

## Grade 7 Playlist: Historical and Literary Comparisons

Aligns with *CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.9*:

- Compare and contrast a fictional portrayal of a time, place, or character and a historical account of the same period as a means of understanding how authors of fiction use or alter history.

### Welcome

A work of literature's setting includes the time and place where it occurs. Sometimes it is the same time and place as when and where the author is writing. Other times, it takes place in the past, in an unfamiliar place. While works of fiction most often depict characters and events that never lived or happened, sometimes fiction is based on real events. Authors can write fictional (or fictionalized) accounts of true events, using their own knowledge of the events with a little imagination.

### Objectives

In this playlist, students will learn how to:

- compare and contrast a fictional portrayal of a time, place, or character and a historical account of the same period.
- analyze and evaluate how authors of fiction use or alter history.

### Review

#### Key Terms

- To **compare** and **contrast** two things is to determine how they are the same and how they are different. When readers compare one piece of writing with another, they take note of the things the two works have in common. When they contrast the pieces, they analyze the ways in which the works are different or tell a story differently.
- A **historical account** is a narrative about an event or series of events that happened in the past. Historical accounts are based on facts and can be proven to have really happened. People who witnessed the events themselves are often the authors of historical accounts.
- A **fictional account** is a telling of a story that never happened. It can be based on real events and include characters that are based on actual people. However, fictional accounts also include details that are either completely imagined or cannot be proven.
- A **portrayal** is a text about something such as an event, place, time, or person.
- To **alter** something is to make it different from before—slightly or significantly.



**Read!**

Take a look at the sample compare-and-contrast paper, essay organizer, and checklist.

- <http://www.timeforkids.com/homework-helper/a-plus-papers/compare-and-contrast-essay>

**Exploring the Standard**

A fictional account that involves historical events is sometimes called historical fiction. Authors of historical fiction must be very knowledgeable about the time and place they are portraying. Some authors conduct extensive research to make sure that the details they use are authentic. However, historical fiction nonetheless contains elements that make it fictional. In fact, often the author deliberately alters historical facts and details in their stories.

**A Closer Look: Why Change History?**

Unless an author was a witness or participant in the event he or she was portraying, the author will almost certainly use his or her imagination when writing at least some of the details in a work of historical fiction. But some authors deliberately change events in stories. They make these changes to draw attention to certain aspects of stories when writing fictional accounts of real events. A few of the many reasons why an author might choose to do this include:

- To suggest how history might have been different if events had happened just a little differently;
- To make a dull subject more interesting using methods such as colorful dialogue or a vivid setting;
- To better inform the reader by creating a reality that is likely, even if it cannot be proven; and
- To enforce his or own views on historical events, and to persuade the reader to accept these views.

**Watch!**

Watch this video to learn more about historical fiction:

- <https://www.opened.com/video/introducing-historical-fiction/1537990>

**Fictional Account: “The Charge of the Light Brigade”**

“The Charge of the Light Brigade” was written by a well-known poet of nineteenth-century Britain, Alfred, Lord Tennyson. Originally published in December 1854, this poem portrays a real event that happened less than two months earlier in a different part of the world. While reading and listening to the poem, think about the following questions:

- What is happening in this poem, and who is involved?
- How does the poet want the reader to feel about this event?



## Teaching Notes: Historical and Literary Comparisons

The goal of RL.7.9 is for students to be able to compare and contrast **fictional** portrayals of elements from the past with **historical** accounts portraying the same elements. The following information contains ideas that teachers can incorporate in their classrooms and additional resources to peruse and integrate into instruction as appropriate.

### Activities

1. Read to the class other examples of historical poetry, such as “The Eve of Waterloo” by Lord Byron or “Paul Revere’s Ride” by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Discuss how the poets use figurative language and other poetic devices to reinterpret history in these poems.
2. Have students identify examples of historical literature that are familiar to them. Which characters and events from history seem to be the most commonly portrayed in historical literature? What does this say about these particular characters and events?

### Writing Prompts

1. Have students select a poem, short story, or short novel that gives a fictional account of the subject they are currently learning about in their history classes. Then ask the students to write an essay comparing and contrasting the treatment of the subject between the fictional account and the account given in their textbooks.
2. Ask students to revisit the brief activity, at the end of the playlist, in which they developed a strategy for adapting a short story with a modern setting to a historical one. Instruct the students to complete their research on the topic and rewrite their story with a historical setting, paying close attention to accuracy in detail while being appropriately imaginative with the story’s plot and dialogue.

### Additional Resources

Consider these additional resources when teaching RL.7.9:

**“Why and How I Teach with Historical Fiction”**: This article gives strategies and tips for using historical fiction in the classroom:

- <http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/article/why-and-how-i-teach-historical-fiction>

**“A Balanced and Critical Approach to Historical Fiction”**: This resource discusses issues that the teacher might encounter while teaching historical fiction in the classroom:

- <http://teachinghistory.org/issues-and-research/roundtable-response/25287>

