

Historical fiction is a contradiction in terms. History is what happened; fiction, what did not. Yet great novelists have often disregarded this logical difficulty, taking up the tools of the historian to explore the shadowy recesses of the past. Their labors have brought forth many literary treasures. But how accurately do these masterpieces of the imagination reflect the past? In *Novel History*, twenty accomplished historians consider this question in relation to some of our most important historical novels. Their essays are followed in most instances by a response from the novelist. These dialogues illuminate one of the most fascinating and perplexing issues of our time -- the relation between the real past and our finest imaginative renderings of it. *Novel History* includes essays by distinguished historians such as John Demos, Michael Kammen, Joan D. Hedrick, John Lukacs, Eugene D. Genovese, Richard White, and Tom Wicker, and responses from notable novelists, including Gore Vidal, John Updike, Russell Banks, Don DeLillo, Larry McMurtry, Jane Smiley, Madison Smartt Bell, William Styron, T. Coraghessan Boyle, William Kennedy, Charles Frazier, Thomas Fleming, and Tim O'Brien. *Novel History* is both a uniquely compelling perspective and a superb collection of literary history.

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