

The use of historical fiction books to explain different perspectives of the real historical event of World War II

Truth and fiction have a very powerful relationship in historical fiction books, bringing together real and fictional events together. Historical fiction is defined as stories that take readers into a past time, (real) place(s), and in recognizable events in history (MasterClass, 2021). Despite historical fiction including fictional elements, these books contain truthful aspects: setting, plot, characters, dialogue, and conflict (MasterClass, 2021). These books take place in authentic and real periods of history, contain a combination of real and fictional events, have characters that speak based on and reflect on the historical time period, and include conflicts that people during the historical time period would often encounter (MasterClass, 2021). In our time, reading historical fiction is important for educating on the past and can help further understanding important events throughout history (Vandal, 2024). Hence, historical fiction books and novels can help readers better understand the truth of difficult and complex situations of historical events through multiple perspectives. This can lead to shock experiences based off the characters experiences in real historical events, such as WWII and its after-effects of the Berlin Wall.

An example of historical fiction shaping real events into fictional stories to explore perspectives is through the exploration of concentration camp experiences. Both novels *The Tattooist of Auschwitz* and *Three Sisters* by Heather Morris share experiences of concentration camps during WWII. *The Tattooist of Auschwitz* tells the story of a Slovakian Jew who is imprisoned at Auschwitz and who falls in love with a girl he tattooed at the concentration camp (Morris, 2018). *Three Sisters* tells the story of three Slovakian Jewish sisters who are also sent to Auschwitz, and later liberated and make their way to Israel (Morris, 2021). The novels tell the story of various experiences about real events through fictional characters that are based off of real people. Furthermore, the novels' combination of factual and fictional allow an empathetic connection between the reader and the characters that differentiates historical fiction from historical documentation: a reader's connection to the character is more developed whilst reading historical fiction than documentation (Fatima, 2024).

The book *Making Bombs for Hitler* by Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch tells the story of a young Ukrainian girl in a Nazi concentration camp and allows for the historical exploration of Eastern European perspectives during WWII and the conditions faced in concentration camps (Skrypuch, 2012). The book *A Night Divided* by Jennifer A. Nielsen, which tells the story of a girl whose family is divided by the Berlin Wall, effectively shares the story many faced during the divide of Berlin during the Cold War after WWII, which shares the perspective of the continuous effects of WWII into the Cold War era (Nielsen, 2015). Both books are both targeted for younger audiences, and through historical fiction, the authors use young fictional characters to appropriately explain the severity of both historical events to younger audiences and allow a connection between the young fictional characters and the young readers. The books balance historical educational aspects (historical truth) and fiction to make the books child-appropriate to not overwhelm the young audience yet still contain historically accurate perspectives.

To conclude, truth and fiction in our time is very important through the writing of historical fiction books and novels to share the truth of real people's experiences and perspectives during (and after) WWII through fictional elements so that readers can be educated on real historical events and further understand people involvements in historical eras.

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