Historical Fiction Writing
A practical guide and tool-kit

Myfanwy Cook

www.myfanwycook.com

DOWNLOADABLE RESOURCES

This document contains a number of resources designed to help you complete the activities in the e-book edition of *Historical Fiction Writing.* You may freely download and print as many copies of these resources as you wish for your personal use.

Please contact me at myfanwyc@btinternet.com if you intend to use the downloads in conjunction with presenting a course in creative writing or any other commercial use.

Each table is numbered according to the activity in the book to which it relates, so Table 1.1 should be used with Activity 1.1, and tables 11.3.1 and 11.3.2 with Activity 11.3.

Table 1.1

Group interviewed	Definition of historical fiction and what is defined as 'a good read' Note down the answers as Keywords, phrases or short sentences
Friends, family and colleagues	Examples: exciting adventures, colourful descriptions of clothes and what people ate
Bookshops, Libraries and Book groups	

Table 1.2

Author details and century	Likes	Dislikes
19th		
20th		
21st		

Table 1.3

How do bookshops and libraries display their historical fiction?
Library
Independent Bookshop
Bookshop chain

Table 1.5

	Name of Author	Title and Publisher
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		

Table 2.2

Ingredients	Mainstream publisher 1	Mainstream publisher 2	Smaller publisher
The author has a strong track record, or the novel is part of a popular series			
Main Characters			
The subgenre type e.g. crime, romance etc.			
Setting e.g. Venice			
Dialogue			
Descriptions e.g. Good action scenes, sense of place			
Does the writer have a particular style that makes their work more alive or memorable?			
Effective use of historical detail			
Pace e.g. action packed and fast moving			
Any other characteristics of the novel that you think might attract readers and publishers to the novels you have chosen?			

[*] For example do they use a lot of similes (comparisons) e.g. "Alexander the Great was like a golden bejewelled sword. He was attractive, but also highly dangerous."

Profile 3.1

Profile of my imaginary fan for my ...
Name: **Age:**

Physical description:

Interior description (personality):

Job, background and income:

Interests:

What do they like about your writing?

Anything else?

Table 7.1

Location of the cemetery and the name on the headstone or memorial	All the information that is written on the stone or plaque	Describe the stone or plaque

Profile 7.4.1

Character Questionnaire Interview with your Main Character

Name:	
Age:	

1	Family details (brother, sister, wife, parents etc.).	
2	**External characteristics** (Physical description) - What do they look like?	
3	Have they got any habits? (e.g. drumming their fingers on the table, comfort eating?)	
4	What do they do? (e.g. work as a blacksmith, soldier, gold miner, governess, maid, artist, duchess or duke)	
5	Where do they live? (e.g. town, country, city, village, or wilderness)	
6	What makes them happy? What makes them sad? (e.g. watching a vaudeville show, hunting deer with friends, or visiting their family on their day off)	
7	What, if any, are their ambitions?	

8	What is the area of their life that upsets them the most at this particular moment?	
9	What is their favourite colour and why? What is their favourite food and why?	
10	What do they smell like? (e.g. of roses, freshly baked bread etc.)	
11	Is their eye sight good? Have they got hearing difficulties?	
12	What do they feel like when you touch their skin (e.g. rough, silky)	
13	What is their first language? Is it English? French? Have they got a regional accent e.g. Scottish? How does this affect the way that they speak? For example do they confuse common idioms when they use them, and as a consequence raining 'cats and dogs' might become raining 'bats and dogs'. Do they have a stammer or speech impediment? Is there one word that they use frequently e.g. addressing all children as 'pet'.	
14	What does their voice sound like e.g. deep and sensual?	
15	Internal characteristics (psychological and personality profile): Are they risk takers? Are they prone to melancholy? What sort of sense of humour have they got?	
16	Anything else?	

Profile 7.4.2

Character Questionnaire Interview with a Secondary Character

Name:	
Age:	

1	Relationship to your main character:	
2	External characteristics (Physical description) - What do they look like?	
3	Have they got any habits? (e.g. chewing their bottom lip when worried, gambling)	
4	What do they do? (e.g. carpenter, seamstress, lawyer, bishop, pirate, fisherman, milliner, opera singer)	
5	Where do they live? (e.g. by the sea, on a canal, or on the Prairies)	
6	What makes them happy? What makes them sad? (e.g. buying a new ribbon for their bonnet makes them happy)	
7	What, if any, are their ambitions?	

8	What is the area of their life that upsets them the most at this particular moment? (e.g. they can't earn enough money to feed their family. They've got too much money and they are worried that no one likes them for who they are, but only for what they can get out of it)	
9	What is their favourite colour and why? What is their favourite food and why?	
10	What do they smell like?	
11	What do they feel like when you touch their skin (e.g. rough, silky)	
12	Internal characteristics (psychological and personality profile):	
13	Anything else?	

Table 7.8

Attractive and gentle	Pungent and lingering
Devon Violets (scent/perfume brand name),Eau de Cologne (brand name), lavender, rose water, musk, orange blossom	hay, rosemary, cinnamon, cloves, mint, fish, garlic, bad breath, silage, dung (cow, sheep)
Your examples:	**Your examples:**

Table 8.2

Name of author	Title of novels and the narrative viewpoints that they use in each novel e.g. "I "(first person)

Table 9.4

Mild verbs of saying		Strong/powerful verbs of saying	
said		shout	
comment		yell	
state		declaim	
remark		interrogate	
add		regale	
agree		tease	
interject		banter	
question		cry	
call		enthuse	
impart		demand	
		argue	
		implore	
		roar	
		bellow	
		sneer	
		snap	
		snort	
		meow	
		snarl	
		grumble	
		laugh	
		chuckle	
		yell	
		scream	
		bark out	

Table 9.8

Idiom	Meaning	Origin
Naval and Maritime		
Example: *two* (or three) *sheets to the wind*	Someone who has had too much to drink and is staggering about	Originally it was three sheets to the wind. The first usage was c. 1821. It refers to the ropes, which secured the sheets (or sails) and which in high winds would cause sailing ships to stagger about like a person who was drunk.
Your examples		
Gardening		
Example: *to nip in the bud*	To stop or prevent something when it is just beginning	It is derived from allusion to the de-budding of plants. The earlier idiomatic form was 'nip in the bloom': see Henry Chettle's romance *Piers Plainnes Seaven Yeres Prentiship* (1595).
Your examples		

Table 11.3.1

Physical vocabulary (mild and romantic)	kiss, fondle, touch, stroke, hug, cuddle, tickle, caress, hold, hold hands, hold close
Related to animals and hunting etc.	bite, paw, grab, preen, stalk, rut, lick, steal
Emotions that we feel	delight, cherish, languish, desire, longing (for), devotion, admiration, frustration, adoration, affection, care (for), appreciation, longing, hankering, hanker (for), cosy, friendship, passion, contentment, exhilaration, happiness, physical satisfaction, devotion, excitement, anticipation
Emotions that love creates	illusion, reassurance, comfort, peace, security, jealously, anger, guilt, obsession, anxiety, paranoia, ecstasy, delight, a sense of longing

Table 11.3.2

Useful Expressions	eyes glistening/ dancing with expectation/excitement, an inviting glance
Idioms	love is blind, love makes the world go round, to fall head over heels in love

Table 12.1

Which authors use which styles and why do readers like them?	
Author	**Stylistic Devices**

Table 15.1.1

Date/Years	Name: Sources:
Additional notes	

Table 15.1.2

Date	Name: Sources:
January	
February	
March	
April	
May	
June	
July	
August	
September	
October	
November	
December	
Additional notes	

Table 15.1.3

Date/Years	Name: Sources:
Additional notes	

Table 15.1.4

Date	Name: Sources:
January	
February	
March	
April	
May	
June	
July	
August	
September	
October	
November	
December	
Additional notes	

Table 15.1.5

Year, Date and Day	Name of your character:
12 midnight	
1am/3am	
4am/5am	
6am	
7am	
8am	
9am	
10am	
11am	
12 midday	
1pm	
2pm	
3pm	
4pm	
5pm	
6pm	
7pm	
8pm	
9pm	
10pm	
11pm	
12 midnight	
Additional notes	

Table 15.2

Date/Year	World/ National Events
Additional notes	

Table 15.3

Date	Place

Table 18.1

When and where	Example of how to commit a murder
Middle Ages	A rabid dog is given as a present to the victim. The dog bites the victim who dies several months later. Rabies has been known since 2000BC.

Table 20.4 Excuses

Excuse	Antidote
No milk had to go and buy some	One day without milk is good for your health.
Too many emails to answer from friends.	Reply with one line answers e.g. *Really interesting! Working will be in contact soon. Thanks, Love.* You can copy and paste these to all your friends.
Asked to work overtime	Tell them you can't as you have a previous professional appointment (you have with your writing).
Too many calls on your mobile	Switch it off for an hour.