

## Historical Fiction Excerpts From Favorites New and Old

The Book Thief  
Markus Zusak

### DEATH AND CHOCOLATE

First the colors. Then the humans. That's usually how I see things. Or at least, how I try.

\*\*\*HERE IS A SMALL FACT \*\*\*

You are going to die.

I am in all truthfulness attempting to be cheerful about this whole topic, though most people find themselves hindered in believing me, no matter my protestations. Please, trust me. I most definitely can be cheerful. I can be amiable. Agreeable. Affable. And that's only the A's. Just don't ask me to be nice. Nice has nothing to do with me.

\*\*\*Reaction to the \*\*\* AFOREMENTIONED fact Does this worry you? I urge you-don't be afraid. I'm nothing if not fair.

-Of course, an introduction.

A beginning.

Where are my manners?

The Boy In Striped Pyjamas  
John Boyne

One afternoon, when Bruno came home from school, he was surprised to find Maria, the family's maid – who always kept her head bowed and never looked up from the carpet – standing in his bedroom, pulling all his belongings out of the wardrobe and packing them in four large wooden crates, even the things he'd hidden at the back that belonged to him and were nobody else's business.

'What are you doing?' he asked in as polite a tone as he could muster, for although he wasn't happy

to come home and find someone going through his possessions, his mother had always told him that he was to treat Maria respectfully and not just imitate the way Father spoke to her. 'You take your hands off my things.'

Maria shook her head and pointed towards the staircase behind him, where Bruno's mother had just appeared. She was a tall woman with long red hair that she bundled into a sort of net behind her head, and she was twisting her hands together nervously as if there was something she didn't want to have to say or something she didn't want to have to believe.

### Cloud Atlas

David Mitchell

Thursday, 7th November –

Beyond the Indian hamlet, upon a forlorn strand, I happened on a trail of recent footprints. Through rotting kelp, sea cocoa-nuts & bamboo, the tracks led me to their maker, a White man, his trowsers & Pea-jacket rolled up, sporting a kempt beard & an outsized Beaver, shoveling & sifting the cindery sand with a teaspoon so intently that he noticed me only after I had hailed him from ten yards away. Thus it was, I made the acquaintance of Dr. Henry Goose, surgeon to the London nobility. His nationality was no surprise. If there be any eyrie so desolate, or isle so remote, that one may there resort unchallenged by an Englishman, 'tis not down on any map I ever saw.

### Code Name Verity

Elizabeth Wein

I AM A COWARD. I wanted to be heroic and I pretended I was. I have always been good at pretending. I spent the first twelve years of my life playing at the Battle of Stirling Bridge with my five big brothers—and even though I am a girl, they let me be William Wallace, who is supposed to be one of our ancestors, because I did the most rousing battle speeches. God, I tried hard last week. My God, I tried. But now I know I am a coward. After the ridiculous deal I made with SS-Hauptsturmführer von Linden, I know I am a coward. And I'm going to give you anything you ask, everything I can remember. Absolutely Every Last Detail.

### I am David

Anne Holm

David lay quite still in the darkness, listening to the men's low muttering. But this evening he was aware of their voices only as a vague meaningless noise in the distance, and he paid no attention to what they were saying.

"You must get away tonight," the man had told him. "Stay awake so that you're ready just before the guard's changed. When you see me strike a match, the current will be cut off and you can climb over -- you'll have half a minute for it, no more."

Little Paradise  
Gabrielle Wang

'Heya, babe. Wanna dance?'

An American soldier made a big sweeping bow in front of Rose.

Rose turned away smiling while Mirabel blushed a violent pink. They had been on their way to meet Great Auntie May when Rose suggested they stop for a coffee at Gibbys.

'Weell, just holla if ya'll change ya mind,' the soldier drawled, then sat down with his mates in the booth behind.

Mirabel couldn't get over it. Even though it was mid-afternoon, the place was buzzing. Music from the latest dance craze, the jitterbug, blared through speakers mounted on the walls and some couples were even up dancing. Mirabel was glad the American soldiers had brought this music over with them. She remembered how, not long ago, Melbourne had been so stuffy, so boring. The Australian boys had gone to war, leaving only women, children and old people. But since the American soldiers had arrived the city was swinging.

Salt to the Sea  
Ruta Sepetys

Guilt is a hunter.

My conscience mocked me, picking fights like a petulant child.

*It's all your fault*, the voice whispered.

I quickened my pace and caught up with our small group. The Germans would march us off the field road if they found us. Roads were reserved for the military. Evacuation orders hadn't been issued and anyone fleeing East Prussia was branded a deserter. But what did that matter? I became a deserter four years ago, when I fled from Lithuania.

Lithuania.

I had left in 1941. What was happening at home? Were the dreadful things whispered in the streets true?

## The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle

Avi

Just before dusk in the late afternoon of June 16, 1832, I found myself walking along the crowded docks of Liverpool, England, following a man by the name of Grummage. Though a business associate of my father, Mr. Grummage was, like my father, a gentleman. It was he my father delegated to make the final arrangements for my passage to America. He was also to meet me when I came down from school on the coach, then see me safely stowed aboard the ship that my father had previously selected.

Mr. Grummage was dressed in a black frock coat with a stove pipe hat that added to his considerable height. His somber, sallow face registered no emotion. His eyes might have been those of a dead fish.

"Miss Doyle?" he said as I stepped from the Liverpool coach.

"Yes, sit. Are you Mr. Grummage?"

"I am."

"Pleased to meet you," I said, dipping a curtsy.

"Quite," he returned. "Now, Miss Doyle, if you would be so good as to indicate which is your trunk, I have a man here to carry it. Next, please oblige me by following, and everything shall be as it is meant to be."

## Under a Painted Sky

Stacey Lee

"She's been sanding there over an hour," a man muttered to another as they passed by.

"Place just lit up," said a woman from behind. "Everything burned, even the Chinaman."

"They sold the Whistle to a Chinaman?" asked another woman.

My face flushed at her commenting on this rather than on Father's death. We were never welcome here. Why should I expect people to care now, just because Father had died? I turned to glare at the two women, only now noticing the crowd that had gathered. The thick soup of smoke had thinned to a veil of black.

"Six months ago. Where you been? Well, that's the chance you take when you operate a dry goods. Places like that are tinderboxes." This first woman finally noticed me, my lips clamped tight and my eyes swollen. She elbowed her friend, then they hurried away. Fly, you crows. My father was not a spectacle. He was the greatest man I ever knew. He was my everything.