

Historical Fiction Research Paper

Historical fiction consists of stories that did not happen but are set in a real place and time in the past. A writer of historical fiction carefully researches the events, places, and historical figures he or she wants to include in the story. The writer chooses interesting characters to “bring history to life.” For this project, you are going to write a piece of historical fiction.

Historical Fiction Guidelines

Focus/Organization

- The writing fulfills its purpose by presenting accurate historical information relating to the barbarian group.
- The writing is clearly targeted for the purpose of entertainment with historical accuracy.
- The writing has a strong beginning, follows the sequential order of actual events, and provides closure to the story and event.
- Transition words are included throughout the paper.

Elaboration/Support/Style

- Sufficient details are provided to explain each step or piece of information.
- The details are clear and understandable.
- Accurately documented sources are **cited**.
- The paper demonstrates a complete and clear understanding of the topic.
- The story exemplifies a good use of dialogue between characters that complements the narration.
- The story is narrated from the first-person point of view.
- Descriptions are consistent with the time period of the historical event.

Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics

- The writing is free of misspellings, and words are capitalized correctly.
- Sentences are punctuated correctly, and the piece is free of fragments and run-ons.
- Quotations are used correctly.
- Standard English usage is employed.
- The paper is neat, legible, and presented in an appropriate format.
- Sentences are varied in size and structure.

Notes and Source Cards

- Notes are thorough and connected to the topic.
- The notes are organized into categories, neat, and easy to follow.
- Bibliography entries are completed correctly for each source.
- Notes are organized and connected to the main idea.

Part 1 – Prewriting & Research Ideas

Research barbarian groups in Europe that existed between 200 CE and 1500 CE (they might still exist, but they had to have lived during the Middle Ages). Come up with at least three groups you could or would like to learn more about. Try to find barbarian groups that connect to you—language, ancestry, region, etc. Come to class ready with your choices, or Binder will have to assign one to you.

Voice

Your main character has to be a fictional character not found in history. The story will be told through the main character's eyes and will be written in first person. Your character can be a child, mother, barbarian, or any other person (animal or insect) that would have been in that situation, unless it is specified in the description. Your main character cannot be an actual person from that time.

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Barbarian Group			
Name		Age	
Appearance		Actions	
Location/Year		Feelings	
Family Information		Interests	
Other Details			

Organization

Now that you have a main character living during the time of the American Revolution, you can plan your story's plot. A plot usually includes a problem that characters have, how they deal with the problem, and how they solve it. A story map can help you plan.

Beginning

Introduce characters, setting, and the problems the characters have.

Setting

Characters

What is the problem/situation that the characters have?

Research

Historical events should be developed chronologically/sequentially within your story. These are actual events that occurred or **could have** occurred during the time of your barbarians.

Adding Details

Adding details to your story will help it be convincing and accurate. For example, you should be able to incorporate a description of barbarian clothing, foods they ate, and an explanation of how they spent their free time. If you cannot find information within these categories, research something else to include or research a related barbarian group, but do not include "guesses" into your historical fiction paper.

Part 2 - Drafting

You've finished planning your story of historical fiction. The next step is to write a draft of your story. The purpose of a draft is to write your ideas on paper. In your first draft, it's okay if you don't have totally accurate spelling, punctuation, or grammar. You'll be able to fix any of these mistakes when you revise. Here are some first-draft pointers you may find helpful.

- Work on a strong beginning, one that captures the reader's interest. Dialogue can be a great way to start a story, especially if a character does something startling. For example: "Fire! Fire!" cried Hrothgar.
- Include information you've gathered from your research to add interesting details about the place and time.
- Give your characters, especially your main character, "voice." Use dialogue to demonstrate whether he or she is serious, humorous, or curious.
- Use dialogue and actions to help create a mood. What do the characters say or do to show that they are fearful, defiant, or clever? Mix dialogue with narration.
- Check to see that actual events are in order and are appropriate to the story line.
- Compare the ending to the rest of the story. You planned an ending when you did a story map. Now that you've written the draft of the story, see if the ending fits logically with the action and events in the middle of the story.
- Make changes if needed. If the ending you originally planned doesn't work with the actions and events, that's okay. You can change it to a better one.

Part 3 – Revision

Reread your first draft. Does the story make sense as a whole?

Is the reader drawn into the story? Does the action flow from one event to another? Should you add more historical details? Did you show how the problem worked out?

Word Choice

Did you use exact words to help a reader picture how things look or what is happening? Can you substitute verbs or add adjectives to make the action more vivid? Did you use prepositional phrases to add details to a description?

Without Exact Words	With Exact Words
The soldier was tall.	The sergeant loomed over the other soldiers.
Without Details	With Details
David raced home.	David raced home in the dark, nearly stumbling as he ran.

Sentence Fluency

Make your writing more interesting to your audience by varying the way your sentence begins.

Similar Beginnings

The soldiers listened. The soldiers couldn't see the camp. The soldiers climbed over the wall.

Varied Beginnings

Both soldiers listened. Neither could see the camp, so they climbed over the wall.

Part 4 – Proofreading & Publishing Conventions

After you revise your story, proofread it.

- Are all words spelled correctly?
- Do all proper nouns begin with a capital letter?
- Is every paragraph indented?
- Does all dialogue have the correct punctuation?
- Does each verb agree with its subject?
- Are all pronouns used correctly?
- Does the story have a title?

Read it aloud or let others read it.

Fix any errors you find and publish your story by writing your final copy.

Checklist

Writing Historical Fiction	Oops, I forgot it!	I could do better.	I did great!
I wrote a strong, interesting beginning.			
My beginning clearly introduces the characters, the setting, and the problem.			
My story is historically accurate .			
I used historical details from my research and cited by sources.			
The main character's voice is clearly presented.			
The story is told from the first-person point of view.			
I use dialogue between the characters to complement my narration.			
Story events are in order and show how characters deal with situations.			
My ending is satisfactory.			
Exact words make a clear picture for the reader.			
I varied the way my sentences begin.			
I made very few mistakes in capitalization, grammar, and spelling.			