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Dare to Know

War Fiction

Fiction that features military conflicts.

This genre focuses on the brutality of war and the experiences of soldiers, civilians, and society in times of conflict. Stories are often set on battlefields, military bases, or naval vessels. Authors can use their own experiences in battle zones to shape the story. The protagonist is often a soldier or civilian engaged in or trapped by the fighting, both of whom may face extraordinary challenges and hardships. Some titles glamorize war and the experiences of characters and depict traditional themes of duty and courage. Sometimes, plots run the risk of being unrealistic and jingoistic. Narratives may include exceptionally heroic soldiers, tragic battles, and appalling human suffering. Drawing from themes in **psychological fiction**, war fiction can be a powerful medium for understanding the physical, emotional, and moral struggles faced by the protagonist and those around them. These novels may also comment on social and political issues that affect soldiers and civilians alike. The genre can present perspectives ranging from pro-war to one conceding to its potential necessity to entirely anti-war. Well-known examples include Homer's *The Iliad* (ca. 8th century BC), Henri Barbusse's *Le Feu* (1916 AD), John Dos Passo's *Three Soldiers* (1921), Jaroslav Hašek's *The Good Soldier Švejk* (1921-1923), Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929), William Faulkner's *The Unvanquished* (1938), Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940), James Jones's *From Here to Eternity* (1951), Pierre Boulle's *The Bridge Over the River Kwai* (1952), Evelyn Waugh's *Men at Arms* (1952), Graham Greene's *The Quiet American* (1955), Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* (1961), and James Jones's *The Thin Red Line* (1962).

A less serious form of the genre often features a protagonist who is a serving or retired member of the armed forces. Similar to **thrillers**, the character must use his or her military training and experience to solve a mystery, halt a conspiracy, or otherwise deal with a crisis.

Common Elements

Camaraderie between comrades in arms
Courage
Sacrifice
Duty
Loyalty
Honor
Ignominy

Armed combat
Survival
Military hierarchy
Home front
The horrors of war and its impact on individuals and societies

Profound concepts of life, love, and death
Avenging wrongs
Protecting family members
Cartel interaction
Rogue militias

Benefits of Reading

<p>Assists readers in understanding the breadth of the human condition (e.g., bravery and cowardice, nobility and dishonor, duty and faithlessness, kindness and cruelty)</p> <p>Captures for readers the spirit of sacrifice, courage, and resilience of military heroes</p> <p>Provides readers with thought-provoking insights into the human psyche</p>	<p>Gives readers unique perspectives on war and society</p> <p>Offers readers a window into the lives of soldiers and their families</p> <p>Allows readers to explore the struggles, pain, costs, and challenges those in war zones face daily</p> <p>Permits readers to grasp combat veterans' loss of innocence and disconnect from civilian life</p>
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Modern Literary Examples

<p><i>Born on the Fourth of July</i> (1976) by Ron Kovic</p> <p><i>Buffalo Soldiers</i> (1992) by Richard O'Connor</p> <p><i>Cauldron</i> (1993) by Larry Bond</p> <p><i>Cellist of Sarajevo</i> (2008) by Steven Galloway</p> <p><i>Charlie Mike</i> (1985) by Leonard B. Scott</p> <p><i>Dogs of War</i> (1974) by Frederick Forsyth</p> <p><i>The Eagle Has Landed</i> (1975) by Jack Higgins</p> <p><i>Empire of the Sun</i> (1984) by J. G. Ballard</p> <p><i>Empire Rising</i> (2015) by Rick Campbell</p> <p><i>The English Patient</i> (1992) by Michael Ondaatje</p> <p><i>Fields of Fire</i> (1978) by James Webb</p> <p><i>Fist of God</i> (1994) by Frederick Forsyth</p> <p><i>Flight of the Intruder</i> (1986) by Stephen Coonts</p> <p><i>Gardens of Stone</i> (1983) by Nicholas Proffitt</p>	<p><i>The Healer's War</i> (1988) by Elizabeth Ann Scarborough</p> <p><i>The Last of the Dog Team</i> (1980) by William W. Johnstone</p> <p><i>Matterhorn</i> (2010) by Karl Marlantes</p> <p><i>Pacific Glory</i> (2011) by P. T. Deuterman</p> <p><i>Red Army</i> (1989) by Ralph Peters</p> <p><i>Sniper and the Wolf</i> (2015) by Scott McEwen</p> <p><i>Sophie's Choice</i> (1979) by William Styron</p> <p><i>Sympathy for the Devil</i> (1987) by Kent Anderson</p> <p><i>Team Yankee</i> (1987) by Harold Coyle</p> <p><i>The Things They Carried</i> (1990) by Tim O'Brien</p> <p><i>The Trident Deception</i> (2014) by Rick Campbell</p> <p><i>The Yellow Birds</i> (2012) by Kevin Powers</p>
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