

CYCLOPAEDIA 15 — ALTERNATE HISTORY

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OVERVIEW

Alternate History brings up many thoughts and feelings. To historical purists, this genre of fiction can look like historical revisionism. Speculative fiction fans view these as “What If” scenarios that challenge us to think outside historical norms to how the world could be different today. Within the science fiction genre, alternate history can take on many sub-genres such as time travel, alternate timelines, steampunk, and dieselpunk. All agree that Alternate History speculates to altered outcomes of key events in history. These minor or major alterations have ripple effects, creating different social, political, cultural, and/or scientific levels in the world.

Alternate History takes some queues from Science Fiction as a genre. Just like Science Fiction, Alternate History can be organized into two sub-categories that are “Hard” and “Soft” like Science Fiction.

“Hard” Alternate History could be viewed as stories and themes that stay as true to actual history as possible with just one or two single changes that change the outcome, such as the Confederate Army winning the Civil War or the Axis winning World War 2. These stories then delve into what this historically significant change would have on the greater world. Here Historical Fiction and Historical Revisionism ride a fine line, dependent upon the purpose of the Alternate History story.

“Soft” Alternate History, much like Space Opera and other softer science fiction stories, are a little more loose with their history elements, often utilizing time travel, parallel

dimensions, or technological changes to explore these historical changes. Steampunk, dieselpunk, and time/dimensional travel stories are good examples of this subcategory of Alternate History. Alternate History rides a fine line between Historical Fiction and Science Fiction at this point.

Whatever type of Alternate History you enjoy, each challenges your preconceived understandings and feelings for a time period in history, perhaps offering you new perspectives on the people and events involved.

MOST COMMON TYPES OF ALTERNATE HISTORY?

Alternate History has so many sub-genres associated with it. Each one has its own unique alteration of history, many of which are considered genres or themes unto themselves.

- 80s Cold War invasion of United States
- Axis victory in World War II
- Confederate victory in American Civil War
- Dieselpunk
- Historical Revisionism
- Parallel Timelines
- Steampunk
- Time Travel-Induced Historical Changes

Following are sources of information pertaining to Alternate History to assist prospective game masters, game designers, writers, and storytellers in knowing where to start their research.

ARTICLES

**Conspiracy and Alternate History in Russia:
A Nationalist Equation for Success?**

By Laruelle, Marlene

Source: The Russian Review, v71 n4
(October 2012): 565-580

**Fallacies and thresholds: Notes on the
early evolution of alternate history**

By Winthrop-Young, Geoffrey

Source: Historical Social Research, v34 n2
(2009 04 20): 99-117

**Past Tense: The best of today's alternate
history isn't likely to cheer you up. But it
certainly won't bore you.**

By Smoler, Fredric

Source: AMERICAN HERITAGE, 50, no. 5,
(1999): 45-48

**The Third Reich in Alternate History:
Aspects of a Genre-Specific Depiction of
Nazi Culture**

By Winthrop-Young, Geoffrey

Source: The Journal of Popular Culture, v39
n5 (200610): 878-896

**Warping Time: Alternate History, Historical
Fantasy, and the Postmodern uchronie
québécoise**

By Ransom, Amy

Source: Extrapolation, v51 n2 (201001):
258-280

**What Almost Was: The Politics of the
Contemporary Alternate History Novel**

By Schneider-Mayerson, Matthew

Source: American Studies, 50, no. 3 (2009):
63-83

BOOKS

11/22/63: A Novel

By King, Stephen

1945

By Forstchen, William and Gingrich, Newt

Ab Urbe Condita Libri

By Livy

Ada or Ardor: A Family Chronicle

By Nabokov, Vladimir

The Alteration

By Amis, Kingsley

Alternate Histories of the World

By Buchholz, Matthew

Aristopia

By Holford, Castello

Aristotle and the Gun

By de Camp, L. Sprague

Bring the Jubilee

By Moore, Ward

A Different Flesh

By Turtledove, Harry

The End of Eternity

By Asimov, Isaac

***End of the Beginning: A Novel of Alternate
History***

By Turtledove, Harry

Fatherland

By Harris, Robert

***Flashpoint* - Comic**

By Johns, Geoff

Histoire de la Monarchie universelle

By Geoffroy, Louis

How To Write Alternate History

By Wolf, Grey

If It Had Happened Otherwise

By Squire, Sir John

Lest Darkness Fall

By de Camp, L. Sprague

Making History

By Fry, Stephen

The Man in the High Castle

By Dick, Philip K.

Men Like Gods

By Wells, H.G.

Night Watch

By Pratchett, Terry

Over the Top: Alternate Histories of the First World War

By Tsouras, Peter and Jones, Spencer

P.'s Correspondence

By Hawthorne, Nathaniel

The Plot Against America

By Roth, Philip

The Proteus Operation

By Hogan, James P.

Sidewise In Time

By Leinster, Murray

Then Everything Changed: Stunning Alternate Histories of American Politics: JFK, RFK, Carter, Ford, Reagan

By Greenfield, Jeff

Timeline 191

By Turtledove, Harry

The Two Georges

By Dreyfuss, Richard and Turtledove, Harry

Watchmen - Comic

By Moore, Alan

What Ifs? of American History: Eminent Historians Imagine What Might Have Been

By Cowley, Robert

The Wheels of If

By de Camp, L. Sprague

Why Alternate History Matters: The World Hitler Never Made

By Rosenfeld, Gabriel

GAMES

Achtung! Cthulhu – RPG

BioShock – Computer Game

Brave New World - RPG

Castle Falkenstein - RPG

Civilization - Computer Game

Command & Conquer: Red Alert - Computer Game

Crimson Skies - Tabletop & Computer Game

The Day after Ragnarok - RPG

Deadlands - RPG

Dust - Tabletop Game

Dust Tactics - Tabletop Game
Fallout - Computer Game
Freedom Fighters - Computer Game
Forgotten Futures - RPG
Gear Krieg - RPG
Godlike: Superhero Roleplaying in a World on Fire, 1936-1946 - RPG
GURPS Alternate Earths - RPG
Iron Sky: The Board Game - Tabletop Game
Mason-Dixon: The Second American Civil War - Tabletop Game
The Price of Freedom - RPG
Rivet Wars: Eastern Front - Tabletop Game
Secrets of the Dust - RPG
Shadows of Normandie - Tabletop Game
Space: 1889 - RPG
S.T.A.L.K.E.R. - Computer Game
Tannhauser - Tabletop Game
Twilight 2000 - RPG
Wolfenstein: New Order - Computer Game
World at War: America Conquered - Tabletop Game

CINEMA

11.22.63 - TV
Amerika - TV
An Englishman's Castle - TV
Ascension - TV
Blackadder - TV
The Boys From Brazil
CSA: The Confederate States of America
District 9
Doctor Who - TV
Fatherland
The Final Countdown
The Good Dinosaur
Inglourious Basterds
Iron Sky
It Happened Here
Kiki's Delivery Service

The Man in the High Castle - TV
Red Dawn
Six-String Samurai
Sliders - TV
The Trial of Lee Harvey Oswald
Timeline - TV
Voyagers! - TV
Watchmen

LOCATIONS

Anachro Con

<http://www.anachrocon.org/>

Anomaly Con

<http://www.anomalycon.com/>

The Museum of Alternate History

<http://www.museumofalternativehistory.com/>

Sidewise Awards for Alternate History

<http://www.uchronia.net/sidewise/>

PEOPLE

L. Sprague de Camp
Randall Garrett
Robert Sobel
Harry Turtledove