Have you ever seen a Civil War movie with a fictional soldier fighting in a battle that really took place? This kind of movie is a work of historical fiction, or a story set in the past that combines made-up characters and events with historical figures and real events from a specific time and place. A historical account, on the other hand, is a factual explanation, description, or narrative from or about the past. All the people actually lived, the places existed, and the events in a historical account really occurred.

**Study the illustration below. Which details are based on reality and which are fictional?**

The above image shows a real person, General Robert E. Lee, standing next to a fictional drummer boy. In a similar way, historical fiction includes real people and events and then alters some historical details to tell a made-up story. Study the chart to consider how the author of historical fiction draws upon real facts to create a work of fiction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How Historical Fiction Uses History</th>
<th>How Historical Fiction Alters History</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• set in a real time period and place</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• provides factual information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• includes events that actually occurred</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• uses historical figures, language, and details, such as famous people or typical customs of the times</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• plot combines real and made-up events</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• made-up yet realistic characters interact with real people who once lived</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• most dialogue is invented</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• may interpret or change historical details to create a better story</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Good readers understand that historical accounts use facts and information to inform readers about history, while historical fiction is meant to entertain readers with an engaging story that combines real and imagined characters and events from the past. As they read, good readers are aware of these differences and are careful to separate fact from fiction.
Read the historical account about the Lewis and Clark expedition. Then read and answer the question that follows.

Journey to the Pacific  
by Rita Hay

In 1804, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark led the first U.S expedition to the Pacific Coast of North America. Sent by President Thomas Jefferson to chart a route through unexplored regions of the country, the team of explorers recorded the wide variety of plants, animals, and geography they saw in the wilderness. The expedition journeyed along rivers, over mountains, and through valleys for over a year, encountering hostile tribes, inclement weather, and challenging terrain.

On November 7th, 1805, the “Corps of Discovery” thought they had finally found the Pacific Ocean, but they were mistaken. The wide expanse of open water turned out to be the estuary, or mouth, of the Columbia River. With the help of native guides and determined companions, however, the team finally succeeded, the expedition reached the Pacific Ocean on November 15th, 1805. A long, hard winter and return journey lay before them, but the first half of their mission had been accomplished.

What characteristics of a historical account are present in this article?

This historical account of Lewis and Clark’s expedition includes many details about their journey. Underline examples of facts, people, and places that present historical information.

Fill in the first column of the chart below with facts from the article. After reading the fictional story on the next page, add additional details to the second column of the chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historical Facts</th>
<th>Fictional Details</th>
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<tbody>
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</table>

With a partner, discuss how to confirm the accuracy of the statement about the mistake made by the explorers on November 7, 1805.
Close Reading

Which facts from the article on the previous page are also present in the historical fiction story? Underline facts that are the same or similar. Star (*) any story elements that are clearly fictional, and add them to the chart on page 202.

Sighting the Pacific by Jaycee Wright

As the weary explorers reached the top of the hill, Mr. Lewis let out a cry of delight. “We’ve made it!” he exclaimed. “The Pacific!”

The men exchanged doubtful glances—just last week, Mr. Clark had rejoiced along with the entire team, confident that the large body of water before them was the ocean. Later, they discovered that the water was just the estuary of the Columbia River. Yet they smelled ocean air! Peter had tried to stay positive as they continued their search, but it was extremely difficult. Would today, November 15th, actually be the day they reached the Pacific Ocean?

“That certainly is a sight for sore eyes!” one of the men exclaimed, and Peter looked up and grinned. After a year and a half of traveling, they had, in fact, come upon the salt waters of the Pacific.

Circle the best answer.

Which fact presented in “Journey to the Pacific” is also included in the fictional story above?

A  Peter played a key role as a member of Lewis and Clark’s team.
B  Some of the explorers felt that the ocean was a “sight for sore eyes.”
C  Peter tried to keep up his spirits during the expedition.
D  The explorers had mistaken an estuary for the Pacific Ocean.

Show Your Thinking

Describe how the author of “Sighting the Pacific” used and altered historical details about the Lewis and Clark expedition to tell a story.

With a partner, discuss the advantages of reading each type of account about an historical event.
Read the following historical account and historical fiction piece. Use the Study Buddies and Close Readings to guide your reading.

Genre: Article

Orphan Train Riders

By Elliot Elmore

1. By the mid 1800s, the New York City streets were filled with an estimated 30,000 poor and hungry children. Many were homeless or abandoned; they sold newspapers, rags, or matches in order to earn money and lived on the streets in all kinds of weather. Often forming gangs in order to protect themselves, the children led hard lives, but it was the only life they knew.

2. In 1853, Charles Loring Brace, a young minister, took it upon himself to help these children. “When a child stands in front of you in rags with a tear-stained face,” he said, “you cannot easily forget him . . . .” Brace founded the Children’s Aid Society, an organization devoted to moving children from the streets of New York City to new homes in rural areas across the country.

3. Later referred to as the Orphan Train Movement, the first step in the process was to load needy children onto what became known as “orphan trains.” The children were then transported to forty-seven states and Canada. Brace believed that loving families in rural areas would adopt these children. He hoped they would grow up with the education and support needed to become productive members of society.

4. Handbills advertised the arrival of the Orphan Train in town. The orphans were cleaned up and displayed onstage in front of curious crowds. Potential parents poked and inspected the children like livestock; siblings were often split apart. Some children ran away, and some were abused. Others found supportive people whom they considered family for the rest of their lives. Regardless of the outcome, however, most found the experience and transition to a new life to be difficult at best.

5. Yet overall, the program resulted in positive outcomes; two orphans even grew up to be state governors. The mass relocation of needy children across the country was Brace’s best effort to connect them with better lives. The Orphan Train Movement was later considered to be the beginning of the foster care system.
As I read, I'll think about how this child's experience is similar to and different from the details described in "Orphan Train Riders."

**Close Reading**

Compare the dates, people, places, and events described in the previous article to those described in this story. **Underline** any facts that are similar.

Which details come from the author's imagination? **Draw a box** around three story elements that show it is a work of fiction.

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**The Train to Somewhere**  
*by* Lydia Wren

My heart was in my throat as Robbie and I boarded the train in New York City that April day. A member of the Children's Aid Society led us to our seats and advised us, “Be sure to smile and make a good impression on the people you meet!”

At age five, I thought myself lucky—at least I had my older brother at my side. I still could remember Mama humming as she cooked dinner and my father's smiling face, but they had both died. For months we had lived on the streets until the Children's Aid Society sheltered us. Now they were shipping us on an orphan train to a new home and a new life.

As the train gathered speed, I caught one last glimpse of the city, the only home I had ever known. The next few days blurred together as our train powered over rivers, lush farmlands, and empty prairies. Where were we going, and what would happen to us? Our destination and future were unclear and unknown.

Then one morning we pulled into a small station as our Society escorts did their best to smooth our hair and straighten our clothes. Weary and confused, we were led to a large hall and seated on a stage in front of a crowd of strangers. Many stared, but some walked up to inspect us. Suddenly I was staggered by a terrible thought. What if Robbie and I went to different homes in different towns and were separated permanently?

“What do you know about farming?” a man asked Robbie gruffly. Wide-eyed, Robbie stammered a response, and my heart thumped wildly in my chest as I clutched his sweaty hand.

“Now Jacob,” said a plain woman behind the man. “Don't start off by scaring 'em.” She looked at us and smiled. “Are you brother and sister? Would you both like to come live with us?”

Some 70 years later, I still remark at how well my luck held. It wasn't just that Robbie and I were raised together or that our lives were all pleasure and no pain. No, it was that the Larsens came to take us home that day, two caring people who became our new family and who made us who we are today.
Hints

Compare paragraph 4 of the historical account with the girl's experience in "The Train to Somewhere." What similarities and differences do you find?

Reread the chart on the first page of this lesson. How does the author of the historical fiction piece alter history?

Look back at the facts you underlined in the fiction story that indicate which information both texts have in common.

Look at your marked-up texts. Then use the Hints on this page to help you answer the questions.

Which detail from the historical account best supports the fictional story about a girl's orphan train experience?

A Handbills advertised the arrival of the Orphan Train in town.
B The children were all adopted into caring families in new homes.
C Crowds gathered at the town stations to greet the orphans.
D The experience was quite upsetting for the orphan children.

Which statement best describes how the author of "The Train to Somewhere" alters historical details to tell her story?

A The author includes historical facts, such as when the Children's Aid Society was formed.
B The author describes the experiences and feelings of an imaginary orphan who was sent west on an orphan train.
C The author provides specific details about families who agreed with Brace's beliefs about ways to help needy orphan children.
D The author explores the adventures of two young children as they start their new lives on a farm in rural America.

Compare and contrast details in the historical account of the Orphan Train Movement to those in the fictional story. Describe how the author of "The Train to Somewhere" has used and altered historical facts.

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