

## How to Undertake Research for a Historical Novel

So you have decided to take the plunge and write a book. Not only have you chosen to write a fantastic novel you have also chosen to set it in history. But where on Earth do you begin?

It's important to choose a period you are familiar with or interested in as you may well have to spend an extensive period researching the era. You will be a fountain of knowledge on your chosen period by the time you have finished your novel!

I have scoured the internet to look for hints and tips and these are a collection of what I have found.

- **Decide on when your story is set**

If you don't have a preference or an exact year in mind then a book called 'The Timelines of History' by Bernard Grun and Werner Stein might be a good place to start. With a year by year listing of social, scientific and political events it will give you an idea of what may be incorporated within your story.

- **Visit the Library**

Once you have your era the Library is an excellent place to start. Your librarian can point you in the right direction of resources. Sometimes there may be biographies and articles that only a librarian would know about!

Never underestimate the power of children's books when taking your first steps into research. They often provide apt description and in-depth diagrams/photos that might prove useful to the amateur historian.

- **Local Historical Societies**

These associations can be of immense help. Seek them out and ask questions.

- **Keep your research in an organised manner**

With different elements of travel, dress, medicine, politics e.g. for each period it's important to keep your research to labelled and to hand whenever you are writing. This enables you to consult the important information as you write.

Make a list of information you need to write your novel using your plot line and update the list when you find the relevant information.

I think it imperative to mention here that whilst the history is an important focus for your novel, it's not the only focus! Primarily your novel is a story and you must try not to get caught up in the historical features so that it obstructs the reader's view of the narrative and characters. The research and factual knowledge should enhance the story, not overpower it.

My final word on research is a word of warning. Check your sources! The internet can be a wealth of information but anyone can write on it. Make sure you verify information you gather. It would be awful to base your entire novel on foundations that were untruthful.

Best of luck!

When your novel is finished, make it stand out from the crowd with [proofreading](#) and a [writer's publisher pack](#) from Words Worth Reading Ltd.