

## World War II

# Casablanca



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I would like to play a game of pretend. Let's pretend that you are one of the most in-demand actors of your time and your contract with the studio says you have to perform in any film they choose. The studio you are working for takes an unknown, unproduced and previously refused play and begins adapting the play for the screen. They are in such a rush to start production and don't wait for the first draft of the screenplay to be finished before they begin filming. At one point the director calls you on the set and tells you to just stand still and give a short nod of your head towards the camera. You don't know why you are nodding or where the nod will occur in the movie, you are just told to nod. Every day the script changes. Not just the little daily changes common to movies, but massive story changes take place. No one at the start of filming, not even the director, knows exactly how the movie is going to end. The film is half-way through production before the ending is finally settled upon. Can you imagine how unhappy you would be and how horrible you believe the final product would turn out? This is what happened to actors Humphrey Bogart and Actress Ingrid Bergman when they starred in a film that when finished won the Best Picture, Best Screen Play, Best Actor and Best Supporting Actor Academy Awards. Since its production in 1942, it has continued to win honors and awards. The play was called 'Everyone Comes to Ricks', the movie, *Casablanca*. [Read more](#)

Posted by Keith C. on March 15, 2016

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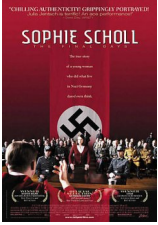
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# Sophie Scholl: The Final Days



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While I was growing up in the 60's and 70's I learned in my history classes about the horrors of what happened in Germany during WWII. However in these classes the German people were painted with broad sweeping strokes of black as supporters of the Nazi movement and Hitler. I never learned of people such as Oskar Schindler, the German industrialist who managed to save the lives of so many of the Jewish people. Nor had I heard of groups, such as 'The Swing Kids,' 'The Edelweiss Pirates,' 'The Solf Circle,' and 'The Kreisau Circle.' All of these were groups of German Nationals who were either vocal opponents of the Nazi doctrine or actively fought against them as part of the underground resistance in Germany. In fact there were a lot more 'subversive groups' in Germany than I was aware existed. Another group I had never heard of was one founded by Hans Scholl and his sister Sophie known as 'The White Rose.'

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Posted by Keith C. on January 9, 2016

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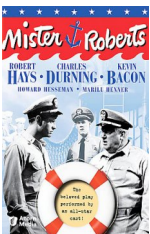
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## Mister Roberts - Teleplay



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In 1984 NBC broadcast a full-length production of *Mister Roberts*. Along with a great many others before it aired, I felt the 1955 movie (about which I've [posted previously](#)) was definitive; I certainly didn't feel that there was a need for another version of this classic film. What I didn't realize was that this was not a remake of the movie—it was a play, filmed before a live audience.

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Posted by Keith C. on August 25, 2015

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## Gellhorn: A Twentieth-Century Life

**GELLHORN**  
A TWENTIETH-CENTURY LIFE



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?I was never deeply interested in being a child.? Twentieth-century war correspondent and novelist, Gellhorn always said these words would open her autobiography if she ever wrote one. Unfortunately, she never did but Moorehead?s deeply researched biography of the writer is so rich with Gellhorn?s work, family life, love affairs, and travels that probably not even Gellhorn could have gotten it down with such precision. Also, Moorehead provides a rich tapestry of historical and cultural information for the nine decades of Martha?s life.

During WW 11, the military refused to give her a pass to Normandy for the German invasion, so Martha sneaked aboard a troop ship and hid in the bathroom until they were well at sea.

Her father, an ex-German doctor settled in St. Louis and married Edna, an intelligent member of the local upper class. Both parents were half Jewish. One of the fascinating things in this book is to discover the lifelong extremely close connection between mother and daughter. [Read more](#)

Posted by Dory L. on August 5, 2015

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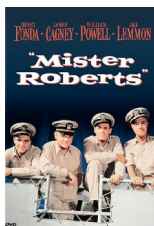
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## Mister Roberts (1955)



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*Mister Roberts* (1955), starring Henry Fonda, is based on the stage play by Frank Nugent. Fonda, who starred in the Broadway play, reprised his role as Lieutenant Douglas Roberts for this film, with an A-list of players supporting him. Jack Lemmon also stars as Ensign Pulver, a role which won him an Oscar for Best Supporting Actor; James Cagney as Captain Morton and William Powell as "Doc" round out the cast. Sadly, the film also ended the longtime friendship and working relationship between Henry Fonda and director John Ford who, in a fit of anger, reportedly sucker punched Fonda in the mouth.

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Posted by Keith C. on August 4, 2015

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## Monuments Men



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It's not often that a World War II film comes my way that stirs my soul. It's even rarer that what stirs my soul is not the personal story of an individual or a small group of people standing up for what is right against the Nazis or an escape from a German internment camp despite impossible odds. It's not that I don't enjoy a good war film, but most war films have the same basic features, [Read more](#)

Posted by Keith C. on December 26, 2014

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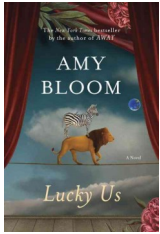
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## Lucky Us



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This intriguing 1940s novel opens with a mother announcing that someone has died and they better hustle over to the house and "see what might be in it for us." The house belongs to Eva's dad and his recently deceased wife.

A week later Eva's Mom deposits her on the doorstep with a suitcase then disappears from her life. Upstairs is Eva's half-sister, Iris. Until this day, neither sister knew the other existed. Iris, four years older and in high school, enters and wins many talent contests (elocution, dramatic readings, poetry, patriotic essays, and dance) in their small Ohio town and bergs like it within fifty miles. However, she must hide her earnings from her father, Edgar, a college professor of elocution, who has no qualms about stealing from his children.

Before long, Iris graduates from school and heads out to Hollywood. Because their dad basically abandons Eva to her own care, she soon drops out of school to join her older sister in Hollywood. They move into a rooming house and Iris shares her adventures with Eva as she holes up in their room until school is out each day.

Iris scores a few speaking roles in movies, but soon becomes involved in a gay sex scandal and gets blacklisted in Hollywood. The older more famous actress marries immediately and her career zooms on.

Soon Edgar reappears and along with a helpful make-up artist, Francisco, they decide to drive across country to find possible jobs in New York. Edgar thinks he can pass as a butler and with some training, Iris, can be a governess. As they drive through the west, Iris memories facts from *The Little Blue Books*, and the party grills her on Shakespeare. Luckily, father and daughter land jobs with an Italian *nouveau riche* family, the Torellis.

Eva grows up to become a fortune teller. As Iris advised Eva, "It's the great thing about the war.... Anyone can be anyone." Iris adopts a son (somewhat illegally--they actually steal him from the orphanage) and falls in love with the Torellis' cook, Reenie, whom she convinces to leave her husband and move in with them.

To this crazy dysfunctional family, Bloom brings her insight as a former psychotherapist. The 40s time period is captured well and a series of letters from a dear family friend, who was thrown out of the country for being Jewish describe some of the hardships of Europe including the Dresden bombings.

In no sense is this a light, hopeful book, yet it is very well-written and captures the complex relationships and dynamics of a modern American family in the midst of a rapidly changing world. For a book about another family surviving WW II on the other side of the pond, try Amanda Hodginkson's [22 Britannia Road](#).

Posted by Dory L. on December 15, 2014

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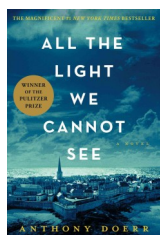
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# All the Light We Cannot See



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A blind French girl. A brilliant German boy. A locksmith who works at a world-class museum. A French resistance worker who doubles as a housewife. An agoraphobic great uncle who has not left home since the close of the last war, WWI. A Nazi army gem expert who prowls after a world-class jewel that he believes will cure his advanced cancer.

These are the main characters that people this fascinating WWII novel. Tying them all together are radio signals and a blue diamond worth millions.

The novel alternates (mostly) between the points of view of Marie-Laure, a blind girl and Werner, an orphan who teaches himself advanced radio skills. Marie-Laure has been blind since the age of six. Just after the German occupation, she and her locksmith father flee Paris, but soon after the Germans take and imprison her father.

A myth surrounds the blue diamond itself. Marie-Laure learned about the diamond early in her life. The myth says that anyone who carries it will have bad luck befall them. Unfortunately, the museum director entrusts the locksmith with this diamond as the Germans enter Paris. He also ordered two other duplicates created to confuse anyone trying to track the diamond. None of the three employees trusted with the diamond know who has the real one. [Read more](#)

Posted by Dory L. on July 21, 2014

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# Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience and Redemption



[Unbroken](#) tells the amazing true story of Louie Zamperini, a rascally little boy who grows

up in Southern California to Italian immigrant parents. As a child, Louie is constantly in trouble and has a restless energy. His saving grace is being introduced to long distance running by his older brother. Louie ends up running in the 1936 Olympics in Berlin and is focused on the 4 minute mile and another chance at the 1940 Olympics.

Back home, he enrolls in USC and continues running when the War interrupts. Louie joins as a gunner in the Army Air Forces. He is eventually sent to the Pacific theater and after a few

successful missions, his plane crashes in the Pacific during a search mission. Three members of the aircraft team make it to two small liferafts and his unbelievable story continues. Louie's 40+ day survival on a life raft seems impossible. Then he is shot at and captured by the Japanese and unofficially is held in horrible war camps. Here too, his survival is seemingly impossible. Louise does survive, his spirit is damaged, but also hopeful. Louie's story will stay with you. I kept thinking of him and his story well after I finished the book. [Read more](#)

Posted by sbowman on October 24, 2012

[Unbroken : a World War II story of survival, resilience, and redemption](#)

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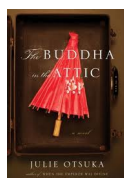
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## Buddha in the Attic and Narrative Mode



"On the boat we were mostly virgins" begins Julie Otsuka's gem of a book, [The Buddha](#)

[in the Attic](#). One of the noticeable things from that first sentence is the unique narrative mode. The whole book is written in the first person plural style. This type of narration can be awkward -- most fiction is written in either first person or third person. Convention can be comforting, we know immediately how to read the story and relate to those characters. In first person plural, the story is told from the group's perspective, and with no main character, the rules are different.

Otsuka said in an interview that she wanted to tell the story of Japanese picture brides -- not just one bride, but that as a group. And in this case, the narrative mode makes perfect sense. Between 1908 and the 1920s, thousands of young Japanese women came over to the United States after an arranged marriage agreement. Instead of focusing on one story, this book introduces the reader to many stories, some devastatingly sad, some happier, but all of them are sympathetic. And by not focusing on just one story, we read the book with a fuller picture and are moved by their collective experiences and struggles. The stories begin on the boat, and follow them through marriage, manual labor, child raising and the heart wrenching internment following the attacks on Pearl Harbor. I can imagine that this book might appeal to a wide range of fiction readers -- fans of historical fiction, women's fiction, immigrant stories, Asian-American experiences, World War II home front, and readers of fiction set in California and the West. [Read more](#)

Posted by sbowman on October 17, 2012

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