Daisy Goodwin, *The American Heiress*
Judith Kinghorn, *The Last Summer*
Rosemary McLoughlin, *Tyringham Park*
Phillip Rock, *The Passing Bells* trilogy
Fay Weldon, *Habits of the House*
Lauren Willig, *The Ashford Affair*

Gothic Sagas, Mysteries, and Thrillers

Jessica Dotta, *Born of Persuasion* and *Mark of Distinction*
Essie Fox, *The Goddess and the Thief* and others
John Harwood, *Asylum*
Anna Lee Huber, Lady Kiera Darby mysteries (*A Grave Matter*)
Susanna Kearsley, *The Firebird*

Kate Morton, *The Secret Keeper*
Charles Palliser, *Rustication*
Lucinda Riley, *The Midnight Rose*
Diane Setterfield, *The Thirteenth Tale, Bellman and Black*
Simone St. James, *The Haunting of Maddy Clare, An Inquiry into Love and Death, Silence for the Dead*

World War II

Charles Belfoure, *The Paris Architect* - a French architect designs hiding places for Jews during WWII
Sarah Bird, *Above the East China Sea* - two women, one American and one Japanese, in present day and WWII
Anthony Doerr, *All the Light We Cannot See* - two children's journeys, one in France and one in Germany
Alan Furst, *Midnight in Europe* - spy novel set in WWII Europe
Lucretia Grindle, *Villa Triste* - two sisters in Nazi-occupied Italy
Kristin Hannah, *The Nightingale* - suspenseful novel set in German-occupied France
Pam Jenoff, *The Winter Guest* - rural Poland under the Nazi occupation
Brian Payton, *The Wind Is Not a River* - story of survival and love in Alaska's Aleutian Islands during WWII
TaraShea Nesbit, *The Wives of Los Alamos* - the wives of the scientists on the Manhattan Project in New Mexico
Alyson Richman, *The Garden of Letters* - romantic novel set in WWII Italy
Liz Trenow, *The Last Telegram* - a woman's memories of the WWII French countryside
Jennifer Vanderbes, *The Secret of Raven Point* - an American woman becomes an army nurse in WWII Italy
Various Authors, *Grand Central* - stories of postwar love and reunion, set at NYC's Grand Central terminal
Susan Vreeland, *Lisette's List* - a woman from the Provence countryside saves works of art & endures life under the Nazis

Magic, Magicians, Circuses, and Fairs

Steven Galloway, *The Confabulist* - life of Harry Houdini
Alice Hoffman, *The Museum of Extraordinary Things* - 20th-century Coney Island
Greer MacAllister, *The Magician's Lie* - 19th-century America
Timothy Schaffert, *The Swan Gondola* - the Omaha World's Fair, 1898
Rosie Thomas, *The Illusionists* - Victorian London

Parallel Narratives / Dual-Time Novels

Jessica Brockmole, *Letters from Skye* - England and Scotland in WWI and WWII, told in letters
Anne Fortier, *The Lost Sisterhood* - modern academic investigates the ancient Greek Amazons
Kimberly Freeman, *Ember Island* - the Channel Islands in the 1890s and today
Sarah Jio, *Goodnight June* - imagined story behind *Goodnight Moon*, set in '50s and modern Seattle
Christina Baker Kline, *Orphan Train* - 1930s and today, orphan trains out west
Stephanie Lehmann, *Astor Place Vintage* - New York today and in the early 20th century
Beatriz Williams, *The Secret Life of Violet Grant* - early 20th century Europe and the 1960s in NYC
Lauren Willig, *That Summer* - modern and pre-Raphaelite (1840s) England

Lesser-Known Historical Characters

Alix Christie, *Gutenberg's Apprentice* - Johann Gutenberg, inventor of the printing press, and his little-known assistant
Kimberly Elkins, *What Is Visible* - Laura Bridgman, a deaf-blind woman in the 19th century
Anne Girard, *Madame Picasso* - Eva Gouel, mistress of the artist Picasso
Sandra Gulland, *The Shadow Queen* - Claudette des Oeillets, a woman of the theatre and a mistress of the Sun King
Sheila Kohler, *Dreaming for Freud* - Freud's most famous patient, "Dora"
Laila Lalami, *The Moor's Account* - Estebanico, a Moroccan slave on a 16th-century expedition to Florida
Sally O'Reilly, *Dark Aemilia* - Aemilia Bassano, possible "Dark Lady" of Shakespeare
Allison Pataki, *The Accidental Empress* - Empress Elisabeth of Austria
Erika Robuck, *The House of Hawthorne* - Nathaniel Hawthorne and his wife Sophia
Stephanie Thornton, *Daughter of the Gods* - Queen Hatshepsut of ancient Egypt
Louisa Treger, *The Lodger* - early 20th century woman writer Dorothy Richardson