



ENGX2040

Historical Fiction and a Passion for the Past

Session 2, Online-flexible 2026

School of Humanities

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Convener

Stephanie Russo

stephanie.russo@mq.edu.au

Contact via Email

By appointment

Credit points

10

Prerequisites

40cp

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description

Historical fiction is one of the oldest genres of the literary novel, but the past is also used in many different ways in popular mass-market fiction such as romance and fantasy. This unit explores the use of history in narrative forms, including medieval literature, the rise of the novel in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and the explosion of popular genre fiction in the twentieth century. It looks at how the genre became "feminised" and the role of the novelist Georgette Heyer in creating a new subgenre of historical romance. It explores how the past, from the ancient world to Australian history, has been fictionalised. Yet the twenty-first century historical novel is not merely entertaining; it can create debates and challenge public perceptions of the past in unsettling ways. Students will also consider how Australian authors have used historical fiction to retell or offer alternative narratives about the nation. By the end of this unit, students will understand how the past informs literary and popular fiction, and why historical fiction can sometimes be considered a form of historiographical interpretation, especially in novels relating to the Second World War and the Holocaust.

Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates>

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

ULO1: Explain the development and evolution of the historical novel.

ULO2: Analyse and describe the way that history is used in different genres of fiction.

ULO3: Demonstrate an understanding of the place that historical novels have in the public understanding of history.

ULO4: Evaluate both literary and historiographic scholarship on the historical novel.

ULO5: Demonstrate an ability to form cohesive and well-researched arguments about literary texts, and present these ideas both orally and in writing.

General Assessment Information

Unless a Special Consideration request has been submitted and approved, a 5% penalty (of the total possible mark) will be applied each day a written assessment is not submitted, up until the 7th day (including weekends). After the 7th day, a mark of '0' (zero) will be awarded even if the assessment is submitted. Submission time for all written assessments is set at 11.55pm. A 1-hour grace period is provided to students who experience a technical issue.

This late penalty will apply to non-timed sensitive assessment (incl essays, reports, posters, portfolios, journals, recordings etc). Late submission of time sensitive tasks (such as tests/ exams, performance assessments/presentations, scheduled practical assessments/labs etc) will only be addressed by the unit convenor in a Special consideration application. Special Consideration outcome may result in a new question or topic.

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Hurdle	Due	Groupwork/Individual	Short Extension	AI Approach
Professional writing task	35%	No	20/09/2026	Individual	Yes	Open
Portfolio	20%	No	01/11/2026	Individual	Yes	Open
Essay	45%	No	08/11/2026	Individual	Yes	Open

Professional writing task

Assessment Type ¹: Professional task

Indicative Time on Task ²: 17 hours

Due: **20/09/2026**

Weighting: **35%**

Groupwork/Individual: Individual

Short extension ³: Yes

AI Approach: Open

Professional writing task

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Explain the development and evolution of the historical novel.
- Analyse and describe the way that history is used in different genres of fiction.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the place that historical novels have in the public understanding of history.
- Evaluate both literary and historiographic scholarship on the historical novel.
- Demonstrate an ability to form cohesive and well-researched arguments about literary texts, and present these ideas both orally and in writing.

Portfolio

Assessment Type ¹: Portfolio

Indicative Time on Task ²: 36 hours

Due: **01/11/2026**

Weighting: **20%**

Groupwork/Individual: Individual

Short extension ³: Yes

AI Approach: Open

Portfolio submission

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Demonstrate an ability to form cohesive and well-researched arguments about literary texts, and present these ideas both orally and in writing.

Essay

Assessment Type ¹: Written Submission

Indicative Time on Task ²: 37 hours

Due: **08/11/2026**

Weighting: **45%**

Groupwork/Individual: Individual

Short extension ³: Yes

AI Approach: Open

2000-word essay

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Explain the development and evolution of the historical novel.
- Analyse and describe the way that history is used in different genres of fiction.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the place that historical novels have in the public understanding of history.

- Evaluate both literary and historiographic scholarship on the historical novel.

¹ If you need help with your assignment, please contact:

- the academic teaching staff in your unit for guidance in understanding or completing this type of assessment
- [Academic Success](#) for academic skills support.

² Indicative time-on-task is an estimate of the time required for completion of the assessment task and is subject to individual variation.

³ An automatic short extension is available for some assessments. Apply through the [Service Connect Portal](#).

Delivery and Resources

Students to listen to one lecture and participate via the online discussion forums.

Unit Schedule

Texts to buy:

1. Anita Heiss, *Dirrayawadha (Rise Up)*
2. Joan Lindsay, *Picnic at Hanging Rock*
3. Joy McCullough, *Blood Water Paint*
4. Rebecca Lehmann, *The Beheading Game*
5. Josephine Tey, *The Daughter of Time*
6. Octavia Butler, *Kindred*
7. Bernardine Evaristo, *Blonde Roots*

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](#) (<https://policies.mq.edu.au>). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

- [Academic Appeals Policy](#)
- [Academic Integrity Policy](#)
- [Academic Progression Policy](#)
- [Assessment Policy](#)
- [Fitness to Practice Procedure](#)
- [Assessment Procedure](#)
- [Complaints Resolution Procedure for Students and Members of the Public](#)

- [Special Consideration Policy](#)

Students seeking more policy resources can visit [Student Policies](https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/policies) (<https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/policies>). It is your one-stop-shop for the key policies you need to know about throughout your undergraduate student journey.

To find other policies relating to Teaching and Learning, visit [Policy Central](https://policies.mq.edu.au) (<https://policies.mq.edu.au>) and use the [search tool](#).

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: <https://students.mq.edu.au/admin/other-resources/student-conduct>

Results

Results published on platform other than [eStudent](#), (eg. iLearn, Coursera etc.) or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in [eStudent](#). For more information visit connect.mq.edu.au or if you are a Global MBA student contact globalmba.support@mq.edu.au

Academic Integrity

At Macquarie, we believe [academic integrity](#) – honesty, respect, trust, responsibility, fairness and courage – is at the core of learning, teaching and research. We recognise that meeting the expectations required to complete your assessments can be challenging. So, we offer you a range of resources and services to help you reach your potential, including free [online writing and maths support](#), [academic skills development](#) and [wellbeing consultations](#).

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit <http://students.mq.edu.au/support/>

Academic Success

[Academic Success](#) provides resources to develop your English language proficiency, academic writing, and communication skills.

- [Ask a Study Coach](#)
- [Access StudyWISE](#)
- [Upload an assignment to Studiosity](#)
- [Complete the Academic Integrity Module](#)

The Library provides online and face to face support to help you find and use relevant information resources.

- [Subject and Research Guides](#)
- [Ask a Librarian](#)

Student Services and Support

Macquarie University offers a range of [Student Support Services](#) including:

- [IT Support](#)
- [Accessibility and disability support](#) with study
- Mental health [support](#)
- [Safety support](#) to respond to bullying, harassment, sexual harassment and sexual assault
- [Social support including information about finances, tenancy and legal issues](#)
- [Student Advocacy](#) provides independent advice on MQ policies, procedures, and processes

Student Enquiries

Got a question? Ask us via the [Service Connect Portal](#), or contact [Service Connect](#).

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit <https://students.mq.edu.au/support/technology/service-desk>.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use of IT Resources Policy](#). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

Unit information based on version 2026.03 of the [Handbook](#)