

HISTORICAL FICTION

THE VICTORIAN PERIOD

Castle Barebane (1976)

Joan Aiken

Val Montgomery leaves New York in the 1880s to journey to London to help her spendthrift half-brother and his ailing wife. She arrives to find only her nephew and niece, apparently abandoned. She takes the children to Scotland to stay with their mother's nurse and is embroiled in threats and revelations.

Midnight Is a Place (1974)

Joan Aiken

Fourteen-year-old Lucas is bored and lonely in Midnight Court, a brooding manor house in Victorian England. He is joined by a French girl, Anna-Marie, and both are suddenly thrown out on their own to survive the winter. To do so, they enter the Victorian world of work and suffering.

Dark Quartet: The Story of the Brontes (1976)

Lynne Reid Banks

This biographical novel chronicles the short and tragic lives of the Brontes--Charlotte, Emily, Anne, and Branwell--who live with their eccentric clergyman father in Yorkshire. The children endure their father's harsh discipline by constructing endless tales of adventure and wish fulfillment, the basis for Charlotte and Emily's later novels. Three-fourths of the quartet die within a year of the staggering success of Charlotte's *Jane Eyre*.

Path to the Silent Country: Charlotte Bronte's Years of Fame (1977)

Lynne Reid Banks

The novel continues the author's biographical portrait of the Bronte family, recording Charlotte Bronte's years alone after the deaths of her sisters and brother. Enjoying the success that *Jane Eyre* brings her, Charlotte visits London and meets many of the literary lions of the age before an unexpected marriage

with her father's curate. The novel ends with her untimely death at age 39.

Glendracó (1977)

Laura Black

Cristina Drummond searches out the secrets of her grandfather's terrible past. The trail leads to the estate of Glendracó and an ever-widening series of secrets and revelations concerning the aristocratic Draco family. Her adventure exposes her to rape, murder, and white slavery amidst the slums of Glasgów.

Strathgallant (1981)

Laura Black

Perdita Sinclair is an orphan and heiress to a vast Scottish estate. She must marry, and the likeliest candidates for a husband are her cousins. Each is invited for a visit, and a competition for Perdita's affections and her hand ensues. Before the issue is resolved, intrigue, treachery, and violence occur.

Wild Cat (1979)

Laura Black

On her wedding night, Catriona Douglas learns that her husband is a drunkard and a brute. Fleeing, she hides among a band of gypsies where she witnesses a murder. She is then hunted by two adversaries: her husband and the murderer.

Death of Riley (2002)

Rhys Bowen

Fresh off the boat from Ireland, Molly secures a position as a paid companion to the aristocratic Miss Van Woekem, a job for which she is singularly unsuited, but she sticks it out until another opportunity comes along. She soon realizes that a man who has been hanging out in the neighborhood, asking questions about a neighbor, is really a private investigator, and she follows him to his office on Fifth Avenue and offers to become his apprentice. He reluctantly agrees, but is unwilling to give her any work other than light cleaning. When he is murdered in the office, Molly sets out to find his killer, a task made especially perilous since she caught a glimpse of the man as he was fleeing the scene and as a witness she is in danger. Meanwhile, she continues to be courted by police detective Daniel Sullivan and to pursue her dream of becoming a private investigator who specializes in putting immigrant families in touch with one another.

Murphy's Law (2001)

Rhys Bowen

When the son of the landowner tries to rape her, Molly kills him in self-defense. Realizing that she'll be sent to the gallows, she has no choice but to flee from her tiny Irish village. Traveling to Belfast and then on to London, Molly meets a woman with tuberculosis who is supposed to sail to America with her two children. Knowing that she won't be admitted to Ellis Island, Kathleen asks Molly to assume her identity and take Seamus and Bridie instead. Molly can't believe her good fortune and gladly accepts the identity and the responsibility, sailing the next morning for America. The voyage is marred by O'Malley, a loud, offensive man, who makes suggestive remarks to Molly, and receives a slap in return. On Ellis Island, when O'Malley is found murdered, Molly becomes a prime suspect, and meets an intriguing policeman.
(226 pages)

Grant: A Novel (2000)

Max Byrd

Byrd adds to his gallery of American historical icons a portrait of Ulysses S. Grant at the end of his life. Seen from the perspective of two journalists--the invented Nicholas Trist, a Civil War veteran who lost an arm at the battle of Cold Harbor and who regards Grant as little more than a butcher, and the actual Chicago newspaperman Sylvanus Cadwallader, who is far more sympathetic and aware of Grant's more human side. The narrative covers Grant's final five years, including his failed bid for an unprecedented third presidential term, his being stricken with throat cancer, his bankruptcy, and his heroic struggle to complete his memoirs (under the editorship of Mark Twain) to insure his family's financial future. Byrd provides a convincing look at the Gilded Age and its important figures, including Henry and Clover Adams and Generals Philip Sheridan and William Tecumseh Sherman. The novel does much to humanize Grant, showing him as a flawed figure who failed at most of his ventures, except the art of war and his final challenges of ill-health and financial ruin.

Midsummer's Eve (1986)

Philippa Carr

Annora Caderson, the daughter of a lord, is initiated into the world of tragedy and disillusion. Her love for the dashing Rolf Hanson is destroyed on a fateful midsummer's eve. She flees her home in Cornwall for London and a romance

with Joe Cresswell until scandal erupts. Along with her family, Annora sails to Australia where she is forced to confront her disturbing past.

The Black Swan (1990)

Philippa Carr

The daughter of Benedict Lansdon introduced in *The Changeling*, Lucie is hit twice by tragedy when her father is assassinated in front of their London home and her fiancé dies. Gradually she recovers from her grief, aided by the kindness of her new acquaintance Roland and his sister. After marrying Roland, Lucie is suddenly visited by ghosts and illnesses, all of which point to danger for her.

The Pool of St. Branok (1987)

Philippa Carr

Angelet, haunted by painful childhood memories, marries the charming Gervaise Mandeville and follows him to the Australian gold fields. There she meets Benedict Lansdon, a figure from her troubled past who forces her to confront and overcome the tragedy she witnessed at the pool of St. Branok.

The Changeling (1989)

Philippa Carr

In a sequel to Carr's *The Pool of St. Branok*, Rebecca and Belinda Mandeville lose their mother and are forced to live with their stepfather, Benedict Lansdon, whom Rebecca despises. The family scene erupts in conflict and tension that escalates into violence.

Gai-Jin (1993)

James Clavell

Set in Japan in 1862, *Gai-Jin*, which means foreigner, is really the sequel to both *Tai-Pan* and *Shogun*. Lord Toranaga's military victory at the end of *Shogun* has secured 250 years of peace and domination by his heirs as Shoguns, but the Toranaga Shogunate is in decline, and new opposition, violently hating gai-jin influence in Japan, is pushing Japan back toward civil war. Dirk Struan's short

lived marriage to Angelique Richaud has a profound impact on the Noble House trading empire.

Rags of Glory (1963)

Stuart Cloete

Cloete's panorama of the Boer War ranges from England to South Africa, detailing the personal dramas of participants on both sides of the conflict--a young Boetie Van der Berg; Turnbull, an English cavalry officer; Moolman, an ivory hunter; and dozens more in this sweeping history. Cloete argues that the Boer War represents the death of the 19th century.

Gramercy Park (2002)

Paula Cohen

This intriguing story concerns the relationship between Italian tenor Mario Alfieri, recently arrived for his Metropolitan Opera debut, and Clara Adler, the ward of a rich guardian who has been left penniless. Clara's past threatens to undermine the couple's romance, as does the villainous lawyer Thaddeus Chadwick, who vows to destroy the couple when they marry. The drama is played out against an authentic period background of Edith Wharton-vintage social life.

The Black Candle (1989)

Catherine Cookson

Bridget Mordaunt oversees a candle factory she inherited as a young girl. She becomes involved in the fate of Joseph Skinner, a factory employee who is unjustly accused of murder. She also finds herself connected to the fate of a fading aristocratic family in this novel of class conflict and village life.

The Desert Crop (1999)

Catherine Cookson

This story of family life set during the last decades of the 19th century begins with the decision of widower Hector Stewart to take a new Irish wife. His children are apprehensive, but Moira Conelly is able to adapt to rural life and gain acceptance. Hector Stewart may not further his financial position by re-

marrying after his first wife's death, but he has always provided well for his two young children, Daniel and Pattie. Their new stepmother, Moira, belongs to a genteel family now fallen on hard times and becomes more loving toward the children even as her new husband grows colder to them. Their growing family, however, compounds their financial difficulties, and Hector's son Daniel is condemned to a farmer's life when his schooling is ended by his increasingly violent and temperamental father. From Moira and her circle, Daniel gains the emotional assets he needs to cope with a difficult childhood and adolescence. After an accident takes the life of Hector, Daniel assumes responsibility for Moira and her children while looking for the love that has long been denied him. Cookson shows a sure knowledge of northeast England and its inhabitants in this novel, released after her death at age 91.

The Love Child (1990)

Catherine Cookson

A child of parents who don't marry until their six children are grown, Anna is the eldest child and consequently endures most of the abuse and scorn heaped on the siblings by the villagers. Determined to prove she's not like her mother, Anna retreats from all romantic involvements until she meets wealthy Timothy Barrington who has also endured pain.