



Historical Fiction: Civil War Era

Compiled by Bonnie Kunzel,
Youth Services Consultant,
New Jersey State Library

Civil War

Armstrong, Jennifer. *Dreams of Mairhe Mehan* . (Gr. 7+)

Mairhe, a young Irish woman living in a Washington D.C. slum in the 1860s, sees the Civil War destroy her dream.

Bartoletti, Susan Campbell. *No Man's Land : A Young Soldier's Story* . (Gr. 5-9)

Thrasher Magee (14) lies about his age and joins the Okefenokee Rifles to fight in the Confederate Army in 1861, driven by his need to prove that he is not a coward - to his father and to himself.

Brenaman, Miriam. *Evy's Civil War* . (Gr. 7-10)

Evy, oldest of five sisters, is shocked on her fourteenth birthday, when everyone expects her to start acting like a "Southern Lady." Putting up her hair, wearing tight corsets and dainty gloves, however, are soon overshadowed by the horror and death of the Civil War, especially after her father goes to fight in the war, leaving Evvy in charge of the plantation.

Clapp, Patricia. *The Tamarack Tree : A Novel of the Siege of Vicksburg* . (Gr. 6-9)

Rosemary, an eighteen-year-old English girl finds her loyalties divided and all her resources tested as she and her friends experience the terrible physical and emotional hardships of the forty-seven day siege of Vicksburg in the spring of 1863.

Collier, James Lincoln and Christopher. *With Every Drop of Blood: A Novel of the Civil War* . (Gr. 7+)

Johnny (14), a white Southern boy, is captured by an African-American Union soldier while trying to transport food to Richmond, Virginia. These two go from enemies to allies during the final days of the Civil War.

Crist-Evans, Craig. *Moon Over Tennessee : A Boy's Civil War Journal* . (Gr. 7+)

This novel in verse, based on original source material, is the diary of a thirteen-year-old boy who leaves his home in northeastern Tennessee with his father to care for the horses and camp duties while his father fights in the Civil War.

Fleischman, Paul. *Bull Run* . (Gr. 6+)

Sixteen characters, from different walks of life, Northerners, Southerners, generals, couriers, dreaming boys, and worried sisters describe the glory, the horror, the thrill, and the disillusionment of the first battle of the Civil War.

Forman, James. *Becca's Story* . (Gr. 7+)

Fifteen-year-old Becca Case is happy until the Civil War is declared and both of her young beaux enlist. This novel is based on the journals kept by James Forman's great-great grandmother.

Hill, Pamela Smith. *A Voice from the Border* . (Gr. 6-8)

Living in the border state of Missouri during the Civil War, fifteen-year-old Reeves tries to understand her father's decision regarding their slaves.

Keith, Harold. *Rifles For Watie* . (Gr. 5-8)

This is an account of the Civil War in Indian country, the adventures of Jeff Bussey, a young Union volunteer, who becomes a scout and is sent out West, to spy on Confederate Cherokee raiders. (Newbery Medal 1958)

Love, D. Anne. *Three against the Tide* . (Gr. 5-8)

After her father is called away from their plantation during the Civil War to spy for General Lee, Susanna (12) leads her brothers on a dangerous journey to Charleston, S.C., hoping to be reunited with him.

Lyons, Mary E. *Dear Ellen Bee: The Civil War Scrapbook Of Two Union Spies* . (Gr. 5-8)

Based on a true story, Elizabeth, a wealthy abolitionist, and Mary Eliza, the daughter of freed slaves, work together as spies for the Union during the Civil War under the code name "Ellen Bee."

Matas, Carol. *The War Within: A Novel Of The Civil War* . (Gr. 5-8)

When General Grant orders all Jews to evacuate Mississippi, Hannah's family must leave their home. On the march north, Hannah begins to see the parallels between her situation and that of the slaves, causing her to rethink her beliefs.

Nixon, Joan Lowery. *A Dangerous Promise* . (Gr. 5-8)

This volume in the *Orphan Train Series* features Mike Kelly (12), who along with his friend Todd Blakely joins the Union Army. Even though they are just musicians, the boys experience the horrors of war firsthand in Missouri.

Paulsen, Gary. *Soldier's Heart* . (Gr. 6-9)

After facing the real fighting in the Civil War, Charlie realizes that war is hell on earth, both mentally and physically. Based on a real-life character who almost made it through the war unscathed, but then came Gettysburg.

Peck, Richard. *The River between Us* . (Gr. 7+)

An old woman recounts to her grandson her life during the Civil War, in particular the story of two mysterious female boarders who come to stay, as well as what happens after her brother runs away to fight in the War.

Reeder, Carolyn. *Across the Lines* . (Gr. 5-9)

In alternating voices, Edward, the son of a white plantation owner, and Simon, his black house servant and friend, relate what happened during the last year of the Civil War. Edward and his family were forced off their plantation by Union troops and wound up at the siege of Petersburg , at the same time that Simon made a break for freedom and wound up doing odd jobs for the Union army.

Reeder, Carolyn. *Before the Creeks Ran Red* . (Gr. 6-9)

These three stories are about three young men at the beginning of the Civil War. Timothy (14) is a Union bugler stationed at Fort Sumter during its bombardment. In Baltimore a mob of local secessionists attacks Northern volunteers headed to Washington , leaving Joseph to decide if he has the courage to tell his South-supporting classmates where he stands. After Union troops declare martial law in Alexandria , Gregory finds that the conflict is ugly and intensely personal, rather than high-minded and political.

Rinaldi, Ann. *An Acquaintance with Darkness* . (Gr. 7-10)

After her mother's death, Emily Pigbush must go to live with her uncle, a widely-respected doctor whom she suspects of being a grave robber. Intertwined is the assassination of President Lincoln and the involvement of her neighbors and friends.

Rinaldi, Ann. *Girl in Blue* . (Gr. 6-9)

Based on the story of a woman who disguised herself as a boy and fought in the Civil War. Sarah Wheelock (15) ran away from an arranged marriage in 1861 and joined the Union army. When her secret was discovered, she was offered a position with the Pinkerton Detective Agency as a Union spy.

Rinaldi, Ann. *In My Father's House* . (Gr. 7-10)

Based on historical fact, this is the story of the McLean family, seen through the eyes of Will McLean's stepdaughter, Oscie Mason. The family owned a farm in Manassas , which is where the Civil War began, moved to Appomattox to get away from the fighting, and wound up owning land where the Civil War ended.

Rinaldi, Ann. *The Last Silk Dress* . (Gr. 5+)

During the Civil War, Susan finds a way to help the Confederate Army that requires a personal sacrifice - the fancy clothes that she and her friends wore before the country went to war.

Rinaldi, Ann. *Numbering All the Bones* . (Gr. 7-10)

Eulinda (13) is a house slave and daughter of the owner on a plantation a mile from Andersonville Prison in 1864. As the war comes to an end, she volunteers to help Clara Barton "number the bones" of those who died in the prison, while at the same time looking for her missing brother who may have been imprisoned there.

SLAVERY**Lyons, Mary E. *Letters from a Slave Girl: The Story of Harriet Jacobs* . (Gr. 5-9)**

Based on the true story of Harriet Jacobs, a young African American woman who overcame tremendous odds, including hiding in an attic for seven years, to attain her freedom from slavery.

Paulsen, Gary. *Nightjohn* . (Gr. 7-10)

Nightjohn, an escaped slave, returns to the South to teach other slaves how to read, igniting a fire in the soul of young Sarny, who sees freedom in the forbidden words.

Paulsen, Gary. *Sarny, A Life Remembered* . (Gr. 6-9)

In this sequel to *Nightjohn* , Sarny, the young slave girl Nightjohn taught to read, tells her story of being freed by soldiers, heading for New Orleans to search for her children, and then what life was like in the new South.

Schwartz , Virginia Frances . *Send One Angel Down* . (Gr. 5-8)

Based on a story in Julius Lester's classic *To Be a Slave* , this is the true account of a slave girl's experiences whose father, the owner of the plantation, has promised not to sell - until his white daughters discover the truth and demand he get rid of her.

Taylor, Mildred. *The Land* . (Gr. 7-10)

In this prequel to the award-winning *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, Cassie's father Paul, the son of a white father and a black mother, is caught between two worlds as he pursues his dream of owning land in the aftermath of the Civil War.

Walker, Margaret. *Jubilee* . (Gr. 8+)

Based on the life of Vvry, Margaret Walker's great-grandmother, who was the child of a white plantation owner and his slave mistress, this is an account of her experiences during the Civil War, and as a woman freed by the Emancipation Proclamation.

Whitmore, Arvella. *Trapped between the Lash and the Gun* . (Gr. 5-9)

Twelve-year-old Jordan is becoming dangerously involved with a street gang when he is suddenly transported through time to become a slave on the plantation of his ancestors.

UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

Armstrong, Jennifer. *Steal Away* . (Gr. 5-9)

In 1855 two thirteen-year-old girls, one white and one black, run away from a southern farm and make the difficult journey north to freedom, living to recount their story forty-one years later to two similar young girls.

Ayres, Katherine. *North by Night* . (Gr. 6-9)

Lucy Spencer's diary and letters tell of her involvement with her family's underground railway activities in 1851 as they hide and then shepherd escaping slaves to safety.

Ayres, Katherine. *Stealing South*. (Gr. 7-10)

Will Spencer (16), whose family has been part of the Underground Railroad for years, leaves home to become a peddler, but he gets more than he bargained for when he agrees to go to Kentucky, steal two slaves, and help them reach their brother in Canada.

Carbone, Elisa. *Stealing Freedom* . (Gr. 7-10)

Based on the true story of Ann Maria Weems, a young teenage slave in Maryland who escaped on the Underground Railroad to Canada in the 1850s after she was separated from her family by her master and shipped off as a housemaid.

Fleischman, Paul. *The Borning Room* . (Gr. 5-9)

Lying at the end of her life in the room where she was born in 1851, Georgina remembers what it was like to grow up on the Ohio frontier as a member of a family of abolitionists.

Lasky, Kathryn. *True North: A Novel of the Underground Railroad* . (Gr. 7+)

Lucy Bradford, fourteen, learns about the Underground Railroad and helps Afrika, a fugitive slave girl, make it to freedom in Canada .

Paterson, Katherine. *Jip, His Story* . (Gr. 6-9)

In this companion novel to *Lyddie* , which was set in the mills of Lowell, Mass., a young boy found abandoned on a country road grows up in the local poor farm, only to discover that he was not the son of a gypsy but of an escaped slave and needs Lyddie's help when slave catchers come after him.

Pinkney, Andrea Davis. *Silent Thunder: A Civil War Story* . (Gr. 5-9)

In alternating chapters, two young slaves, Summer (11) and her older brother Rosco (13) describing their life on the Parnell Plantation in 1862 Virginia . Summer dreams the impossible dream of learning to read, while Rosco dreams of fighting for his country and his freedom and finally escapes on the Underground Railroad.

Rinaldi, Ann. *Mine Eyes Have Seen* . (Gr. 6-9)

In the summer of 1859, Annie Brown, the daughter of famous abolitionist John Brown, is at the farm where her father is assembling his provisional army for the raid upon the arsenal at Harper's Ferry.

Stolz, Mary. *Cezanne Pinto* . (Gr. 6-9)

Now an old man, Cezanne recalls his youth as a slave, a traveler on the Underground Railway and as a cowboy out west.