War is Hell: Military Fiction, Reporting for Duty

Charly Taylor
Kentucky Dept. for Libraries & Archives
Military Observances

May – National Military Appreciation Month
May 18 – Armed Forces Day
May 27, 2019 – Memorial Day
June 6, 2019 – 75\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of D-Day and the Battle of Normandy
June 28, 2019 – 100\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Versailles
November 11, 2019 – Veterans Day
December 16, 2019 – 75\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge
June 25, 2020 – 70\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of start of Korean War
September 2, 2020 – 75\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of VJ Day
About Military Fiction

• Based in history
• Re-interpretation of events
• Primary action is in field of combat
  − Characters are preparing for, in, returning from war
• Features battles, war horrors/atrocities
• Common themes are heroism, nationalism, cowardice, morality
Common viewpoints

- Company-level
- Platoon and squad also common
Common viewpoints

- Command-level
  - Wide variety of characters
  - Melting pot of “American boys”
    - Early: Civil War army units from same state
    - Later: national units led to cliché of melting pot
Common viewpoints

• Change with Vietnam War
  – Minorities featured more prominently
  – Men sent as replacements
  – Veterans isolated, alienated, loyal to each other
Common viewpoints

• Middle East
  – Soldier and journalist memoirs most common
  – Fiction tends to be soldier-focused
    • First person or close third person
Common viewpoints

• War experience is often personal
  – Individual being tested
  – Becoming a man/coming-of-age
Common viewpoints

• Consequences of war
  – On person, country, culture
  – How do you put war behind you?
Appeal

- Better understanding of events
- Students learning about a place/time
- Exploring unfamiliar/exotic cultures
- Current events
- Action-packed books
- Certain author/time period
Appeal

- Shared experiences
  - Combat soldiers/vets, wives/spouses, children
- Details of combat
  - Emotions, physical challenge, soldier skills
- Moral issues
In this webinar...

• Major wars with U.S. involvement
• War is main subject, not just part of the setting
  – See historical fiction for war as setting
In this webinar...

- Revolutionary War
- Civil War
- World War I
- World War II
- Korean War
- Vietnam War
- Middle East
- Technothrillers
- Literary
- Alternate History
- POWs
Revolutionary War (1775-1783)

- Also called American War of Independence
- Defining war of American character and experience
- Pamphlets written during war
Revolutionary War novels

- Love and Honor by Randall Wallace (2004)
- George Washington novels by Newt Gingrich (2009-2012)
- The Fort by Bernard Cornwell (2010)
Civil War (1861-1865)

- Popular military fiction topic
- Early novels focused on romance of the South
  - *Gone With the Wind* by Margaret Mitchell (1936)
- Very few Civil War veteran authors
  - Reasons are debated
Civil War Novels

- The March by E.L. Doctorow (2005)
- The Battle of the Crater by Newt Gingrich (2011)
- Novels of the Civil War by Jeff Shaara (2012-2015)
World War I (1914-1918)

• U.S. joined late, in 1917
• “Lost Generation” writers
  − Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Dos Passos, Faulkner
• Mass casualties led to criticism, disillusionment
• Introduction of realism
• Hemingway most associated with this time period
  − A Farewell to Arms (1929)
World War I novels

- **Flanders** by Patricia Anthony (1998)
- **To the Last Man** by Jeff Shaara (2004)
- **The First of July** by Elizabeth Speller (2013)
- **1914** by Jean Echenoz (2014)
- **The Harlem Hellfighters** by Max Brooks (2014)
World War II (1939-1945)

• Lots written, varied
• Pragmatic, non-romantic fiction
• Common themes:
  − Battle, loyalty, courage/cowardice, endurance...
• Combat novels are most numerous
• Began seeing books critical of military command
  − The Naked and the Dead by Norman Mailer (1948)
  − From Here to Eternity by James Jones (1951)
World War II novels

- Josh Thurlow novels by Homer Hickam (2003-2007)
- World War II novels by Jeff Shaara (2006-2011)
- Killing Rommel by Steven Pressfield (2008)
- The Commodore by P.T. Deutermann (2016)
Korean War (1950-1953)

- “The Forgotten War”
- Much written during/immediately following
  - *Don’t Touch Me* by Mackinlay Kantor (1951)
- Resurgence due to Memorial & anniversary
- Focus on Army & Marines
- Most follows whole war or last two years
- Much written by veterans
- Recent works often self-published
Korean War novels

• War Remains by Jeffrey Miller (2011)
• Hope in Hungnam by David Watts, Jr. (2012)
• Divisions by Larry Krantz (2013)
• The Frozen Hours by Jeff Shaara (2017)
Vietnam War (1954-1975)

• Tradition of distinguished war literature
  – *The Quiet American* by Graham Greene (1955)

• Realistic/naturalistic

• Heller’s *Catch 22* (1961) influenced Vietnam authors

• Much written on war’s effects on veterans
Vietnam War novels

- **Matterhorn** by Karl Marlantes (2010)
- Vietnam series by Chris Lynch (YA, 2011-2014)
- **Don’t Mean Nuthin’** by Ron Lealos (2015)
- **Viet Man** by D.S. Lliteras (2015)
- **The Low Bird** by David L. Robbins (2016)
The Middle East (1990-)

- Gulf War, Afghan War/Iraq War/War on Terror
- Cultural and historical appeal:
  - Historical villains (bin Laden, Hussein, Qaddafi...)
  - Birthplace of three major religions
  - Previous conflicts/wars
- Terrorism threat ensures popularity
- Much is set in U.S.
- Focus on individual soldiers
Middle East novels

- **Sniper Elite series** by Scott McEwen (2013-)
- **Fives and Twenty-Fives** by Michael Pitre (2014)
- **Redeployment** by Phil Klay (2014)
- **Wynne’s War** by Aaron Gwyn (2014)
- **And the Whole Mountain Burned** by Ray McPadden (2018)
Technothrillers

• The Hunt for Red October by Tom Clancy (1984)
• Plot revolves around military weapons system
• Technology, action, pacing over characters
• High, sustained action; military jargon & acronyms
• Hero fights for truth, justice, America
• Very, very bad guys
• Usually highly researched
Technothriller

- **The Last Line** by Anthony Shaffer (2013)
- Troy Pearce series by Mike Maden (2013-)
- Trident Deception novels by Rick Campbell (2014-)
- **Drone Strike** by Dale Brown (2014)
- Tom Locke novels by Sean McFate (2016-)
POW Stories

- Stories of human condition, survival
- Overlaps with non-military incarceration tales
- Tough-skinned readers or history buffs
POW novels

- The Special Prisoner by Jim Lehrer (2000)
- War Trash by Ha Jin (2004)
- In the Shadows of the Sun by Alexander Parsons (2005)
- Dawn of a Thousand Nights by Tricia Goyer (2005)
- Shame and the Captives by Thomas Keneally (2015)
Literary Military Fiction

- Poetic, lyrical language; slower read; character-driven
- Straightforward or experimental
- Good for book groups
- Often critically acclaimed
  - “Literary” refers to style, not quality
Literary Military Fiction novels

• Three Day Road by Joseph Boyden (2005)
• The Judas Field by Howard Bahr (2006)
• The Coldest Night by Robert Olmstead (2012)
• Youngblood by Matt Gallagher (2016)
• Bring Out the Dog: Stories by Will Mackin (2018)
Alternate History

- What if...?
- One event that changes everything
  - Carries out premise in great detail
- Authors typically have good historical knowledge
- Appeal to fans of technothrillers
  - Historical military readers may shun
- May appear under Sci-Fi or speculative fiction
Alternate History novels

- The Great War series by Harry Turtledove (1997-2007)
- The Plot Against America by Philip Roth (2004)
- Pacific War series by Newt Gingrich (2007-2008)
- Leviathan trilogy by Scott Westerfeld (YA, 2009-2011)
- The War that Came Early series by Harry Turtledove (2009-14)
- Liberty 1784 by Robert Conroy (2014)
Readers’ Advisory Tips

• Military fiction RA = reference interview
• Listen for references to historical accuracy
• Match readers to books based on tone, style, language
• Suggested questions:
  – Time period or theater preference?
  – Land, air, or sea battles?
  – Interest in future/imaginary battles?
Readers’ Advisory Tips

• Has your patron “read it all?”
  − Sci-Fi military fiction
  − Sea adventures = conflicts and history
  − Non-fiction war accounts
Readers’ Advisory Tips

• Don’t be intimidated... be prepared!
  - Bibliographies/lists
    • By place
    • By subject
  - What-to-read-next
  - Create a bookmark
Selection Tips

• Scan catalog and stacks
  − Too heavy/light in certain sections?

• Judging historical accuracy
  − Know the “Old Faithfuls”
  − Read reviews
  − Look for bibliographies, notes, epilogues, maps, photos, etc.
Marketing Tips

• Create shelf talkers
  − Recommend other books/authors
• Popular with your patrons?
  − Designated section
  − Genre stickers
• Useful, relevant subject and genre headings
  − War stories, Military fiction, Alternative histories, Techno-thrillers, Literary fiction, etc.
Marketing Tips

• Create a display!
  – Educate your patrons on military anniversaries
  – Mix fiction and non-fiction
  – Movie tie-ins
  – Books featuring veterans
  – Include local history materials
  – Passive programming
    • Operation Gratitude, Military Missions
Recommended Websites

- D-Day/Battle of Normandy 75th anniversary - [dday-anniversary.com/#](http://dday-anniversary.com/#)
- WWI Centennial Commission: [worldwar1centennial.org/educate-home.html?edu_page=topics](http://worldwar1centennial.org/educate-home.html?edu_page=topics)
- Military.com: [military.com](http://military.com)
- KY Dept. of Veterans Affairs: [veterans.ky.gov/Pages/default.aspx](http://veterans.ky.gov/Pages/default.aspx)
- U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs: [va.gov](http://va.gov)
- U.S. Army Center of Military History: [history.army.mil/index.html](http://history.army.mil/index.html)
- Novelist: [kyvl.org/novelist](http://kyvl.org/novelist)
References


Read On... Historical Fiction: Reading Lists for Every Taste by Brad Hooper (2006).

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Summer Reading in Rural Libraries
  Wednesday, January 23, 1:00-2:00 pm ET (12:00-1:00 pm CT)

Oh, the Places You’ll Go!: Travel RA
  Thursday, January 24, 2:00-3:00 pm ET (1:00-2:00 pm CT)

E-rate Form 471 for Category Two: Funding Year 2019
  Tuesday, January 29, 10:00-11:30 am ET (9:00-10:30 am CT)

Stronger Together: Developing School & Library Partnerships
  Wednesday, January 30, 1:00-2:00 pm ET (12:00-1:00 pm CT)

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Thank you for attending!

Charly Taylor
KDLA Continuing Education Consultant
Charly.Taylor@ky.gov
502-564-8371

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