

# BARTON

## LIBRARY

### *Dare to know*

#### **Alternative Histories (Fiction)**

*Fiction in which the plot or setting assumes an alternative outcome of an historical event.*

A genre in which the course of known history has deviated from a key point to create an alternate timeline and a different version of reality. To avoid being speculative fiction about the future, the change must occur in a past historical period, often with actual historical events included. The reasons can be fateful decisions, missed opportunities, significant assassinations, enormously influential movements in art, major wars, or advances in technology. Stories typically occur long after the point of divergence, permitting the alternate timeline to develop. This allows authors to speculate on the consequences and implications of these changes, providing a fresh perspective on familiar historical periods. Other times, the history has been rewritten to include some element of magic or fantasy. Perhaps the earliest example is the Roman historian Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita Libri*, which imagined that Alexander the Great lived to complete his conquests of Asia, only to meet defeat at the hands of the Roman Republic. Erskine Childer's *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903), L. Sprague de Camp's *Lest Darkness Fall* (1939), Ward Moore's *Bring the Jubilee* (1953), Poul Anderson's *The Time Patrol* (1955), Keith Laumer's *Worlds of the Imperium* (1962), and Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* (1962) are more recent examples.

#### **Common Elements**

"What-if" scenarios
Consequences of changes in historical events

Everyday life in a reworked place and time
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#### **Benefits of Reading**

Asks readers to consider choices and decisions, and their consequences
Reminds readers of the dichotomy between inevitable history and uncertain futures

Reveals to readers that when the unthinkable becomes inevitable, it can become acceptable
Encourages readers to question the inevitability of events and situations

## Modern Literary Examples

<i>11/22/63</i> (2011) by Stephen King
<i>1632</i> (2000) by Eric Flint
<i>The Calculating Stars</i> (2018) by Mary Robinette Kowal
<i>The Crown's Game</i> (2016) by Evelyn Skye
<i>The Court-Martial of George Armstrong Custer</i> (1976) by Douglas C. Jones
<i>Dominion</i> (2012) by C. J. Sansom
<i>Dread Nation</i> (2018) by Justina Ireland
<i>Fatherland</i> (1992) by Robert Harris
<i>Front Lines</i> (2016) by Michael Grant
<i>The Guns of the South</i> (1992) by Harry Turtledove
<i>Hannibal's Children</i> (2002) by John Maddox Roberts
<i>His Majesty's Dragon</i> (2006) by Naomi Novik
<i>How Few Remain</i> (1997) by Harry

Turtledove
<i>Ink and Bone</i> (2016) by Rachel Caine
<i>Mercury Rising</i> (2022) by R. W. W. Greene
<i>The Plot Against America</i> (2004) by Philip Roth
<i>The Proteus Operation</i> (1985) by James P. Hogan
<i>The Sky People</i> (2006) by S. M. Stirling
<i>Timekeeper</i> (2016) by Tara Sim
<i>When Women Were Dragons</i> (2022) by Kelly Branhill
<i>Worldwar: In the Balance</i> (1994) by Harry Turtledove
<i>The Years of Rice and Salt</i> (2002) by Kim Stanley Robinson
<i>The Yiddish Policemen's Union</i> (2007) by Michael Chabon