

Infectious Diseases, Illness, and Epidemics in Historical Fiction

FICTION

Anderson, Laurie Halse. *Fever, 1793*. Aladdin, 2002.

In 1793 Philadelphia, 16-year-old Matilda Cook, separated from her sick mother, learns about perseverance and self-reliance when she is forced to cope with the horrors of the yellow fever epidemic. (Card catalog description)

Brooks, Jerome. *The Big Dipper Marathon*. Pocket Books, 1982.

A fifteen-year-old's visit to relatives in Chicago gives him new insight into his struggle to decide the kind of life he will live as a victim of polio. (Card catalog description)

Coerr, Eleanor. *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes*. Puffin Books, 1999.

Hospitalized with the dreaded atom bomb disease, leukemia, a child in Hiroshima races against time to fold one thousand paper cranes to verify the legend that by doing so a sick person will become healthy. (Card catalog description)

Cohen, Barbara. *Gooseberries to Oranges*. HarperCollins Children's, 1982.

A young girl reminisces about the journey from her cholera-ravaged village in Eastern Europe to the United States where she is reunited with her father. (Card catalog description)

DeAngeli, Marguerite. *The Door in the Wall*. Yearling, 1990.

This Newbery Medal winning story, set in medieval times, is about a boy who learns his own strength when he saves the castle and discovers there is more than one way to serve his king. (*School Library Journal*)

DeFelice, Cynthia. *The Apprenticeship of Lucas Whitaker*. HarperTrophy, 1998.

After his family dies of consumption in 1849, twelve-year-old Lucas becomes a doctor's apprentice. (Card catalog description)

Erdrich, Louise. *The Birchbark House*. Hyperion, 2002.

Omakayas, a 7-year-old Ojibwa girl and sole survivor of smallpox in her family, lives through the joys of summer and the perils of winter on an island in Lake Superior in 1847. (Card catalog description)

Haddix, Margaret Peterson. *Running Out of Time*. Aladdin, 1995.

Jessie lives with her family in the frontier village of Clifton, Indiana, in 1840—or so she believes. When diphtheria strikes the village and the children of Clifton start dying, Jessie's mother reveals a shocking secret—it's actually 1996, and they are living in a reconstructed village that serves as a tourist site. In the world outside, medicine exists that can cure the dreaded disease, and Jessie's mother is sending her on a dangerous mission to bring back help. (Book cover description)

Hesse, Karen. *Letters from Rifka*. Hyperion, 1993.

Refused passage in 1919 because she has ringworm, a young Jewish girl from Russia battles supercilious officials and yards of red tape before she is finally reunited with her family in America. Historical fiction with a memorable heroine, a vivid sense of place, and a happily-ever-after ending. (*School Library Journal*)

Lasky, Kathryn. *Marven of the Great North Woods*. Harcourt Children's Books, 1997.

When his Jewish parents send him to a Minnesota logging camp to escape the influenza epidemic of 1918, ten-year-old Marven finds a special friend. (Card catalog description)

- Lewis, Sinclair. *Arrowsmith*. Signet Classics, 1998.
 In *Arrowsmith* (1925) Lewis portrays the medical career of Martin Arrowsmith, a physician who finds his commitment to the ideals of his profession tested by the cynicism and opportunism he encounters in private practice, public health work, and scientific research. The novel reaches its climax as its hero faces his greatest challenges amid a deadly outbreak of plague on a Caribbean island. (Book cover description)
- Myers, Anna. *Graveyard Girl*. Walker & Company, 1995.
 During the yellow fever epidemic in Memphis in 1878, twelve-year-old Eli and Addie, a young child he befriends, struggle to survive with the help of Addie's ghost-mother and a girl who works at the busy graveyard. (Card catalog description)
- Paton Walsh, Jill. *A Parcel of Patterns*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1992.
 Mall Percival tells how the plague came to her Derbyshire village of Eyam in the year 1665, how the villagers determined to isolate themselves to prevent further spread of the disease, and how three-fourths of them died before the end of the following year. (Card catalog description)
- Paterson, Katherine. *Lyddie*. Puffin Books, 1994.
 Impoverished Vermont farm girl Lyddie Worthen is determined to gain her independence by becoming a factory worker in Lowell, Massachusetts, in the 1840s. (Card catalog description)
- Reeder, Carolyn. *Shades of Gray*. Aladdin, 1999.
 At the end of the Civil War, twelve-year-old Will, having lost all his immediate family, reluctantly leaves his city home to live in the Virginia countryside with his aunt and the uncle he considers a "traitor" because he refused to take part in the war. (Card catalog description)
- Turner, Ann Warren. *The Way Home*. Random House, 1982.
 In 1349, a young girl returns from months of surviving in the marsh, having been "outlawed" for offending the village lord, only to find that her village has been wiped out by "the sickness." (Card catalog description)
- Weaver, Lydia. *Close to Home: A Story of the Polio Epidemic*. Sagebrush Education, 1999.
 In the summer of 1952, Betsy sees her vacation fun overshadowed by the spreading polio epidemic, while her mother and other scientists work frantically to develop a vaccine for the crippling disease. (Card catalog description)
- Yep, Lawrence. *Hiroshima*. Scholastic, 1996.
 Describes the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan, particularly as it affects Sachi, who becomes one of the Hiroshima Maidens. (Card catalog description)
- Yep, Laurence. *When the Circus Came to Town*. HarperTrophy, 2004.
 An Asian cook and a Chinese New Year celebration help a ten-year-old girl at a Montana stage coach station to regain her confidence after smallpox scars her face. (Card catalog description)

NONFICTION

- Aaseng, Nathan. *The Disease Fighters: The Nobel Prize in Medicine*. Lerner Publishing, 1987.
Describes some of the major medical discoveries, such as the cure for tuberculosis and the cause of malaria, made by researchers who were eventually awarded the Nobel Prize for Medicine. (Card catalog description)
- Cefrey, Holly. *AIDS (Epidemics!)*. Rosen Pub Group, 2001.
Brief and to-the-point, books in this series provide the history and future of these often studied diseases through an accessible format that will draw students to the occasionally graphic but informative content. (Voice of Youth Advocate Honor List)
- de Kruif, Dr. Paul. *Microbe Hunters*. Harvest Books, 2002.
From the top of today's news, where reports of Ebola and HIV loom large, comes the story of microbes, bacteria, and how disease shapes our everyday lives and society thrives. The superheroes in this scheme are the scientists, bacteriologists, doctors, and medical technicians who wage active war against bacteria. (*Ingram*)
- Draper, Allison Stark. *Polio*. Rosen Pub Group, 2001.
Slim, accessible books that discuss the history and social and political consequences of these diseases as well as their causes, symptoms, prevention, treatment, and current research. (*School Library Journal*)
- Giblin, James Cross. *When Plague Strikes: The Black Death, Smallpox, AIDS*. HarperTrophy, 1997.
While the Black Death, smallpox, and AIDS may seem to have little in common, Giblin draws parallels between them that are both striking and fascinating. The Black Death was often blamed on Jews, leading to hatred, mistrust, and violence against them. In much the same way, many people have blamed AIDS on homosexuals. (*School Library Journal*)
- Hoff, Brent H. and Carter Smith III. *Mapping Epidemics: A Historical Atlas of Disease*. Franklin Watts, 2000.
Organized alphabetically by disease, this fact-filled resource should prove an outstanding research tool. A brief introduction, which suggests the scope and impact of infectious diseases on the world population, is followed by a glossary of meaningful terms that appear in the main text. Thirty-two diseases (including AIDS, E. coli, Legionnaires', syphilis, and TB) are discussed, most within one double-page spread each. (*Booklist*)
- Isle, Mick. *Malaria (Epidemics!)*. Rosen Pub Group, 2001.
The attractive format of these introductory titles will entice young report writers. Both well-researched volumes provide information about the disease's origins, history, symptoms and treatment, and prevention. Malaria explains that this disease still poses a threat in many places. (*School Library Journal*)
- Kolata, Gina. *Flu: The Story of the Great Influenza Pandemic of 1918 and the Search for the Virus That Caused It*. Farrar Straus Giroux, 1999.
Gina Kolata, an acclaimed reporter for The New York Times, unravels the mystery of this lethal virus with the high drama of a great adventure story. Delving into the history of the flu and previous epidemics, detailing the science and the latest understanding of this mortal disease, Kolata addresses the prospects for a great epidemic recurring, and, most important, what can be done to prevent it. (Book cover description)
- Marrin, Albert. *Dr. Jenner and the Speckled Monster: The Search for the Smallpox Vaccine*. Dutton Books, 2002.

In 1796, an unknown country doctor named Edward Jenner developed and administered the world's first vaccine—turning the tide in humanity's age-old war against disease. (Book cover description)

Murphy, Jim. *An American Plague: The True and Terrifying Story of the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793*. Clarion, 2003.

History, science, politics, and public health come together in this dramatic account of the disastrous yellow fever epidemic that hit the nation's capital more than 200 years ago. Drawing on firsthand accounts, medical and non-medical, Murphy re-creates the fear and panic in the infected city, the social conditions that caused the disease to spread, and the arguments about causes and cures. (*Booklist*)

Ramen, Fred. *Influenza*. Rosen Pub Group, 2001.

Though we are all aware of the flu, who among us really understands that this seemingly seasonal nuisance could be, and often is, a deadly disease? This book reveals the terrible and fascinating history of this common illness, traces its impact on society throughout history, and discusses the ways in which we attempt to prevent and treat this rampant and debilitating virus. (Book cover description)

Ramen, Fred. *Tuberculosis*. Rosen Pub Group, 2001.

This book discusses the tragic impact tuberculosis has had on people, especially those in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe, including many famous artists and writers. It also traces the way in which the medical community came to understand and treat this deadly disease and how it continues to affect people even today. (Book cover description)

Ridgeway, Tom. *Smallpox*. Rosen Pub Group, 2001.

Only thirty years ago, smallpox was killing three million people a year. Those who didn't die were left with horrible scars all over their faces. This book discusses all aspects of this disease, which terrorized the world for so many years, and covers everything from the Hindi goddess of smallpox to the spread of the virus to the New World to the symptoms of the disease and the history of the smallpox vaccine.

Roueche, Berton. *The Medical Detectives*. Plume Books, 1991.

What do Lyme's disease in Long Island, a pig from New Jersey, and an amateur pianist have in common? All are subjects in three of 25 utterly fascinating tales of strange illnesses, rare diseases, poisons, and parasites—each tale a thriller of medical suspense. (Book cover description)