



Writing Historical Fiction that Sizzles and Sells!

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A little more about me...

Novel	Genre(s)	Subgenre
The Pirate of Panther Bay (2004/2014)	Action/Adventure Young Adult/New Adult	Historical Fiction Romance
Tortuga Bay (2015)	Action/Adventure Young Adult/New Adult\ Mainstream/Literary	Historical Fiction Romance
St. Nic, Inc. (2014)	Action/Adventure Mainstream/Literary	Contemporary Near Science Fiction
Renegade (2012)	Middle Grade	Contemporary Urban
A Warrior's Soul (2011)	Middle Grade	Contemporary



Today, in reverse order....

- **What makes a good historical fiction story?**
- **What makes a story that sells?**
- **What makes a story that sizzles?**
- **Is historical fiction different?**

Is historical fiction different?

A good story...

- Engaging characters
 - Multidimensional
 - Defined arcs
- Gripping story
 - Conflict drives plot points
 - Tension created by uncertainty
- Setting
- Most novels are character-driven or plot-driven
 - Exception: *The Hunger Games*

Historical Fiction...

- Engaging characters
- Gripping story
- Exotic settings
- More scope for setting-driven stories
- “Compact” with readers
 - Accuracy
 - Honor the period
 - Judicious use of literary license
- A note on “creative” nonfiction

What makes historical fiction sizzle?

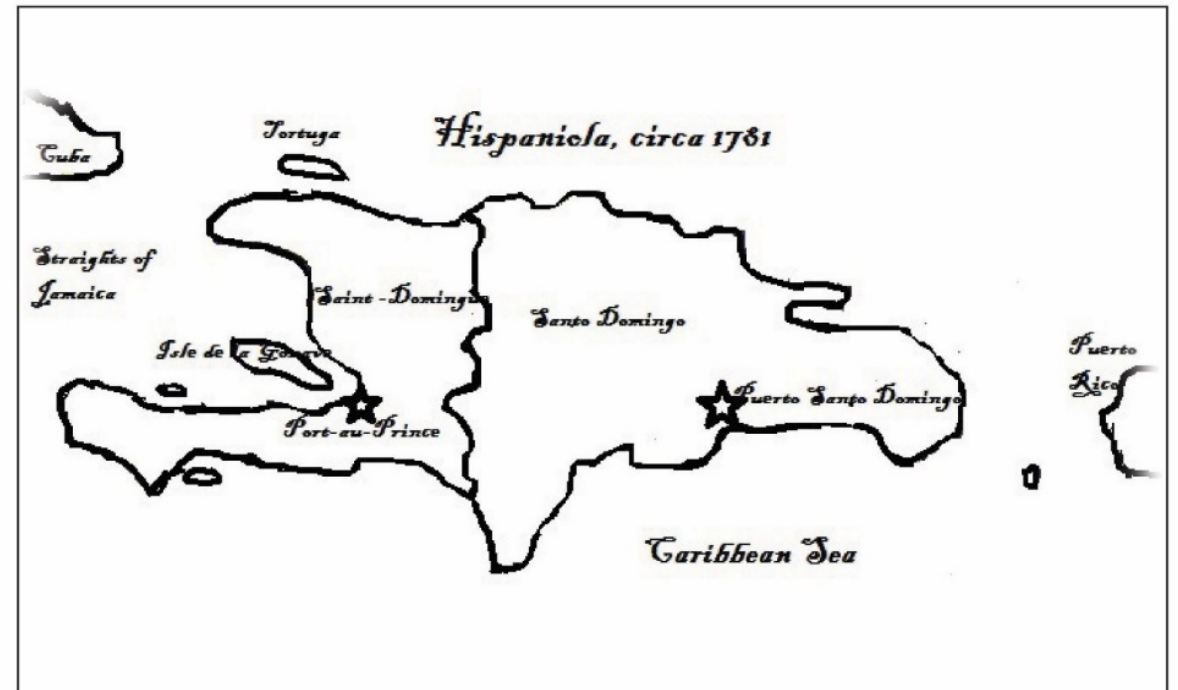
- **Characters**
 - Real or fictional?
 - Literary license
- **Relationships**
 - Human conflict
 - Hero's Journey
 - Romance
- **Action**
 - Well done
 - Less is more

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What makes historical fiction sell?

- Honor the character
- Honor the period
- Honor the reader



Honor the character



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Honor the period



Which vessel is appropriate for the period?



Historical details become part of the story...



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Honor the reader

- **Tell a good story**
 - Avoid getting lost in history
- **Don't forget the character arc**
- **Ensure actions are in context**
- **Break rules...with intention and purpose!**
- **Embrace your "voice"**

The science and art of “selling”

- **Some genres “sell” well**
 - Science fiction
 - Romance
 - Some historical fiction
- **Few authors sell without a readership base or marketing platform**
- **Invest for the long haul**
 - Think “trilogy” or “series”
- **Build your platforms**
 - Personal relationships with readers
 - Social media
 - Book events/Appearances
 - Show appreciation for all support
- **“Earned” vs “unearned” media**
- **Other writers support you emotionally and professionally, but will not make you a bestseller**

Closing thoughts

- Good storytelling is the core of good historical fiction
 - “Sizzle” requires conflict
 - “Selling” requires sizzle
- Accuracy is critical
 - Use literary license only if it serves the story
- Honor the reader
- Honor yourself
- Sales come with persistence

