



## WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY

### SPOT: Historical Fiction

*Jumping Into Genre: Historical Fiction  
(developing wide reading)*



### Reading Historical Fiction to Better Understand Social Studies Concepts

It is unlikely that you are able to take your child on a field trip to every location studied in his or her social studies curriculum. It is certainly impossible to travel back in time to study a historical event. Reading Historical Fiction may help your child better understand concepts introduced in his/her social studies classroom.

Historical Fiction helps readers learn that all people in all times have:

- faced change and crisis
- basic needs in common
- depended on each other

### The Parent's Role

Parents play an important role in helping their child(ren) understand limitations and develop critical thinking skills when reading Historical Fiction.

- Since many of the characters are fictitious and some of the historical events may not have really occurred, you can use the historical novel to help your child(ren) distinguish fact from fiction.
- Historical Fiction may distort reality. For example, some books written for children are filtered through the nostalgic lens of the adult author. In order to better help your child understand this, help him/her recall something that happened when he/she was younger. Then tell about the event from your perspective. Compare perceptions.
- Some Historical Fiction may portray women or certain ethnic groups in stereotyped ways. You can discuss the author's purpose, point of view, and possible bias with your child(ren). It may be helpful to take your child(ren) to the library to consult primary sources such as journals, diaries, letters, or newspaper articles from the time period to determine if these stereotypes reflected the attitudes and values of the historical period rather than the bias of the author.

Reference:

Freeman, E. B., & Levstik, L. (1988). Historical fiction in the social studies curriculum. *The Elementary School Journal*, (88)4. 329-337.

