

History Through Literature

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September 2, 2020, marks the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II - a good time to reflect on and learn about that time in history. The following titles have something for everyone – non-fiction, graphic novels, historical fiction, movies, and TV shows.

All the Light We Cannot See by Anthony Doerr follows the lives of a blind French girl and a young German soldier and how their paths intersect when the Allies bomb German-held Saint-Malo, a city on the coast of France.

The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society by Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows begins in 1946 when author Juliet Ashton is corresponding with members of a literary society on Guernsey. Through these letters she becomes friendly with the society members and learns about their experiences during the German occupation of Guernsey. Intrigued, she then visits the island to research her next book. This book has also been made into a movie starring Lily James (from *Downton Abbey*).

In France, regular citizens lived in constant fear of the Nazis after the Germans invaded. *The Nightingale* by Kristin Hannah follows the lives of two sisters – Isabelle, who joins the resistance, and Vianne, a schoolteacher in a town occupied by the Germans.

Actor and activist George Takei wrote about his experience in a Japanese internment camp as a child in the teen graphic novel *They Called Us Enemy*. The Takeis were taken from their home in Los Angeles and sent to an internment camp in Nebraska. His family was moved three times throughout the war, the last time to a high-security facility in Tule Lake, California.

Set in pre-war Germany, *In the Garden of Beasts* by Erik Larson is the story of the first American ambassador to Nazi Germany and his daughter and their time in Berlin during Hitler's rise to power. Larson's latest book, *The Splendid and the Vile*, covers Winston Churchill's first year as prime minister, from May 1940 to May 1941, during the London Blitz.

The Pianist, a movie starring Adrien Brody, is based on the true story of Polish composer and pianist Wladyslaw Szpilman and how he survived the war in the Warsaw Ghetto, even after it was destroyed by the Germans.

For fans of British television, *Foyle's War* is a crime series set in the south coast of England during World War II. Detective Chief Superintendent Christopher Foyle must deal with wartime crime, from profiteering to biological warfare.

These titles and more are available at the Wyckoff Library, and many are also available on Libby and Hoopla. Hope to see you soon!

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