



Getting up to Speed in...Adventure

Here's what Adventure is:

These are stories of a hero on a mission. They are fast-paced, action-packed, and often set in exotic locales in war — and peacetime.

Here's what happens in Adventure:

Heroes undertake desperate missions, overcoming obstacles and often rescuing themselves and others, as they carry out dangerous assignments. The protagonist is usually male, and his ingenuity and skill are instrumental in the success of the mission. There is almost always a happy ending, with the hero safe and order restored. Pacing may be slower in historical Adventure, but all these stories are driven by a life-and-death urgency.

Here's why people like Adventure:

Fans of Adventure appreciate the opportunity to participate vicariously in dangerous missions against deadly opponents, often in hostile environments. Adventure novels are often written tongue-in-cheek, feature larger-than-life characters, good and bad, and heroes on seemingly impossible missions, often with the fate of the world in their hands. These cinematic stories are often made into movies.

Here are key titles to read:

- Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* popularized the Literary Thriller, which is really a form of Adventure with the mission to discover the meaning of a work of art or to obtain a treasure with an artistic or literary basis. As in other Adventure stories, the fate of the world is often at stake.
- James Clavell wrote epic tales of historical Adventure set in the Far East, underlining the passion for adventures set in exotic locales. In *Shogun*, 17th century feudal Japan forms the backdrop as an Elizabethan sailor, John Blackthorne, becomes a samurai.
- Louis L'Amour, best known for his classic westerns, also wrote two novels sure to please Adventure fans. In *The Walking Drum*, set in 12th century France, a boy seeks revenge for the destruction of his family estates and heads for Turkey to find his father, a captured corsair. In *The Last of the Breed*, an American test pilot downed in Siberia during the Cold War must battle the elements as well as enemy soldiers to survive and escape.
- Patrick O'Brian's swashbuckling sea Adventures, set during the Napoleonic Wars, features Captain Jack Aubrey and Stephen Maturin, surgeon and spy, in dangerous and far-reaching escapades. *Master and Commander* launches the series.
- Arturo Perez-Reverte, known for his intelligent Thrillers also writes Adventure novels of note. *Captain Alatriste* introduces the title character, a swordsman-for-hire in 17th century Spain, and his battles of weapons and wit.



Here are key authors to know:

- **Clive Cussler** and his hero, Dirk Pitt, embody the modern day Adventure tale. With missions that send Pitt on dangerous assignments against nefarious villains, showcase cartoon violence, and provide fascinating historical, technological, and military details, these fast-paced stories of good guys outwitting the bad lead readers quickly to the last page. *Atlantis Found* blends page-turning action and suspense with the provocative possibility that Atlantis may have existed — and may be recovered.
- **Bernard Cornwell** writes historically rich Adventure tales set during the Napoleonic Wars, the U.S. Civil War, Saxon times, England's Hundred Years War, and Arthurian times. Military details figure prominently, and the mood is often dark. Books are frequently based on particular battles and historical notes on the battles conclude the novels. Start with the first of any series, but the Sharpe series, set in the Napoleonic Wars is probably the most popular, as the novels follow his ascent up the ladder. *Sharpe's Tiger*, set in India in 1799, is the first chronologically.
- **Jack Higgins** achieved fame with his wartime Adventure novels, such as the classic *The Eagle Has Landed*. His colorful series characters — Sean Dillon and Liam Devlin — now battle neo-Nazis, international conspiracies, the Mafia, and more in these suspenseful Adventures that move at breakneck speed.
- **Matthew Reilly** writes Adventure in the tradition of H Rider Haggard: men on dangerous missions in exotic locales, fighting against both the elements as well as infamous bad guys. These cinematic books are fast-paced, and the over-the-top plots make them pure entertainment. Try *7 Deadly Wonders*, in which a team made up of a scientist, a young girl and several commandos work against time to find and restore the golden capstone of the great pyramid of Cheops, with the fate of the world hanging in the balance.
- **James Rollins'** Sigma Force, an American Special Ops team, travels the globe on dangerous special missions. Invincible heroes fighting against deadly villains, exotic locales, and a range of secret missions fill his fast-paced, action-filled, plot-centered dramas. Scientific and historical details form the fascinating backgrounds to his tales. *Map of Bones* is the first of the Sigma Force series, although Rollins has also published stand-alones including *Amazonia*.

Here's how to talk with Adventure fans:

- Fans may find it easier to talk about movies they have enjoyed, and we can relate those appeal elements to books, perhaps even suggesting the book on which the movie was based.
- Look through books for maps, detailed drawings of sailing ships, battle plans or other graphic elements. These often point to the Adventure elements in a novel.
- Even though the protagonists are primarily male, many women appreciate Adventure novels. Offer Adventure to men and women alike.

A few more tips:

- Classics are often good suggestions. Swashbuckling Adventure tales from the 19th century, World War II Adventure, Napoleonic War stories and more remain popular with a wide range of readers.



- Adventure elements figure prominently in many genres. In Fantasy, the Quest novels by authors such as J. R. R. Tolkien and Robert Jordan are rich in Adventure. Historical Fiction overlaps extensively from classic authors like Henryk Sienkiewicz to more modern treatments by authors such as Wilbur Smith's tales of early Egypt and Africa. Suzanne Brockmann's Romances feature Adventure elements, as do the Romantic Suspense novels of Elizabeth Lowell. Thriller and Western writers draw heavily on Adventure elements, and Adventure readers will also find much to explore in nonfiction, such as Jon Krakauer's *Into thin Air* and other stories of exploration and discovery.

Joyce Saricks is a well-known readers' advisory consultant. In addition to presenting readers' advisory seminars around the country, she is engaged in updating her book, *Readers' Advisory Guide to Genre Fiction* (ALA, 2001).