

Explore More—Fact and Fiction

Directions: Listen to your teacher talk about why it is important to recognize the difference between fact and fiction. Circle any words you don't understand. Underline or highlight important ideas in the text. Write notes in the margins to help you understand key points. Then answer the questions in your own words.

What is fact?

Fact is information we know is true. For example, by 1733, there were 13 English colonies in North America. This is a fact. We know it is a fact because we have evidence—historical records—to prove it.

What is fiction?

Fiction is information that we know is not true. It is about make-believe people and events. For example, you may have read a book about wizards or other magical creatures. The information comes from someone's imagination. It is not fact. We call it fiction.

What is historical fiction?

Sometimes people combine fact and fiction into what we call historical fiction. For example, there are several movies and books about the life of Pocahontas. We know for a fact that Pocahontas was a real person. However, we don't know all the details of her life. Sometimes people who write books or movies take a real person—such as Pocahontas—and write a make-believe story about her. Some of the story is fact, and some of the story is fiction. This is called historical fiction.

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Why do writers sometimes blend fact and fiction?

Writers sometimes blend fact and fiction to make a story more interesting to the reader. People are naturally curious about people who lived long ago. We can't talk to these people, so we can only imagine what their lives were like. Writers often take what they know about a person and then add new details that may or may not be true.

Other times writers alter the facts of a story because of their opinions. They want to emphasize or exaggerate the facts that support their opinions, and sometimes hide or omit facts that don't support their opinions.

Why is it important to know the difference between fact and fiction?

It is important to have an accurate understanding of history. History shapes our views of the world and our views of others. We can learn a lot from the people who lived before us. We can learn from their successes and their mistakes. Studying history gives us an opportunity to prevent the same mistakes from happening again. This is why it's important that we have the ability to recognize fact and fiction. Sometimes this task can be difficult, but it is important to always be aware that not everything you read, hear, or see is fact. Writers sometimes blend fact and fiction. Writing that is completely factual is called nonfiction. Writing that is only partially factual or not factual at all is called fiction. When you read a book or watch a movie about historical people or events, ask yourself whether it's fiction or nonfiction.

What is an example in which a writer blended fact and fiction?

In this chapter, you read about Paul Revere's famous journey to warn Patriots that the British soldiers were on their way. American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote a poem about this event called "Paul Revere's Ride." Longfellow's poem about Paul Revere's ride is not completely accurate. Longfellow blended fact and fiction. For example, Longfellow's poem says that Paul Revere was the lone express rider who spread the alarm about the British. However, many, many people were involved in this event. Longfellow wanted people to know the facts of the story, but his main goal was to make people feel excited and patriotic. That is why he blended fact and fiction. ❖

YOUR TURN!

1. Name an example of a book, poem, or movie that blends fact and fiction.

2. What part of the story is fact?

3. What part of the story is fiction?

4. Why is it important to recognize the difference between fact and fiction?
