

Genealogical Crime Mystery



Creative Writing Course

Session overview

Week 3 – The Art of Setting: Bringing the Past to Life

- Review of last week's assignment
- Building the plot through character development
- Exploring historical settings & modern day settings
- Creating vivid and immersive descriptions
- Assignment: write the opening scene to parts of your story

Examples of compelling characters...

Caroline Waugh - Week 2 assignment

Characters in the Present - 2024:

Phillip and Sophie Mackenzie (students who become amateur genealogists):

- Twins, born 2000 in Tasmania, Australia (millennial babies).
- Orphans – parents died in car crash 2022, during the summer holidays, hit and run, no-one charged or found responsible yet – open case with police ATM.
- They live in Arthur's Circus, Battery Point in a convict built 1840's cottage. They have lived there since birth. Battery Point is a small village within walking distance of Sandy Bay and Hobart. The house was purchased by their great grandfather after WWI. (Documents hidden by their grandfather or father regarding the family "shame" will be discovered buried under the floorboards or in a wall cavity).
- University students at UTAS (Sandy Bay and Hobart city campuses). Took a year off when their parents died to grieve and orient themselves. Have since thrown themselves back into their university studies.
- Surrounded by trusted neighbours, their local community, and family friends, who pulled together to support them during their parents' death and afterwards.
- They have been left well provided for financially. No known living family. This is their motivation to do Ancestry DNA tests which leads to their genealogical investigations...
- **Phillip's interests and personality:**
 - Studying a Bachelor of Medicinal Science and Doctor of Medicine, a five-year program. He is in his fourth year.
 - Light brown hair, cheek dimples, tall and athletic build, well-groomed favouring classic jeans and shirts.
 - Sociable, friendly, likeable guy. Lots of friends. No girlfriend or serious relationships, but friendly and handsome so does not lack female companions.
 - Athletic: walks and runs, plays sport (maybe ultimate frisbee, or cricket, or many sports...)
 - He refuses to acknowledge that he needs support in the grieving process for his parents. Their death is unresolved, but he also feels responsible for his sister and wants to be 'strong'.
- **Sophie's interests and personality:**
 - Studying a combined degree of Bachelor of Psychological Science and Bachelor of Laws, a five-year program. She is in her fourth year.
 - Blonde hair, slim, feminine, stylish and favours vintage clothing for its sustainability and classic look.
 - Quiet, contemplative, an observer. Dry sense of humour.
 - A small close group of friends (from childhood) and some shared university friends with brother. No boyfriend or serious relationships, but very attractive therefore gets approached by interested men often. She could write a book on the pick-up lines she has heard!

Week 2 Assignment – Richard

In the present day

The main protagonist in the present day is **Adam Knight** (not sure if I like this name)

He is about 30, English / Welsh, and of average build; about 6 feet tall. His brown hair is short cropped and with a few wayward curls. He has a long narrow face with close set brown eyes and thin lips, and lives alone in the Wirral between Liverpool and Chester, which is where he grew up. He's a university graduate with a history degree. He has no siblings. His father died many years ago but his mother is still alive and is showing signs of the onset of dementia which worries him greatly. His mother lives a few miles away. He has an ongoing struggle with the authorities over her care

I don't exactly know why I've placed him in the Liverpool / Chester area apart from the fact that I know it well. I thought Liverpool would be a name that non UK readers might recognise which I thought would help. I thought placing him somewhere with some character rather than in an anonymous town or village would be best, but I am open to ideas.

He has a girlfriend of a few years standing named Katie. They get on well and do much together. Katie is a good sounding board for him in resolving issues. He had a previous girlfriend who ended their relationship suddenly and without warning and who immediately left the area. He is uncertain why and it haunts him. He doesn't share these thoughts with Katie.

There is something unspecified in his past that has caused him not to have the sort of serious professional career that his parents originally wanted. The issue from his past isn't identified but is significant, at least to him.

He's a football supporter but his team remains unspecified. He loves cooking and good food and wine, and visiting pubs. He enjoys travelling, especially by train. He is a keen environmentalist and wants to preserve the countryside and ensure that the planet survives a few more generations.

He is a genealogist of a few years standing and has pursued his own family history back a few centuries. He works part time for an heir hunters company finding potential beneficiaries of people who dies intestate and signing them up. His main job is working in a large town centre library.

In terms of character, he likes the accomplishment of solving a puzzle. He's a fairly solitary character but has a circle of friends who he sticks with.

His girlfriend is **Katie Walsh**

The Great Galveston Storm

Cast of lead characters:

Present day narrative:

- Morton Farrier – lead character / genealogist



The Great Galveston Storm

Cast of lead characters:

Past narrative:

- Teenager / orphan male - 'good'

Ernest Gorton

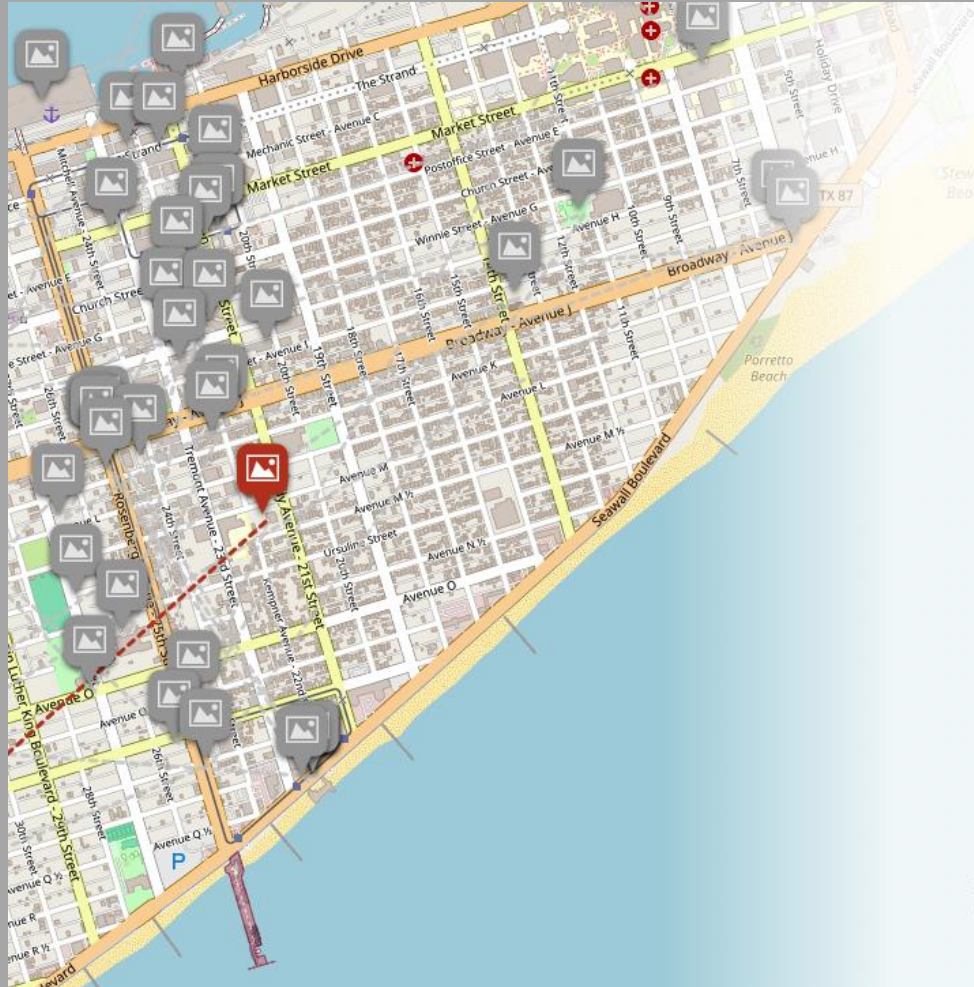
- Age 17
- Difficult childhood in the orphanage. Despite this, he is a kind and good-natured boy who looks after the other children in the home.
- Works for Henri Mantzel, a fisherman
- Saved from killer and storm by mysterious woman

Mystery: Unknown birth parents. Abandoned at the Galveston Orphan's Home as a baby. Left with a locket, which is stolen just before the storm.



Empathy: Reader empathises with his being an orphan and with the difficulties of growing up in the orphanage. Empathy also comes from having his locket stolen. With him on his quest for the truth about the locket and his heritage.

Change of location?

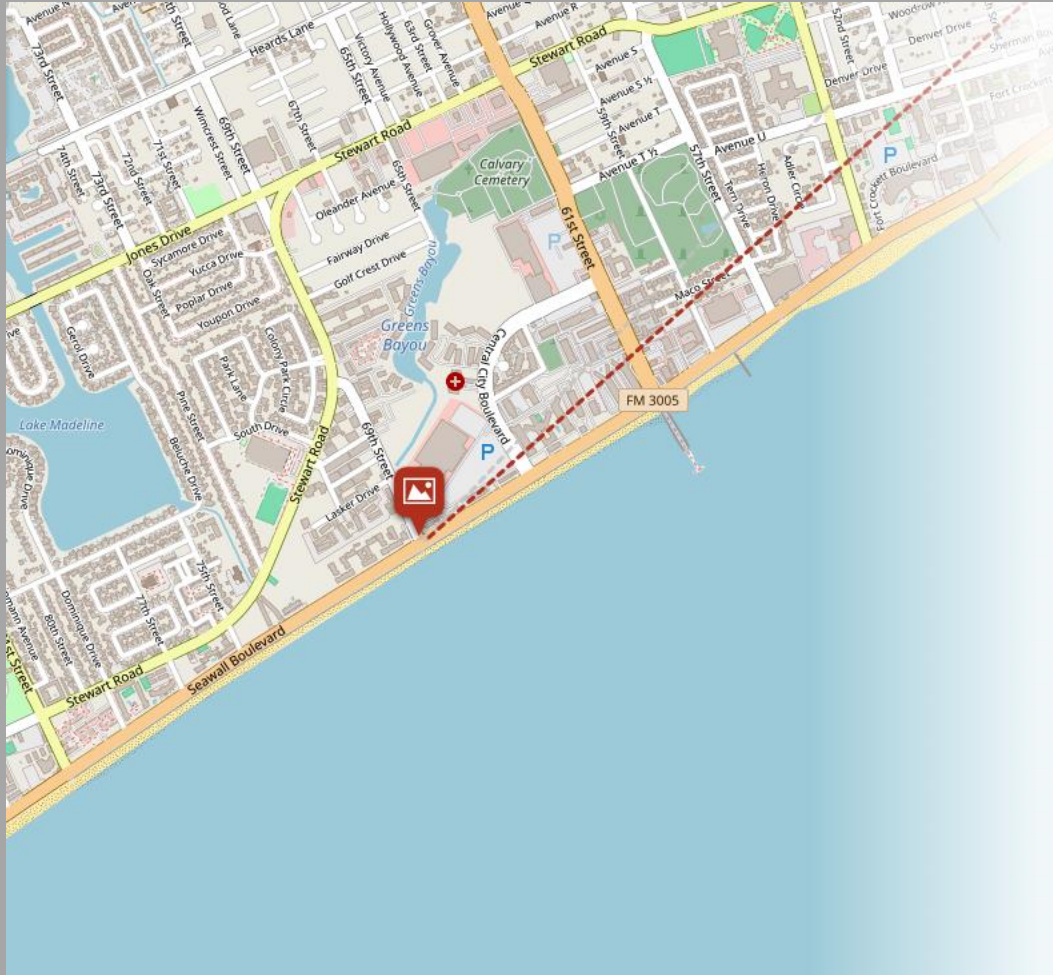


Galveston Orphans' Home after the Storm of 1900, G_1771.4_FF4_5, Galveston Photographic Subject Files: Storm of 1900. Rosenberg Library, Galveston, Texas.

GALVESTON ORPHANS' HOME

1315 21st St, Galveston, TX 77550; built in 1895 by Alfred Muller and operated as the Island City Protestant Orphans' Home. The first building was completely destroyed during the Storm and since demolished. George B. Stowe constructed the second building in 1902. This building currently houses The Bryan Museum.

Change of location?



1900 United States Federal Census for Mother M Gabril

Texas > Galveston > Galveston Island > District 0142

INCLUDE every person living on June 1, 1900. OMIT children born since June 1, 1900.		Color or race	Sex	Age at birth	Whether widowed	Number of children	Mother's maiden name	Year of immigration	Number of years in U.S.	Status						
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Gabriel M. Gabril	Head	W	M	55			France	1845	20	Superior						
Cottier, Vincent		W	F	45			France	1855	25	Needle Work						
Heber, Catherine		W	F	43			Canada	1857	18	Needle Work						
Ryan, Elizabeth		W	F	35			Ireland	1864	10	Teacher						
McCart, Michael		W	M	30			Ireland	1870	15	Teacher						
Collitt, Raphael		W	M	27			Ireland	1873	10	Teacher						
Callahan, George		W	F	33			Ireland	1867	8	Teacher						
Harlan, Emma		W	F	27			Canada	1873	9	Needle Work						
Weldon, Miranda		W	F	20			Ireland	1879	5	Teacher						
Horan, Benjamin		W	M	23			Canada	1877	11	Cook						
Sapierse, Augustin	Servant	W	F	18			Canada	1882	18							
Bracord, Henry	Servant	W	M	16			France	1884	16	Hand Labor						
Murray, William	Orphan	W	M	13			Spain	1887		At School						
Doyle, John	Orphan	W	M	8			Spain	1892		At School						
Taney, John	Orphan	W	M	14			Spain	1886		At School						
Arabe, Bennie	Orphan	W	F	15			Spain	1885		At School						
— Eugene	Orphan	W	M	14			Spain	1886		At School						
Clark, Robert	Orphan	W	M	19			Spain	1881		At School						
Beaudreau, Albert	Orphan	W	M	13			Spain	1886		At School						
— Teresa	Orphan	W	F	12			Spain	1888		At School						

The Great Galveston Storm

Cast of lead characters:

Past narrative:

- Teenager / female trapped outside the city

Clara Mantzel

- Age 17
- Born Galveston Island, Texas. Parents born in Germany
- Father a kind-hearted but hard-working fisherman (could be useful to the story later – i.e. use of his boat / proximity to the sea) Ernest works for him.
- Clara in love with Ernest
- Helps out at home but wants more from life



Mystery: Discovers something outside of the city about Ernest's birth / the locket. Can she get back in time to help him / warn him if he's in danger?

Empathy: Reader empathises with her kind nature and desire to help Ernest. Also with her wish to do something with her life.

The Great Galveston Storm

Cast of lead characters:

Past narrative:

- Bad man – murderer / trying to find the locket (antagonist)

'He'

- Age 40
- Mysterious.
- Kills someone thinking that they are Ernest. Realises just as storm approaches island.
- Eventually steals Ernest's locket
- Trapped on the island by the storm
- Later transpires that the locket isn't particularly valuable but its connection to Ernest and his bio family is why it was stolen



Mystery: Who is he? And why does he want the locket so badly?

Empathy: Not needed – antagonist. Want the reader to dislike him (*although, as the writer I need to know **why** he's 'bad'!*)

The Great Galveston Storm

Cast of lead characters:

Past narrative:

- Detective – ‘good’. Trying to solve crime

William Apple / Charles Buck / August Hoffman / Joe Homburg / Barney Gardner / Wilson Glass

- Age 45
- Born and bred on Galveston Island. Comes from cotton farming stock
- Recently widowed. Struggling to look after young child & gets help from mysterious woman who saves Ernest

Mystery: Trying to solve the murder in the midst of helping storm victims / look after his child(ren)



Empathy: Reader empathises with his being a widow and having young child(ren). Also with his kindly nature and desire to solve the crimes despite having no time

The Great Galveston Storm

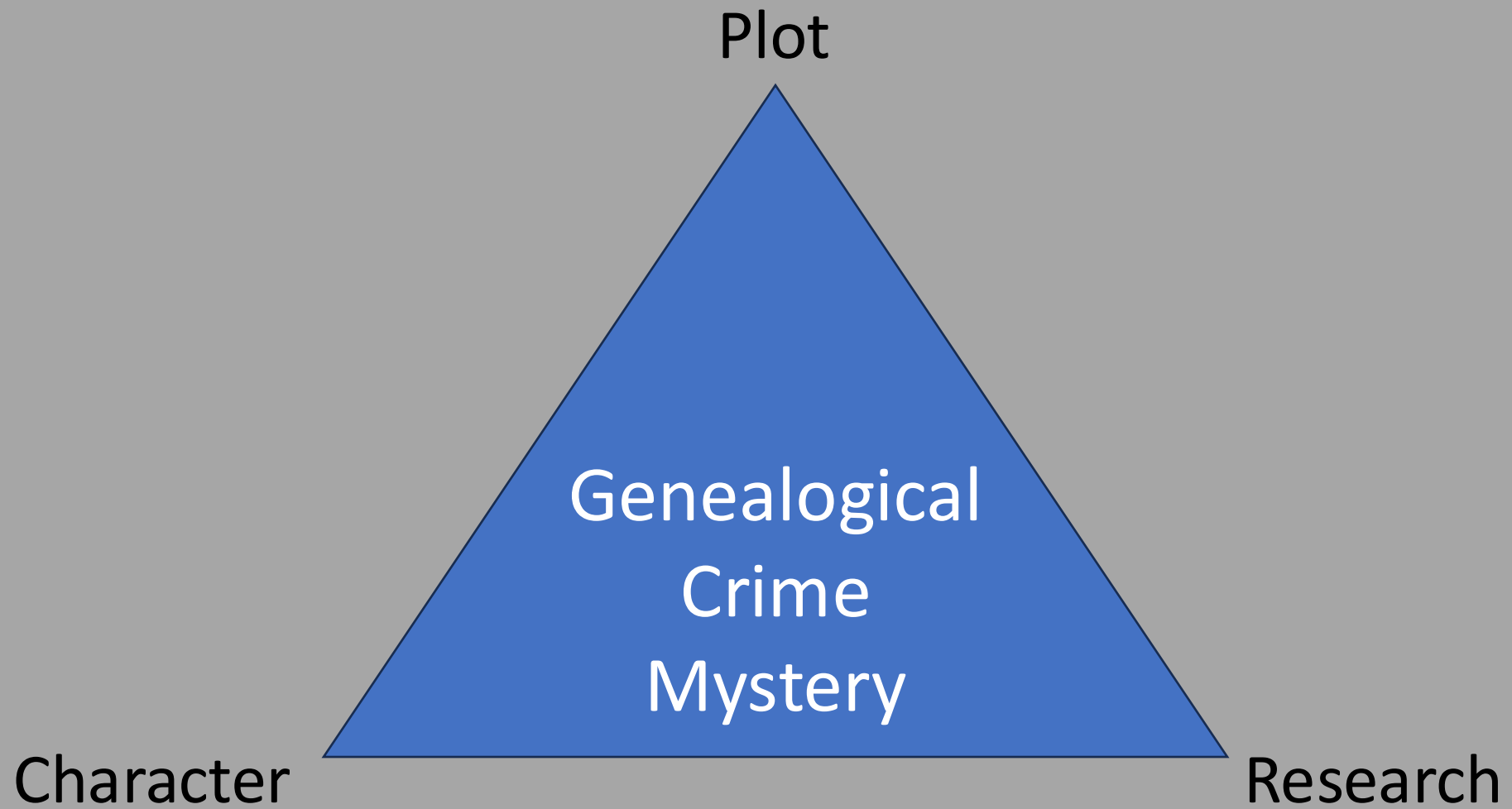
Present day narrative:

- Melissa Gorton – great-grandchild of Ernest Gorton (the orphan)
- **[Probably won't be a narrative lead]**
- Age 28
- Interested in family history – heard about her great-grandfather's story
- Takes DNA test to help work out her heritage
- Goes to Morton Farrier for help



Character names

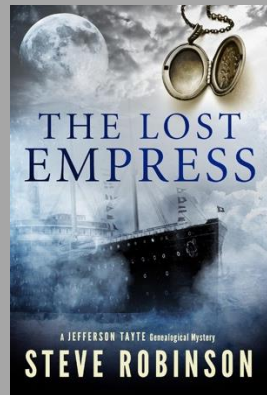
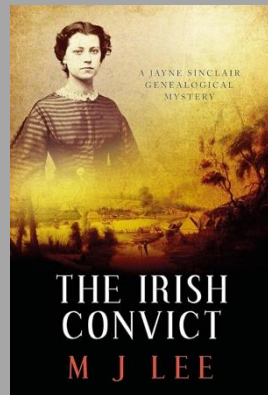
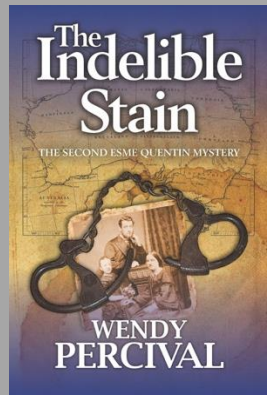
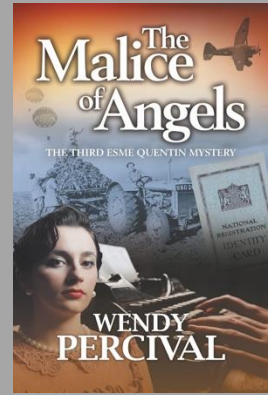
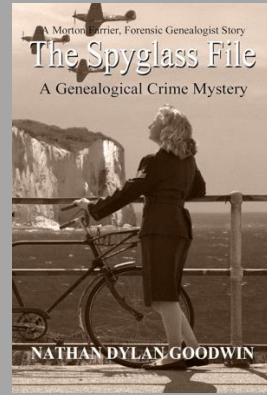
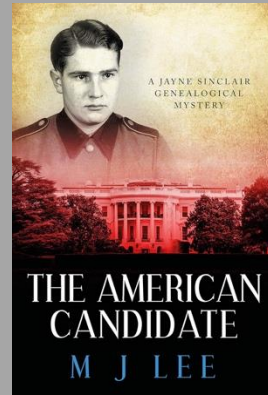
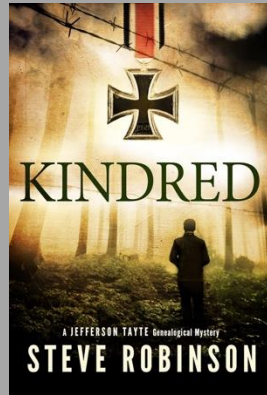
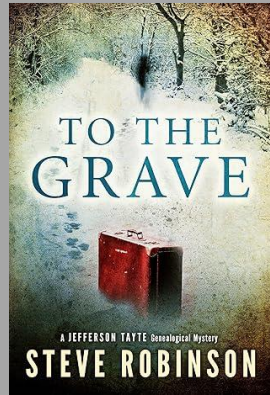
- Try and use a distinctive name (*it doesn't need to be Mr Pumblechook or Martin Chuzzlewit!*)
- Three names which did exactly that: Morven MacAlpine, Boyd Rivers and Elberly Ellis.
- Avoid similar sounding names
- Be aware of using same name senior / junior
- Be aware of using difficult to read names
- Historic names – get them from contemporary records



Historical Settings



Historical Settings – external conflict?



Points to consider...

- The conflict needs to have some relevance to your mystery
- If you have external conflict, you need to write about it (*you can't have a story set in the 1940s and not mention the war!*)
- If you have external conflict, are you going to stick rigidly to the facts / dates, etc?

Wickford Hollow, Fordshire



Historical Settings

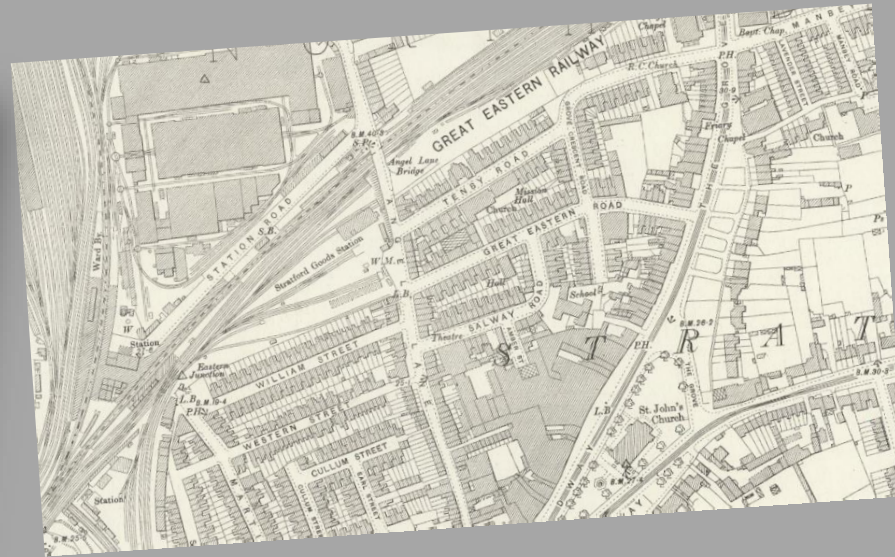
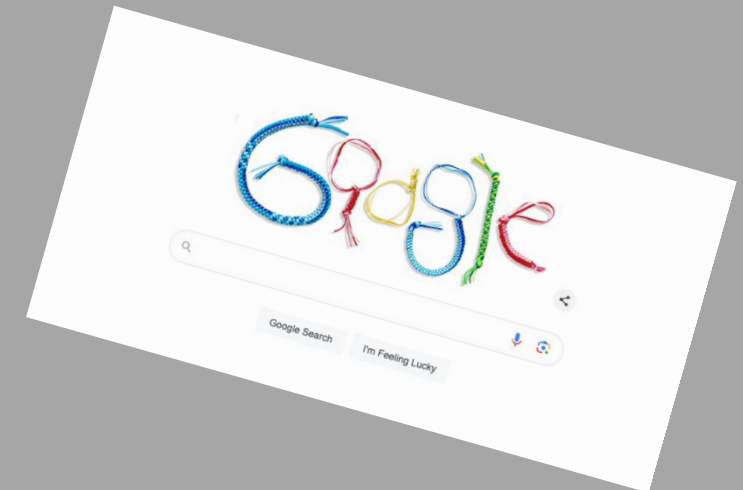
Whichever time period you set your story, you need...

RESEARCH!

To write authentically, you need to understand:

- Everyday life (food, clothing, housing & transportation for your story world)
- Social structures (gender, class, ethnic groups, etc)
- Politics & events (major historical events can influence your characters' lives)

Historical Settings - Research



ChatGPT 4o

What clothes did men and women typically wear on Galveston Island, Texas, USA in 1900?

In 1900, Galveston Island, Texas, reflected a blend of Victorian and Edwardian fashion trends, which were typical of the United States at the turn of the 20th century.

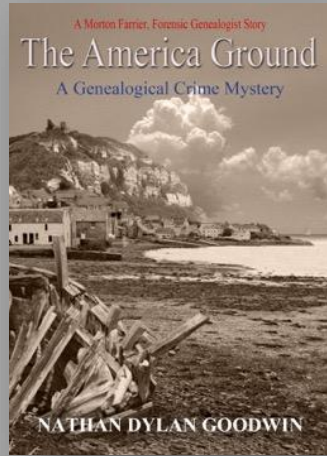
Men's Clothing:

Men's fashion was generally formal and structured:

- **Suits:** Men typically wore three-piece suits, consisting of a sack coat (or frock coat), waistcoat (vest), and trousers. Dark colors like black, gray, and navy were popular.
- **Shirts:** White shirts with stiff, high collars were common, often paired with bow ties or cravats.
- **Trousers:** These were high-waisted and usually straight-legged.
- **Outerwear:** Men would wear overcoats or frock coats for formal occasions, while lighter wool coats were worn in colder months.
- **Hats:** Bowlers or straw boater hats were typical for daily wear, while top hats were worn for more formal events.
- **Shoes:** Leather boots or oxford shoes were standard.



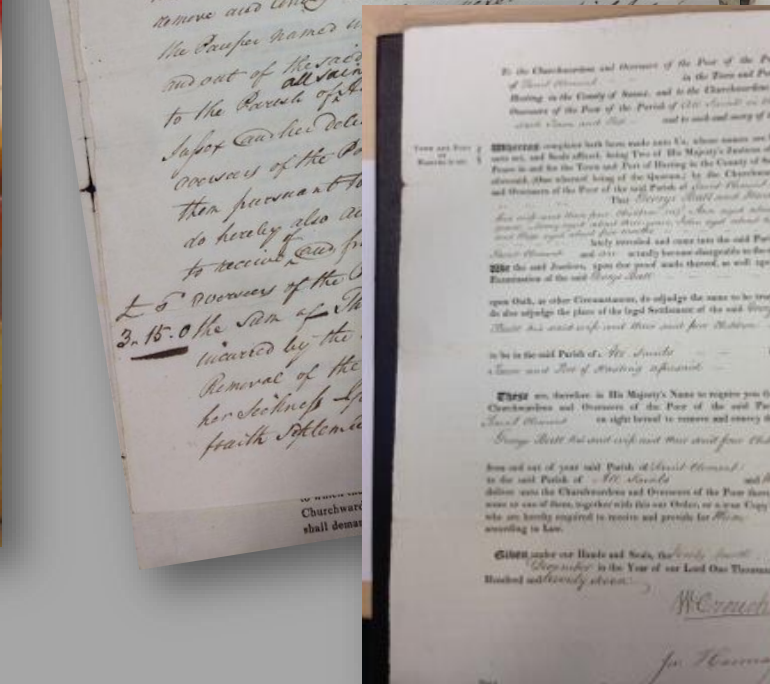
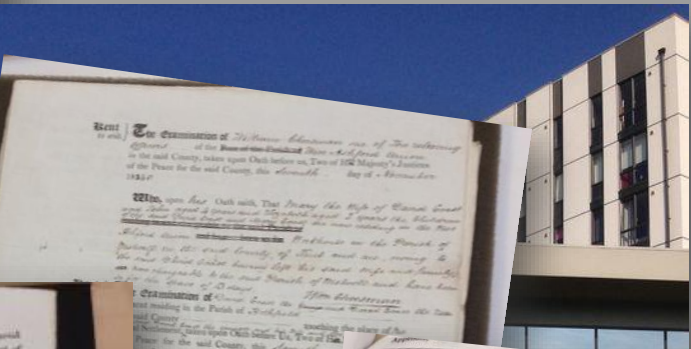
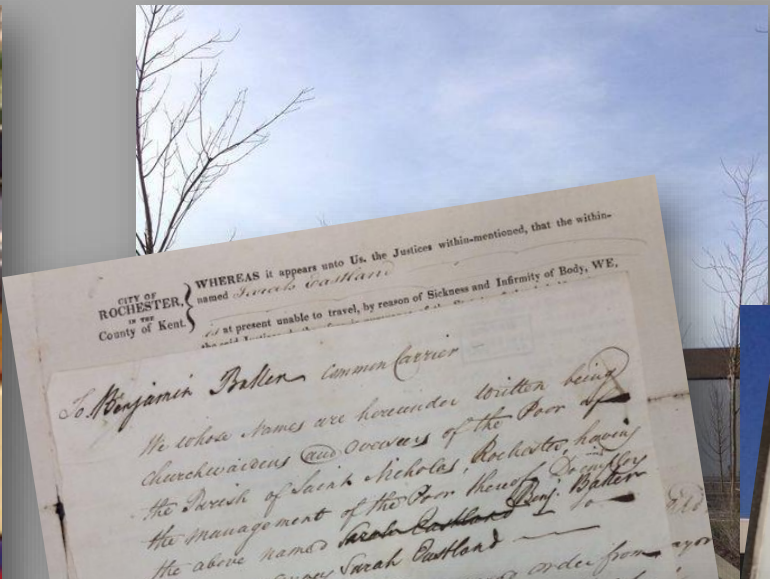
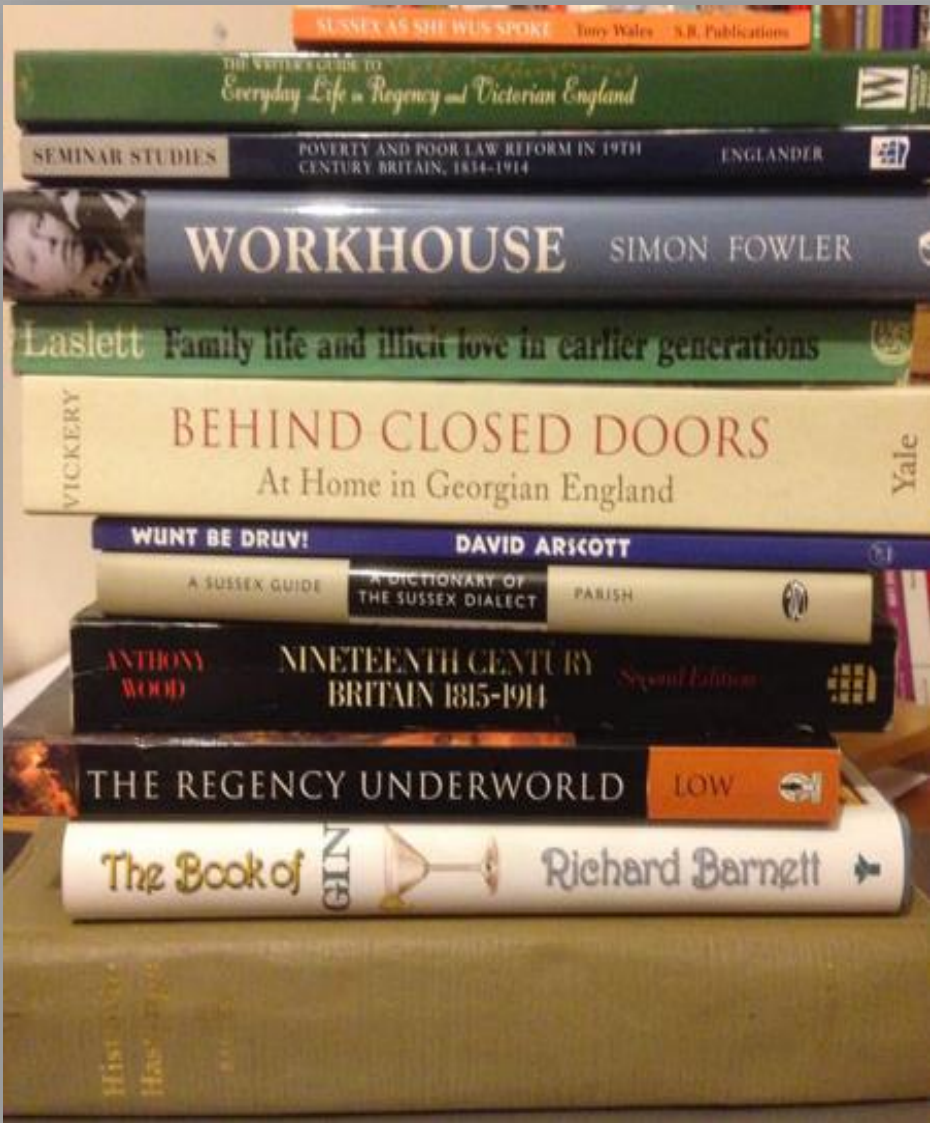
Historical Settings



Time period: 1820s

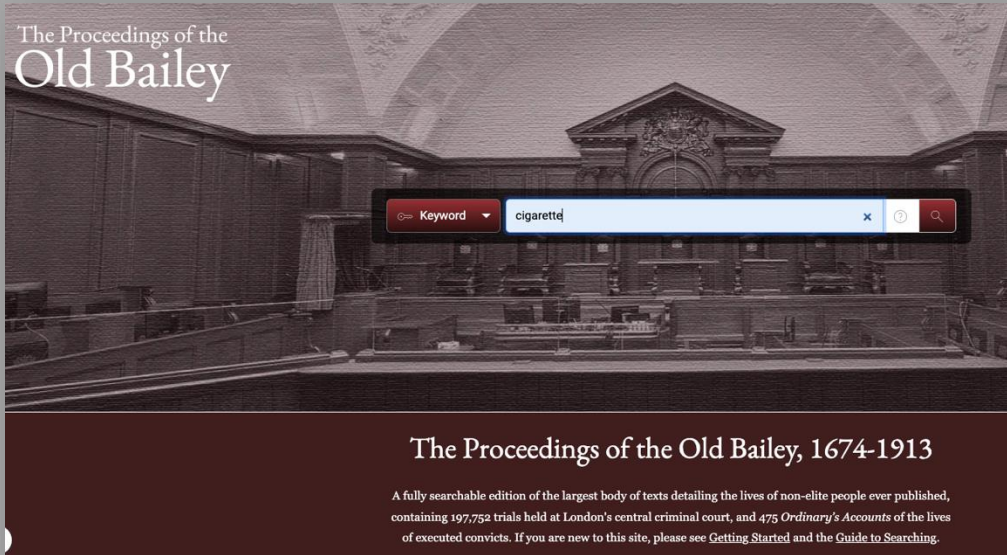
Location: Hastings, Sussex, England

External conflict: a dispute between 1000 residents of the America Ground and the Crown.



NAME OF THE PERSON	DESCRIPTION OF THE PREMISE	ANNUAL VALUE OF THE PREMISE	RENTS
Daniel Thomas - Publican	Two Timber Cottages and Tenement, with Yard &c.	£. s. d.	£. s. d.
William Hyland - Shipwright	Timber Cottage in two Tenements - N° 110 in ditto	87 12	12
Moses Minter - Shipwright	Timber Cottage in two Tenements - N° 110 in ditto	87 12	12
John Manington - Shipwright	Timber House and Cottage - N° 6 & 165 in ditto	59 18	12
William Willard - Butcher	Blacksmith's Forge, timber-built and tiled, N° 65 in ditto	59 18	12
Thomas Thorne - Bricklayer	Several brick-built and timber-built houses, with a large enclosed Yard and Figgeries: N° 100, 101 & 102 in ditto	55	18
George Sutcliff - Com Factor	Two Brick House - N° 165 in ditto	50	18
Thomas Page - Rope Maker	Two Brick and Plastered House, and enclosed Yards	50	18
James Elder - Miller	Brick House and small Fore Court, Brick and Timber Cottage, Wash-house and Garden: N° 175 & 179 in ditto	50 16	18
John Daly - - - - - Silver	Brick Dwelling and Garden: N° 10, 23 & 123 in ditto	32	18
Mary Bealer - - - - - Widow	Brick Dwelling and Cottage and Yard: N° 16 & 17 in ditto	28 18	18
John Highkin - Labourer	New brick-built House, with two other Buildings	25	18
George Wyles - - - - - Labourer	Stone-built House and Garden and Shop, N° 106 & 107 in ditto	20	18
William Hill - - - - - Farmer	Timber House in two Tenements and Yard, N° 102 in ditto	14 6	18
John Prior - - - - - Shipwright, Eng. Brewer	Brick and Timber Cottage in two Tenements, and Fire	14 6	18
William Langley - The Collector	Two brick-built Tenements and Wash-house, N° 111 & 112 in ditto	14 6	18
Wm Jp. Hinton & John Hinton - Cabinet Makers	Timber-built House - N° 1 in ditto	14 6	18
James Hyland - Labourer	Brick Cottage, and Brick and Timber Cottage: N° 100 & 101 in ditto	14 6	18
James Bealer - - - - - Shoemaker	Brick Dwelling and Yard - N° 102 in ditto	14 6	18
James Ball - - - - - Wheelwright	Two Brick Dwelling-houses - N° 112 & 113 in ditto	14 6	18
Samuel Cutting - Carpenter	Brick and Timber House - N° 114 in ditto	14 6	18
George George - Labourer	Cottage, called Neptune Cottage, and Shed, N° 47 in ditto	14 6	18
Richard Latham - - - - - Shoemaker	Two Timber Sheds, Road and Yard: N° 48 & 49 in ditto	14 6	18
Joseph Lively - - - - - Coachman	New Brick and Timber House - N° 115 in ditto	14 6	18
William Piper - - - - - Fisherman	Brick and Timber House, with stable and Yard: N° 116 in ditto	14 6	18
Edward Paul - - - - - Mariner	Brick House in two Tenements - N° 117 in ditto	14 6	18
Samuel Jordan - - - - - Rope Maker	Timber Dwelling and Yard - N° 118 in ditto	14 6	18
John Swain - - - - - Fisherman	Two Brick Cottages, Yard and Figgeries: N° 4 in ditto	14 6	18
Thomas Thorne - - - - - Outlet	Brick and Timber Cottage in two Tenements, N° 27 in ditto	14 6	18
Henry Threlton - - - - - Grocer	Brick House and Yard - N° 113 in ditto	14 6	18
Charles Baker - - - - - Carpenter	Brick Dwelling and Yard - N° 114 in ditto	14 6	18
Edw. Bowser - - - - - [Black and (Met. Maker)	Brick Dwelling and Yard - N° 115 in ditto	14 6	18
Elizabeth Fowlers - - - - - Widker	Timber-built Cottage and Yard - N° 116 in ditto	14 6	18
Thomas Ringer - - - - - Shoemaker	Brick and Timber House and Yard - N° 117 in ditto	14 6	18
Edward Stevens, Livery Stable Keeper	Blacksmith's Shop, and another Shop and Loh: N° 118 in ditto	14 6	18
William Yeo - - - - - Bricklayer	Brick House and small Yard - N° 119 in ditto	14 6	18
George West - - - - - Carpenter	Brick Cottage - N° 120 in ditto	14 6	18
	Timber House and Yard - N° 121 in ditto	14 6	18

Historical Settings



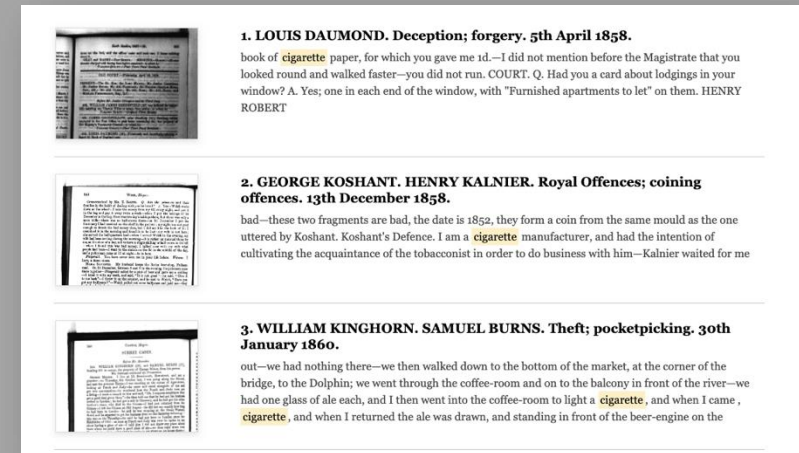
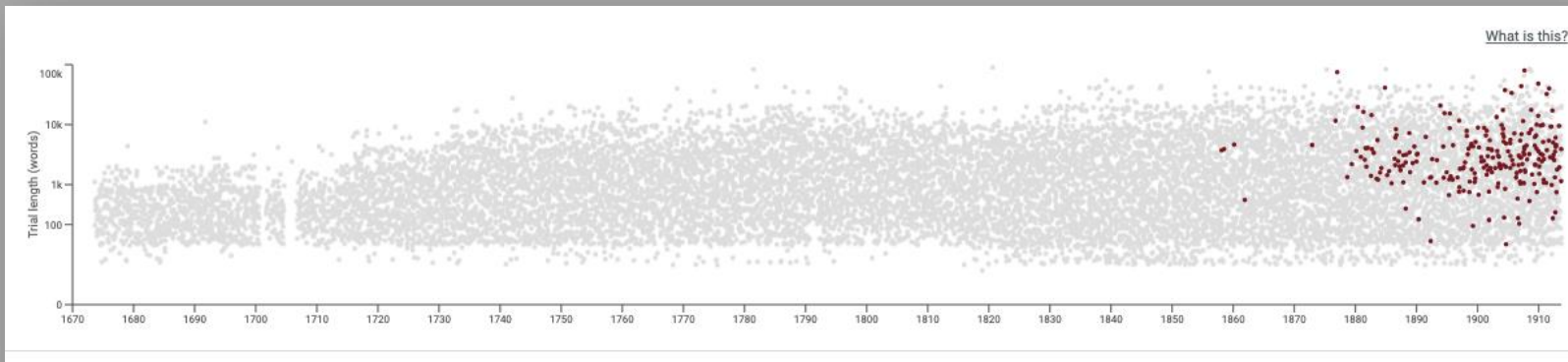
The Proceedings of the Old Bailey

Keyword

The Proceedings of the Old Bailey, 1674-1913

A fully searchable edition of the largest body of texts detailing the lives of non-elite people ever published, containing 197,752 trials held at London's central criminal court, and 475 *Ordinary's Accounts* of the lives of executed convicts. If you are new to this site, please see [Getting Started](#) and the [Guide to Searching](#).

www.oldbaileyonline.org/



- 1. LOUIS DAUMOND. Deception; forgery. 5th April 1858.**
book of **cigarette** paper, for which you gave me 1d.—I did not mention before the Magistrate that you looked round and walked faster—you did not run. COURT. Q. Had you a card about lodgings in your window? A. Yes; one in each end of the window, with "Furnished apartments to let" on them. HENRY ROBERT
- 2. GEORGE KOSHANT. HENRY KALNIER. Royal Offences; coining offences. 13th December 1858.**
bad—these two fragments are bad, the date is 1852, they form a coin from the same mould as the one uttered by Koshant. Koshant's Defence. I am a **cigarette** manufacturer, and had the intention of cultivating the acquaintance of the tobacconist in order to do business with him—Kalnier waited for me
- 3. WILLIAM KINGHORN. SAMUEL BURNS. Theft; pocketpicking. 30th January 1860.**
out—we had nothing there—we then walked down to the bottom of the market, at the corner of the bridge, to the Dolphin; we went through the coffee-room and on to the balcony in front of the river—we had one glass of ale each, and I then went into the coffee-room to light a **cigarette**, and when I came, **cigarette**, and when I returned the ale was drawn, and standing in front of the beer-engine on the

Prisoner. Q. Were you alone when I came first into the shop? *A.* I was; you bought a book of **cigarette** paper, for which you gave me 1d.—I did not mention before the Magistrate that you looked round and walked faster—you did not run.

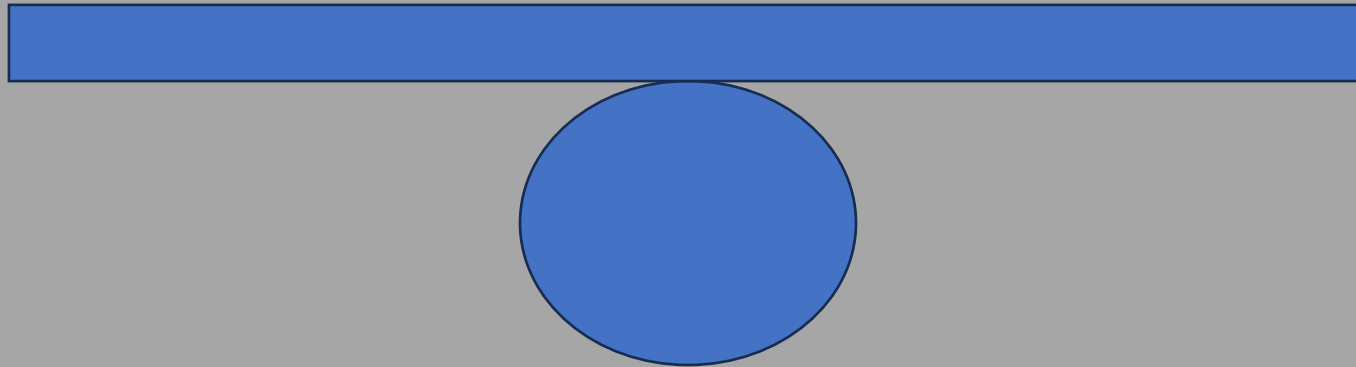
COURT. Q. Had you a card about lodgings in your window? *A.* Yes; one in each end of the window, with "Furnished apartments to let" on them.

HENRY ROBERT ELLIS . I manage the business of Mr. Harrison, a pawnbroker, in Aldersgate Street. On 23d Feb., the prisoner came there, between 4 and 5 o'clock, and asked to look at a gold Albert chain; he afterwards pointed out a gold watch—we bargained fur the price, and eleven guineas was ultimately agreed upon—the young man that served him asked him for his name, and I heard him give the name of Daumond—he tendered two notes to pay for the watch, a 10l. and a 5l.—these (*produced*) are the notes—hegave them to the

Historical Settings – getting the balance

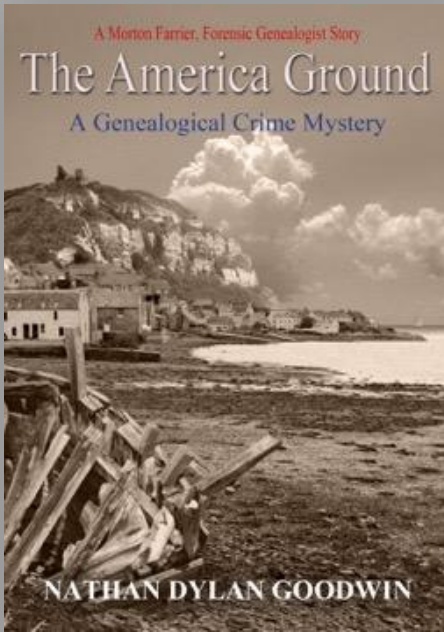
Character & story

Historical detail



Points to consider...

- Set the scene for the reader in time and place
- Don't get bogged down with too much description
- Include details of the setting which will be relevant later in the story
- Get on with your story! **(this isn't a history lesson!)**



Chapter Four

3rd February 1827, The Priory Ground, outside Hastings, Sussex

The Priory Ground, outside Hastings: four acres of land, close to the abandoned Priory of the Augustinian order of Black Canons; donated by the sea and bestowed upon the town by a series of devastating storms in the thirteenth century, it lay dormant and desolate for four hundred years. Gradually, led by a group of rope-makers, this land was sliced into small parcels, upon which sprang a variety of homes and business concerns. Begrimed ramshackle wooden huts sat incongruously beside substantial buildings of stone and timber. By the mid-1820s, a complete community of close to two hundred properties had arisen, with more than a thousand people calling the Priory Ground their home: carpenters and cabinet-makers dwelt alongside mast-makers, millers and mariners; ostlers and brewers made neighbours among coachmen, labourers and butchers; tax collectors inhabited the same forsaken walkways and darkened alleys as those whose very existence there was to defy any kind of official duty. It was an unruly, raucous mixture of town and village, where a stranger might lose anything from his handkerchief to his life.

It was to this nefarious spot in Southern England that there came, four Michaelmas ago, the Lovekin family: Joseph, his wife Eliza and their children, Harriet, Keziah and Ann. Joseph, for many years itinerant and with dubious employment history (extending from labouring to smuggling) had heard word of the opportunities presented by new land beyond the boundary and jurisdiction of the town of Hastings. Within a few short weeks of their arrival, he had taken advantage of the recent forty per cent reduction in spirit duty and established the first public house on the Priory Ground: a grand gin palace akin to those found in most English cities, whose origins could be traced back to the poor streets of the capital city. The edifice, which bore the name the *Black Horse*, stood out amongst the motley collection of buildings that surrounded it: a fine ornamental front, replete with pilasters, carved entablature and handsome corning. The doors and windows were glazed with large squares of plate glass and the building was fitted with costly oil lighting. Inside this gaudily decorated gin palace, which housed not a single chair or table, were to be found a roomful of working men and women who sought refuge from their gruelling and grim daily lives. Behind one long mahogany bar, Joseph and Eliza Lovekin plied their poor clientele with liquor from barrelheads named *Old Tom*, *Cream of the Valley* and *Celebrated Butter Gin*.

Chapter Four

3rd February 1827, The Priory Ground, outside Hastings, Sussex

The Priory Ground, outside Hastings: four acres of land, close to the abandoned Priory of the Augustinian order of Black Canons; donated by the sea and bestowed upon the town by a series of devastating storms in the thirteenth century, it lay dormant and desolate for four hundred years. Gradually, led by a group of rope-makers, this land was sliced into small parcels, upon which sprang a variety of homes and business concerns. Begrimed ramshackle wooden huts sat incongruously beside substantial buildings of stone and timber. By the mid-1820s, a complete community of close to two hundred properties had arisen, with more than a thousand people calling the Priory Ground their home: carpenters and cabinet-makers dwelt alongside mast-makers, millers and mariners; ostlers and brewers made neighbours among coachmen, labourers and butchers; tax collectors inhabited the same forsaken walkways and darkened alleys as those whose very existence there was to defy any kind of official duty. It was an unruly, raucous mixture of town and village, where a stranger might lose anything from his handkerchief to his life.

It was to this nefarious spot in Southern England that there came, four Michaelmas ago, the Lovekin family: Joseph, his wife Eliza and their children, Harriet, Keziah and Ann.

Historical Settings

Chapter Three

22nd October 1919, Stratford, London

An autumnal wind blew over the narrow cobblestone streets of Stratford in London's East End, swirling a melancholic symphony between the rows of cramped terraced houses. Coal fire smoke, rising from the twin chimneys of almost every home churned out into the slate-grey sky, melding with the metallic stench from the factory on the street corner. The red-brick houses on Angel Lane, like most in the neighbourhood, were tired and tatty. The windows of many were cracked, others were begrimed in the layers of local industrial output. The air inside number ninety-seven Angel Lane was no warmer or cleaner than the outside. A cold draft breathed through the house, flickering the gas lamp in the parlour. The room was sparsely furnished with just three wooden chairs, a sideboard and the open fireplace, above which ran a mantelpiece with a carriage clock and the sepia photograph of Herbert Partridge, standing proudly in his London Regiment uniform.

Kneeling just in front of the fire, on a worn rag-rug was nineteen-year-old Nellie Partridge.

Using senses

- **Sight:** Describe the physical world. What kind of buildings, clothing, or landscapes are present?
- Example: *The cobblestone streets glistened with rain, the gas lamps casting flickering shadows against the soot-covered brick walls.*
- **Sound:** What were the sounds of the period? Street vendors calling out, the clatter of horse-drawn carriages, or the ticking of a grandfather clock?
- Example: *A carriage clattered past, the driver's voice sharp as he barked commands at the restless horses.*
- **Smell:** Smells can evoke a strong sense of place and time. The scent of wood smoke, perfume, or a dirty city street can instantly transport readers to the past.
- Example: *The faint smell of coal smoke hung in the air, mingling with the sharper scent of wet leather from the man's boots.*
- **Touch:** What textures are present? How does fabric feel, or the roughness of tools and materials?
- Example: *Her fingers brushed the velvet curtains, the thick fabric cool and heavy against her skin.*
- **Taste:** What food or drink is consumed in the period? Describing a meal or beverage can help ground readers in the time period.
- Example: *The bitter tang of the strong ale lingered on his tongue as he set the clay mug back on the table.*

Exercise - The Galveston Storm



Based on what you know about this story, where would you start the past narrative?



Would you use an omniscient narrator to set the scene or jump straight into a character's perspective?

What kinds of historical information would you include?

Which of the senses would you use to help describe the scene?

The Galveston Storm – historical setting



Based on what you know about this story, where would you start the past narrative?

Would you use an omniscient narrator to set the scene or jump straight into a character's perspective?

What kinds of historical information would you include?

Which of the senses would you use to help describe the scene?

- Use an omniscient narrator to introduce the past narrative – one or two paragraphs to set the scene
- Describe Galveston Island, perhaps its size and location. Include the weather – good to contrast what is to come.
- Describe some of the key sounds and visuals, focusing on an area which will be relevant to the story, i.e. the wharf / seafront.
- Then 'zoom' into the life of one of my main characters (house / work / wherever they are) and describe that setting
- Then get on with the story!

The Galveston Storm – potential opening

Chapter One

8th September 1900, Galveston City, Galveston Island, Texas, USA

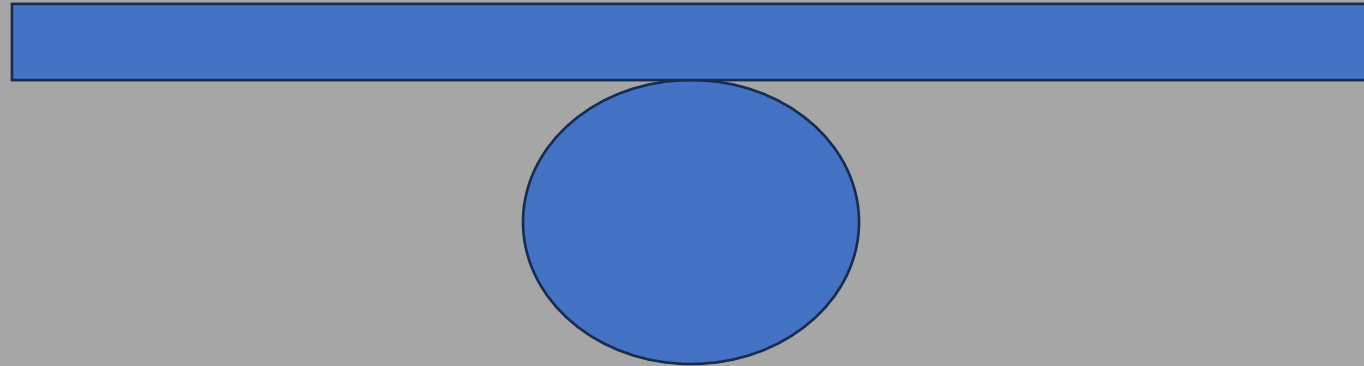
The city of Galveston sat serenely under a brilliant and clear September sky. Known as the *Wall Street of the South*, this wealthy city was a bustling hive of activity. In direct contrast to the sleepy bayous on Texas's opposite southern shore, each of the port's wharves [how many?] were heaving. Fishermen along the piers hauled in their nets for the final time of the day, as long lines of dock-workers emptied the last bales of cotton [is this right?] from horse-drawn trolleys onto the awaiting steamships. A few streets behind the port, along this twenty-seven-mile spit of land, well-dressed Victorians strolled the city's lively centre, conversations blending with the calls of street vendors and the distant hum of passing trolleys and carts.

On the opposite side of the island, past several neat blocks of elegant and smart homes, was a narrow strip of sandy beach which faced the vast, open Gulf of Mexico. Despite being just under three miles from the busy port on the north of the island, the beach on the south was tranquil, with only a murmur of a sea breeze wafting over the balconies of the beach-front properties. One building, standing alone on the shore was St Mary's Orphanage, a three-storey wooden structure that housed ninety-three of the city's abandoned children. Standing on the balcony of the second floor was sixteen-year-old Ernest Gorton.

Historical Settings - getting the balance

Past

Present



Novel Format
Manuscript
Chapter
Prologue
1. Morton starts research
2. Kathy starting to investigate abandon...
3. Alfred Farrier
4. Morton
5. Kathy. Visiting Croydon hospital
6. Alfred. Picks up Morton and Margaret
7. Morton
8. Kathy at home. Budgie Burglar arrives
9. Alfred
10. Morton. Crawley Library
11. Kathy. Training in Canterbury
12. Alfred. Just before court case.
13. Morton
14. Kathy
15. Alfred
16. Morton
17. Kathy
18. Alfred
19. Morton. Cont at Kathy Streadmans....
20. Kathy
21. Alfred
22. Morton arriving Cornwall
23. Kathy. Finds out Redmond killed. W...
24. Alfred in Reno. Leaves.
25. Morton in Cornwall
26. Alfred. Christmas Day 1980
27. Morton. Christmas Day
Epilogue
Morton in Lockdown
Historical information & acknowledgem...
Further Information
Characters
Places
Front Matter
Notes
Research
Sample Output
Standard Manuscript
Paperback Novel
FG 9 ideas
Dave Scales notes
Burgess Hill Police Station image
Seeboard, The Broadway, Haywards Heath
Template Sheets
Trash

Prologue

Prologue

23rd September 1973, Haywards Heath, West Sussex

She was the only person to alight at Haywards Heath railway station; the few other passengers that had occupied the train carriage with her were likely taking advantage of the hot September Sunday to escape the capital for a day out beside the sea in Brighton. She took a brief glance around her, then carefully placed the red and white chequered bag that she had been clutching in her hand down onto the platform. She pulled a crumpled packet of Embassy cigarettes from her handbag as she watched the train crawl out of the station, continuing its journey south towards the coast. Lighting a cigarette, she stood for a moment in the silence left by the departing train, then she picked up the bag and walked out onto the main road.

She ambled along The Broadway, taking casual interest in the window displays of the small shops that she passed. Being a Sunday, this main thoroughfare running through the town was deserted; the shop interiors were dark, their awnings retracted and the parking spaces in front of them all but empty. Just the way that she wanted it.

She stopped outside of Jo's Boutique, admiring a fancy new barmink coat in the window. Much nicer than the grubby black leather jacket that she was now wearing. 'Twenty-five quid? Is that a joke?' she scoffed, drawing on the cigarette and continuing up the hill towards the town centre.

A young couple, arm in arm were walking towards her. She looked down at the pavement as they passed, not wanting to make eye contact.

She quickened her step until she reached a row of three shops. She stopped, glanced up briefly to the first floor and then tossed the cigarette butt into the road. Looking around her and finding the street to be deserted, she crossed over, heading for the bright red telephone box outside of the Seeboard showroom opposite.

She hastened towards it, pulling open the door and smelling the familiar musty, metallic odour common to every telephone box that she'd ever stepped inside.

Placing the red and white bag down on the floor, the woman turned to leave, heading back towards the train station. Behind her, the heavy door closed with a bang. Seconds later, from inside the bag the baby began to cry, the sound amplified by the acoustics of the telephone box.

She continued walking, without so much as a glance back.

Snapshots
Compare Roll Back

Date	Title
28 Jan 2021 at 12:55	Untitled (First Dra...
21 Jun 2021 at 10:10	Untitled (First Dra...
26 Jun 2021 at 13:14	Untitled (First Dra...

Prologue

23rd September 1973, Haywards Heath, West Sussex

She was the only person to alight at Haywards Heath railway station; the few other passengers that had occupied the train carriage with her were likely taking advantage of the warm September Sunday to escape the capital for a day out beside the sea in Brighton. She took a brief glance around her, then carefully placed the large red and white checked bag that she had been clutching in her hand down onto the platform. She pulled a crumpled packet of Embassy cigarettes from her handbag as she watched the train crawl out of the station, continuing its journey towards the coast. Lighting the cigarette, she stood for a moment in the silence left by the departing train, then she picked up the bag and walked out onto the main road.

She ambled down The Broadway, taking casual interest in the window displays of the small shops that she passed. Being a Sunday, this main thoroughfare running through the town was deserted; the shop interiors were dark, their awnings retracted and the parking spaces in front of them empty. Just the way she wanted it.

She stopped outside of Jo's Boutique, admiring a fancy new barmink coat in the window. Much nicer than the grubby beige Shearling coat that she was wearing. 'Twenty-five quid? Is that a joke?' she scoffed, drawing on the cigarette and continuing up the hill towards the town centre.

A young couple, arm in arm were walking towards her. She looked down at the pavement as they passed.

She looked at the shop doorways around her, considering where she could dump the red and white bag. She noticed a band of heavy grey clouds rolling up from the coast. Rain was coming.

She kept walking.

Outside of the Seeboard showroom she spotted the answer: a bright red telephone box. She hastened towards it, pulling open the door and receiving the familiar musty, metallic smell common to every telephone

Present Day setting

Chapter One

25th February 2023, Rye, East Sussex

Morton Farrier was flustered. He was sitting at the kitchen table of his beloved fifteenth-century home, The House with Two Front Doors on Rye's historic Mermaid Street, trying—and generally failing—to finish a PowerPoint presentation. From the next room, his son, Isaac, was smashing the merry hell out of a drum kit, which Morton's mother-in-law had thoughtfully bought for his third birthday last week. Despite Morton and his wife, Juliette, showering Isaac with a variety of gifts, his outright favourite present of all had been the wretched, deafening drum kit.

The Deserter's Tale

Chapter One

19th October 2019, Rye, East Sussex

Morton Farrier was puzzled. Having conducted a routine check of all of the different genealogy websites hosting his DNA, he was surprised to discover that a new cousin match had appeared by the name of Vanessa Briggs.

'Nine hundred and two,' Morton remarked to himself, sipping a coffee at the kitchen table, staring at his laptop.

'What?' Juliette, his wife, asked, as she entered the room wearing her police officer uniform.

'Oh,' Morton replied, looking up and realising that he had just spoken aloud. 'I've got a new DNA match.'

The Sterling Affair

Exercise



- Start to think about the opening chapter with your **genealogist character**
- First, jot down some general ideas about what you will include in this chapter (**how are we introduced to the case?**)
- How much description will you include about the setting? Are you going to give information about the town / street / house at the start or drip feed it to the reader?
- Is this a real place or fictional?
- Will you use an omniscient 3rd person narrator or go straight in with your character?
- **Remember: the story is the priority – hook the reader into your mystery ASAP!**

Final thoughts... To date or not to date?

Chapter One

Present Day, Rye, East Sussex

Morton Farrier was...|

Chapter One

2013

Wednesday

Morton Farrier was perplexed. He was sitting at home running an online birth search and, according to the indexes, the man for whom he searched hadn't ever been born. It was a rare occurrence for a birth not to have been registered, he had to admit, but it wasn't *that* extraordinary. Nothing to get over excited about. In his twelve years of working as a forensic genealogist he had come across it maybe once or twice before. Although, now that he actually thought about it, he could only bring one specific case to mind, a job he had worked on two years ago. It certainly didn't warrant the unnecessary histrionics that his new client, Peter Coldrick, had displayed when he had visited him for the first time yesterday afternoon.

Morton had found Peter living an austere life in a run-down council estate on the outskirts of Tenterden, a charming Kentish Weald town not far from his own home in Rye. Peter's house was crammed with an abundance of genealogical books and guides. Years of personal research and three redundant genealogists later, Peter Coldrick had come to the conclusion that any antecedents prior to his father had been wholly obliterated. It was for the birth of Peter's father, James Coldrick, that Morton had searched in vain. He ran one final check on Ancestry, his favoured website for birth, marriage and death searches, but came to the same answer: there was no James Coldrick. He was pondering the implications of this when his mobile rang. It was Juliette, his girlfriend.

Chapter One

15th December 2019, Rye Foreign, East Sussex

Morton Farrier was exasperated. He was standing in a large field of Christmas trees on the Dengate Farm Stall in Rye Foreign with a tangle of brambles wrapped around his boots. His wife, Juliette, was grasping onto a traditional Norway Spruce and staring down at the ground.

'Are you okay?' he asked her, questioning the wisdom of trekking up two small hills in search of the perfect Christmas tree whilst being seven months pregnant.

Assignment



To write the opening scene to parts of your story.

- **Part 1: Write the opening scene to your past narrative using as accurate description as you can (research!)**
- Use omniscient 3rd person narrator if your setting or time period is likely to be unknown or obscure to the reader
- Don't include dialogue at this stage
- **Part 2: Write the opening scene to your present day narrative where you introduce your main genealogist character**
- Decide how you will show the reader the location and how you will introduce the case (*you don't need to actually write this, yet*)
- Try and read some fellow students work and offer constructive criticism
- Name your document ***your name week3***
- Upload by Sunday if possible

Points to consider:



- What is the structure of your story going to look like? (switching between past / present or different?)
- Will you use an omniscient 3rd person narrator in both time periods to introduce the setting?
- Try to strike the balance between setting the scene and overloading the reader with unnecessary detail!

Any questions?

