

HISTORICAL
TIMES



AMERICAN
HISTORY

Featuring articles by Linda Ulleseit, Joan Koster, Rebecca Rosenberg,
T. M. Brown, Seth Irving Handaside, Phil Hore, M. B. Zucker,
Deborah Hufford, Trish MacEnulty, & Tom Durwood



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INTERACTIVE HISTORICAL
FICTION MAGAZINE

DEBORAH HUFFORD

Examines the use of images
in Historical Fiction.

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ARTICLES | REVIEWS | ART | RECIPES
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BLOOD TO RUBIES

A NOVEL BY

DEBORAH HUFFORD

FOREWORD BY DESCENDANT OF CHIEF JOSEPH
ESTEEMED NEZ PERCE ELDER, ALLEN V. PINKHAM, SR.

"A sweeping saga told with crushing intimacy, layered between love and war."

—Kathleen Grissom, NYT bestselling *The Kitchen House* and *Crow Mary*

BLOOD TO RUBIES

Why I Chose to Use Images in My Upcoming Historical Novel

By Deborah Hufford

Blood to Rubies is the scorching saga of injustice, love and redemption in the western wilderness. A young photographer goes West to escape the Civil War draft and settles in the Bitterroot Mountains, ancestral home of the Nez Perce Indians. There he becomes obsessed with a young Irish pioneer woman he spies swimming nude in a mountain lake. He comes to admire the Nez Perce and photographs the young leader, Chief Joseph, and a Nez Perce warrior woman (based on a real historical person). Their stories tangle in a ruthless convergence of fates. As he chronicles Chief Joseph's desperate struggle to save his people and their harrowing 1,500-mile exodus to the Canadian border--"the medicine line"--to join Sitting Bull in freedom, he feels complicit in their demise.

Blood to Rubies has already garnered early praise from NYT bestselling authors: "a riveting debut novel," "lush and lyrical," "heartbreakingly beautiful prose," and "a triumph of scholarship and great storytelling."

Online presales of Blood to Rubies begin June 20, available for ordering through Amazon and bookstores. The publishing date is September 5. Read more at: DeborahHufford.com.

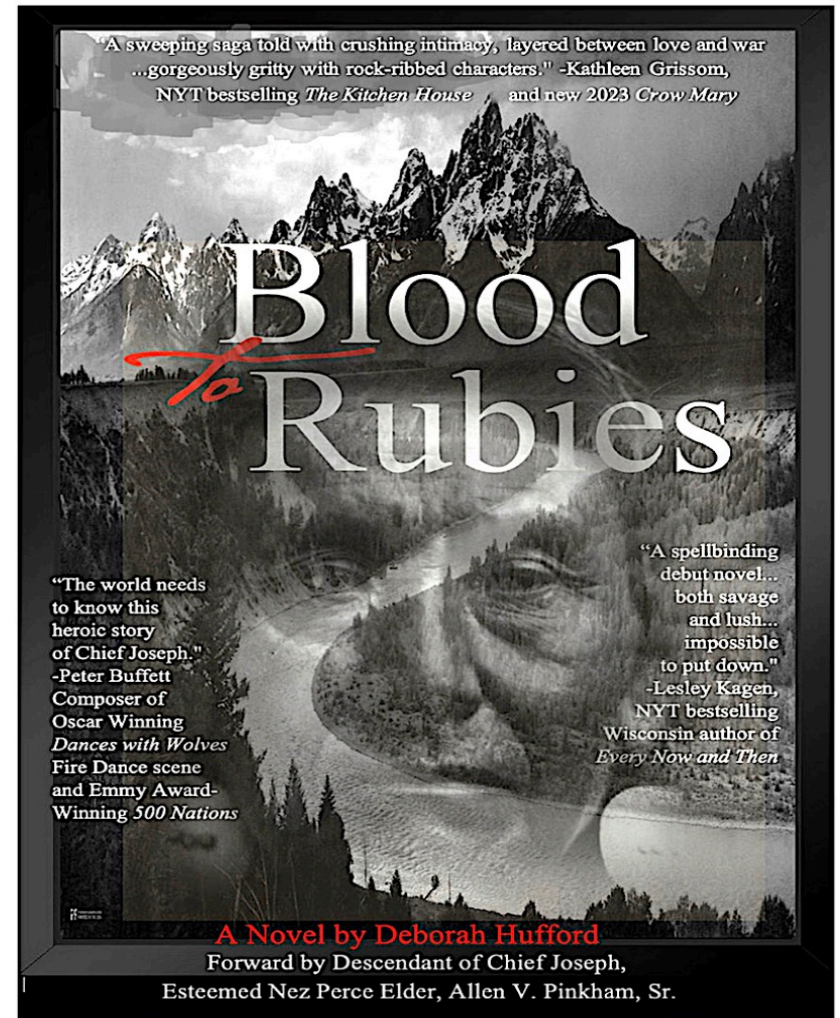
The fiction novel is a relatively modern artform, only about 300 years old. Daniel Dafoe's 1719 literary creation, *Robinson Crusoe*, is often cited as the first novel. For more than the next 200 years, novels customarily included images. Jane Austen's and Charles Dickens' works were illustrated. Later, even John Steinbeck's Pulitzer Prize-winning 1939 *Grapes of Wrath* was illustrated by none other than Thomas Hart Benton. Even Kurt Vonnegut included his sketches in his 1973 *Breakfast of Champions*. (See sidebar, "Brief History of Images in Fiction.")

Sometime around World War II, images in fiction were abandoned, then, it seemed, forgotten altogether. Only a handful of novels in the last twenty years have been published with images throughout. Using images in fiction has, in fact, become a radical notion.

So, it was with bewilderment and some trepidation that I considered using photographs in my upcoming historical novel, *Blood to Rubies*. I couldn't think of one novel the last 40 years that included images. Even after research, I found only a handful. Why? Life is our ocular oyster! Why had the world come to accept this curious segregation of artforms that so strictly forbade the congress of words and images in fiction?



My first inspiration for my novel came to me when I was a child and was the result of powerful imagery, of horses and history and vast horizons. I grew up as an Iowa farm girl and explored



This is not the final cover for *Blood to Rubies* but a comp cover used in early promotions, an amalgam of two of the most iconic photographs in the history of western photography: "Snake River and the Tetons," by Ansel Adams, and Chief Joseph's most famous portrait, by Edward Curtis, ghosted against the landscape.

old pioneer cemeteries, stagecoach traces, and even hunted for arrowheads while bareback riding my horse Sundance all over creation. I lived near a vast river valley cloaked in forest. My favorite spot was a panoramic hillside where, as it happened, a herd of Appaloosas grazed. Granted, I lived in Iowa, not Idaho, the ancestral home of the Nez Perce who developed the Appaloosa breed. But my childhood musings were not discouraged by such earthbound technicalities. I liked to imagine Chief Joseph lived up in those hills.

In adulthood I became an award-winning magazine writer, editor and later, publisher. Consumed by my career and raising a family, my dream of writing my Chief Joseph novel stayed dormant in my imagination. Finally, I took advantage of my chronic insomnia to begin work on my book during the wee hours of the night. My dog and cat would sleep on my feet as I wrote.

My life's ambition would take 30 years, interrupted by a number of tragedies, among them having a heart attack because of congenital kidney dysfunction, then sliding into end-stage kidney failure, and finally getting a kidney transplant six months ago. I really didn't think I'd make it. The same day we were told my husband qualified as my kidney donor, I also landed a publisher for my book. Two miracles in one day after so much struggle.

During those 30 years of research and writing, I pored over hundreds of books, scholarly papers and memoirs, and materials from numerous historical societies about the American frontier of the 1800s. Most included wonderful archival photographs that became inextricably linked to my



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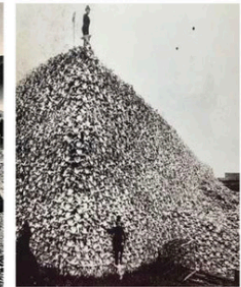
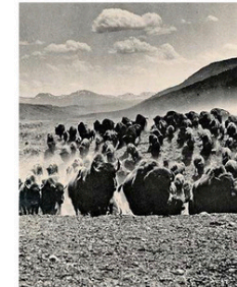
westering muse



6

confluence of fates

Blood to Rubies showcases 70 images as chapter headers. These images set the stage for the coming cataclysm of cultures and the decimation of manifest destiny. **TOP LEFT:** From the 1923 silent film, *The Covered Wagon*. **TOP RIGHT:** George Catlin's painting, *Crow Chief Who Outjumps All*, circa 1856-1870. **RIGHT:** Images by two unknown photographers: stampeding buffalo from the University of Oklahoma, and a mountain of buffalo skulls, from the Detroit Public Library.



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manifest destiny

During those 30 years of research and writing, I pored over hundreds of books, scholarly papers and memoirs, and materials from numerous historical societies about the American frontier of the 1800s. Most included wonderful archival photographs that became inextricably linked to my story, visual markers that inspired characters and chapters and the plotline. From them

came my main character, a young frontier photographer named Frederick Cortland, who goes West to escape the Civil War draft.

Photography was in its infancy just as the juggernaut of westering whites began to flood to the American West, bringing with it the cataclysm between white and red civilizations. Photographers who ventured west found gold mines of imagery in the spectacular scenery, wildlife, Native cultures and pioneer endeavor. This is perhaps why the mythos of the western frontier remains so much a part of the American zeitgeist of rugged individualism.

I immersed myself in image-packed volumes showcasing the works of Edward S. Curtis, William Henry Jackson, George Catlin, Ansel Adams, and many others. But the book that affected me most was *The West, An Illustrated History*, the companion book to Ken Burns' seminal documentary about the American frontier. The first image in the frontispiece of his huge tome was the famous portrait of Chief Joseph, by Edward Curtis.

Of course, Ken Burns has perfected the story-telling method of integrating archival still photographs into his historical narratives. His PBS documentaries have become wildly popular, world-changing, award-winning. He's proven resoundingly that the approach works. His success, perhaps, has been counterintuitive for many media experts in this age of hyper-phantasmagoric-flashing images and frenetic social media. Humans have become so used to being bombarding with eye candy that we have become drunk on saccharin-drenched, rapid-fire visuals. Burns has done the impossible; cut through the cacophony. Slowed us down to listen and absorb history, to appreciate it, to love it.



8

far side of paradise

The majority of images in *Blood to Rubies* are archival photographs by frontier photographers, some of whom my fictitious main character Frederick Cortland crosses paths with. This 1880s image, from the Denver Public Library, is of the famous photographer, William Henry Jackson, on Promontory Point in Yosemite Valley.



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of human bondage

Prostitutes were popular subjects for frontier photographers. The theme of prostitution—from elegant San Francisco brothels to the dreaded "cribs," the final stop for many prostitutes before they succumbed to venereal disease, murder, or starvation—is an ongoing theme in *Blood to Rubies*. A main villain in the novel, a Southern ex-African slave trader, Cornelius Blades, transfers his "skills" to the Oriental slave trade in California, with ghastly consequences.



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soiled doves

Several years ago, inspired in part by the Ken Burns model, I launched a historical blog called Notes from the Frontier (@NotesfromtheFrontier). The blog, copiously researched and image heavy, was an exercise in telling stories with words and archival photographs. Within two years, Notes from the Frontier had garnered more than 100,000 readers and my most popular post had been viewed by nearly one million readers. Its popularity proved to me that readers would find my image-infused approach to fiction appealing.

Perusing those images during my research for my novel and my blog was such a profound experience and enriched my perspectives so much, I thought it would be exciting and innovative to provide a similar experience for my readers. But I was warned that including images would make it harder to get my novel published. That literary agents and publishers wouldn't know how to categorize the book. That the use of images in fiction was practically non-existent.

Certainly, the prevailing genre is not image friendly. Various philosophies discourage their use, ranging from gentle skepticism to outright condemnation: images detract from the words; images eclipse the imagined internal scenes readers might otherwise form



thy kingdom come



beseech the earth



best portion of a life



long squash, round melons

These images immerse readers into the more intimate lives of pioneers and Native Americans on the frontier and are illustrative of scenes in their respective chapters.

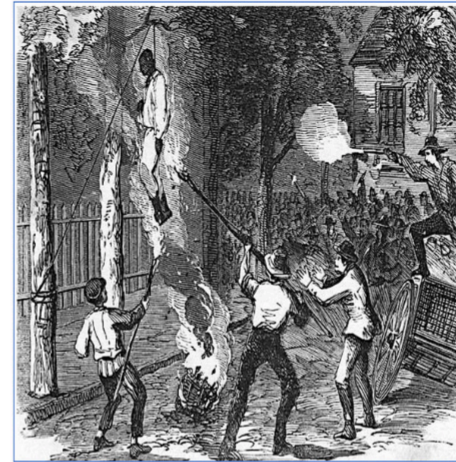
in their own minds; pictures trivialize or infantilize the writing; images are considered gauche in "intellectual" or "serious" fiction. Of course, publishers discourage images, especially color, because they add production expense.

Certainly, some novels do not lend themselves to the use of images. But, since my novel's main character is a frontier photographer and the narrative follows his unfolding life photographing western landscapes, major events, and the lives of Native Americans and pioneers, the use of black-and-white photographs, the medium of the 1800s frontier, seemed wholly natural in enhancing and augmenting the narrative of each chapter.

The young frontier photographer in *Blood to Rubies* is fictional. But he crosses paths with or is hired by famous frontier photographers of the time. Frederick is hired to document the carnage and aftermath of the Little Bighorn; to survey and photograph the Yellowstone region for the government, who would then declare the area America's first national park; to photograph the Nez Perce War.

Blood to Rubies' narrative and Frederick's adventures are enhanced with more than 70 photographs, used as chapter headers, by many 1800s photographers, including Ansel Adams, Edward Curtis, William Henry Jackson, Eadweard Muybridge, E. Jane Gay, John Fouch, Solomon Butcher, and Timothy O'Sullivan, in addition to many who were anonymous, their names lost in history. I have also included the works of famous artists of the western frontier, George Catlin and Frederic Remington.

Black and white photographs can evoke complex nuances that words cannot always convey. Native American and pioneer images from the 1800s especially are freighted with



THE NEW YORK TRIBUNE, JULY 16, 1863

11

molten dreams



10

motherless child



15

the bowels of hell

Images are a powerful means of conveying violence and injustice. Several main characters in *Blood to Rubies* are Irish and Welsh immigrants, ex-slaves, former Civil War soldiers, and white pioneers, all of whom go west to escape horrors of their past lives: famine, grinding poverty, disease, racism, war, and the horrific conditions of tenement life and work conditions in cities. Many also were driven out by race, draft and labor riots that ravaged cities, as the *New York Tribune* illustration depicts. The Nez Perce, in turn, endured horrors brought to them by the mass migration.

cultural meaning and reverie and capture the essence of a place or person or animal or event at that exact time in history. The images pull us in as if we are there ourselves. And that is powerful.

I located these photographs with the invaluable help of librarians and researchers from scores of archives and libraries, including the Smithsonian, Library of Congress, National Archives, the Beinecke Rare Book Library at Yale University, the National Park Service, the Nez Perce Historical Park Service, numerous university libraries, and many state and regional historical societies.

I also used the works of contemporary photographers, some of them the best in the world, mostly from the American West, but also from Poland (the world's leading equestrian photographer of the time was the Polish photographer, Marion Gadzalski), Wales, and England.

Several images are composites from archival photographs-- pictures of my family ancestors in the 1800s, even friends' dogs, cats, and horses, or multiple historical images artfully photoshopped together with dramatic effect to illustrate a chapter narrative. All images are identified and their providence listed in an extensive section at the back of the book.

The effort was considerable work over many years. But it was my life's work, a passion project. I hope that my efforts--and that of many librarians and researchers who helped me--result in a powerful and very personal reading experience for readers. And that they will become engulfed in the story as much as I was creating it.

Ansel Adams once said, "A photograph is an instrument of love and revelation." The words of historical fiction writers are as well. Surely combining both powerful artforms can lead to transformational and ever more exciting literary horizons?



55

sun of big trouble



61

Dusk of a Dream

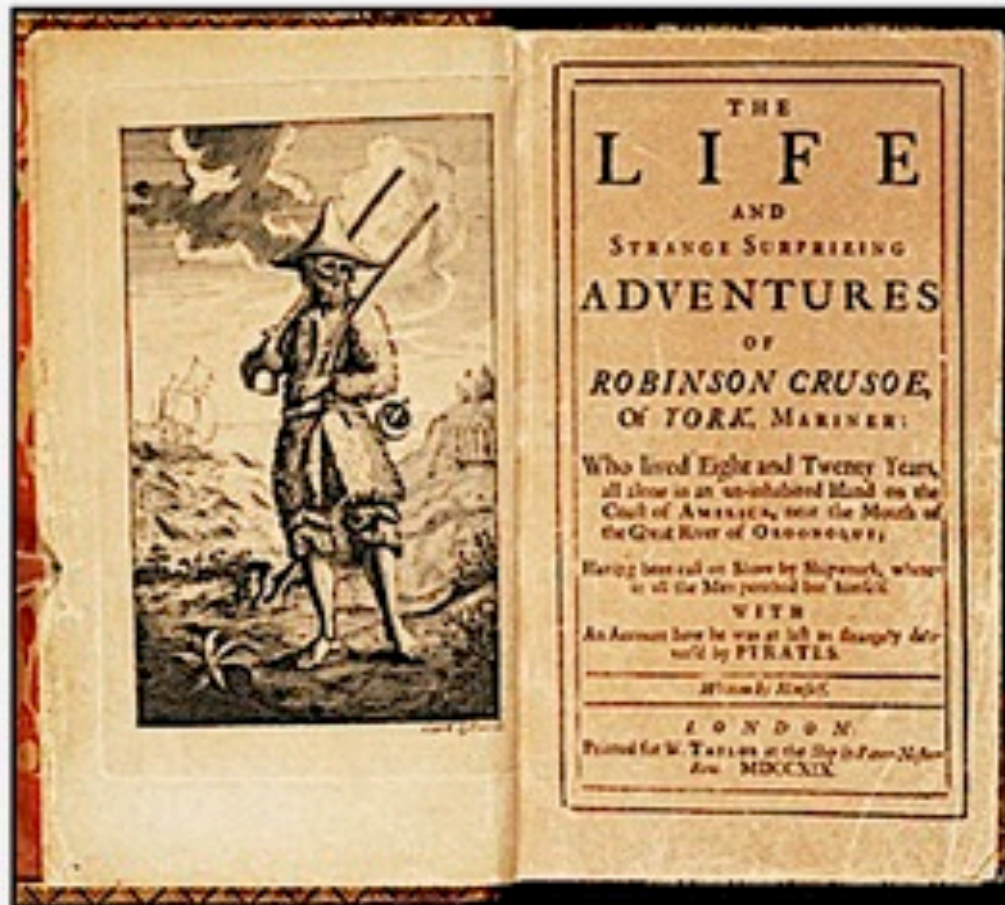


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Winter of Despair

One of the most photographed chiefs in history, Chief Joseph captured the imagination of the nation as "The Red Napoleon" heroically struggling to save his people. The Nez Perce War of 1877 was the last major U.S. Indian war. Ironic, because the Nez Perce saved Lewis and Clark, enabling manifest destiny to ultimately decimate Native tribes in the west, including his own.

A Brief History of Images in Fiction

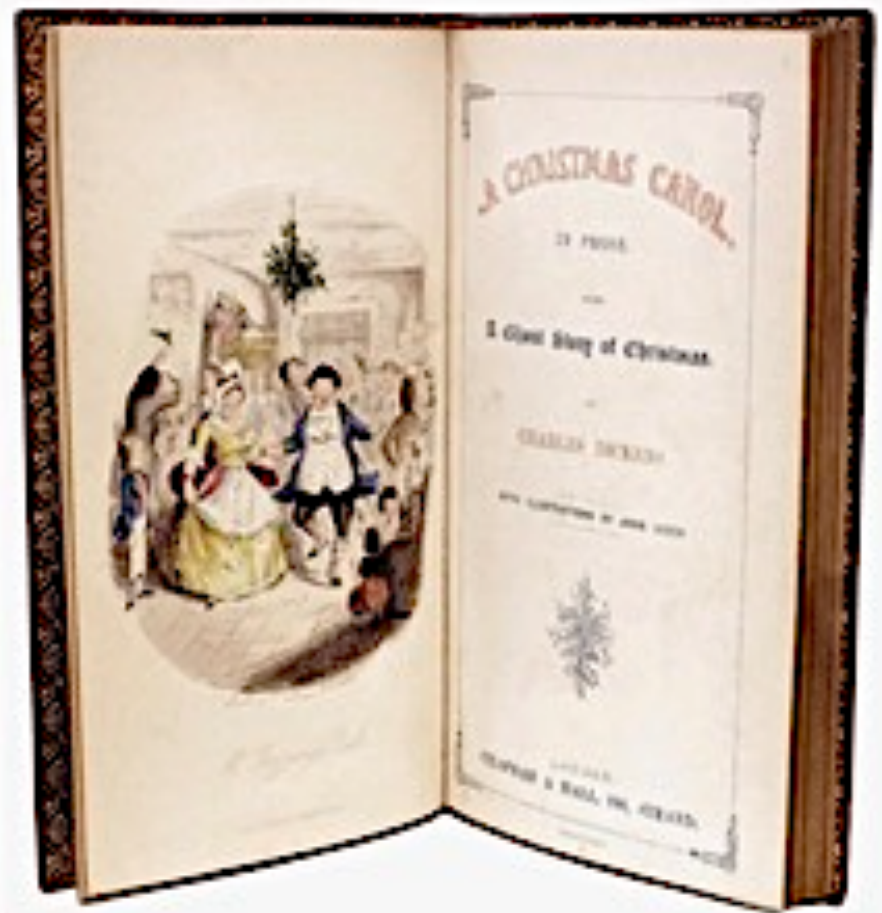


Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, published in 1719, is generally considered to be the first novel of realistic fiction as a new literary genre. The book included more than 160 intricate engraved illustrations. Seven years later, Jonathan Swift published *Gulliver's Travels*, also richly illustrated.



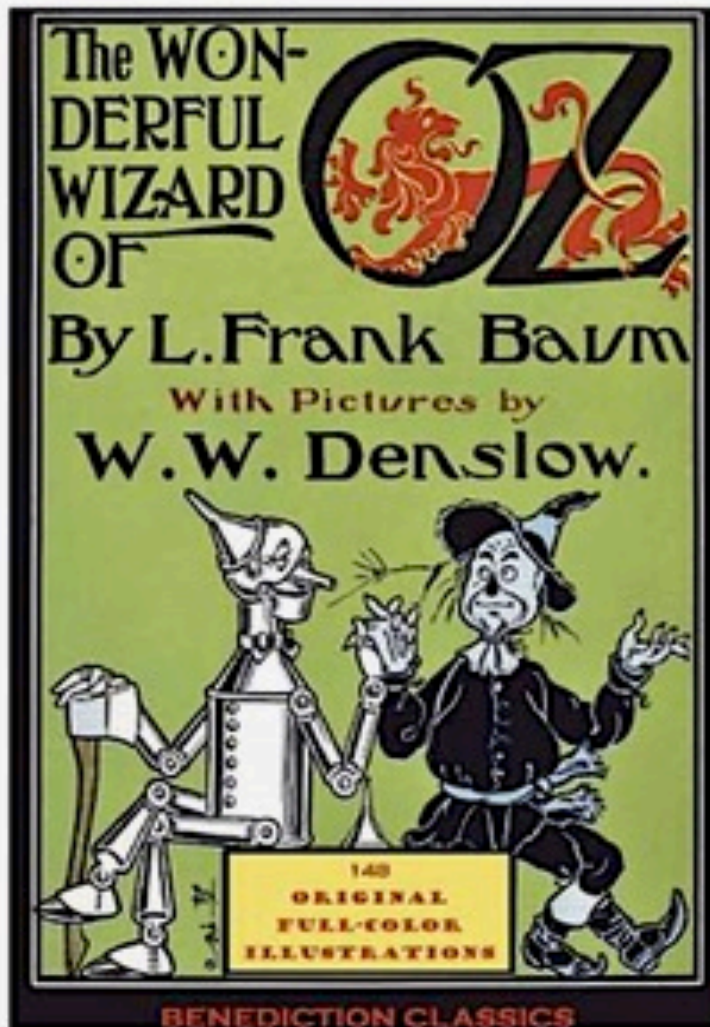
1719





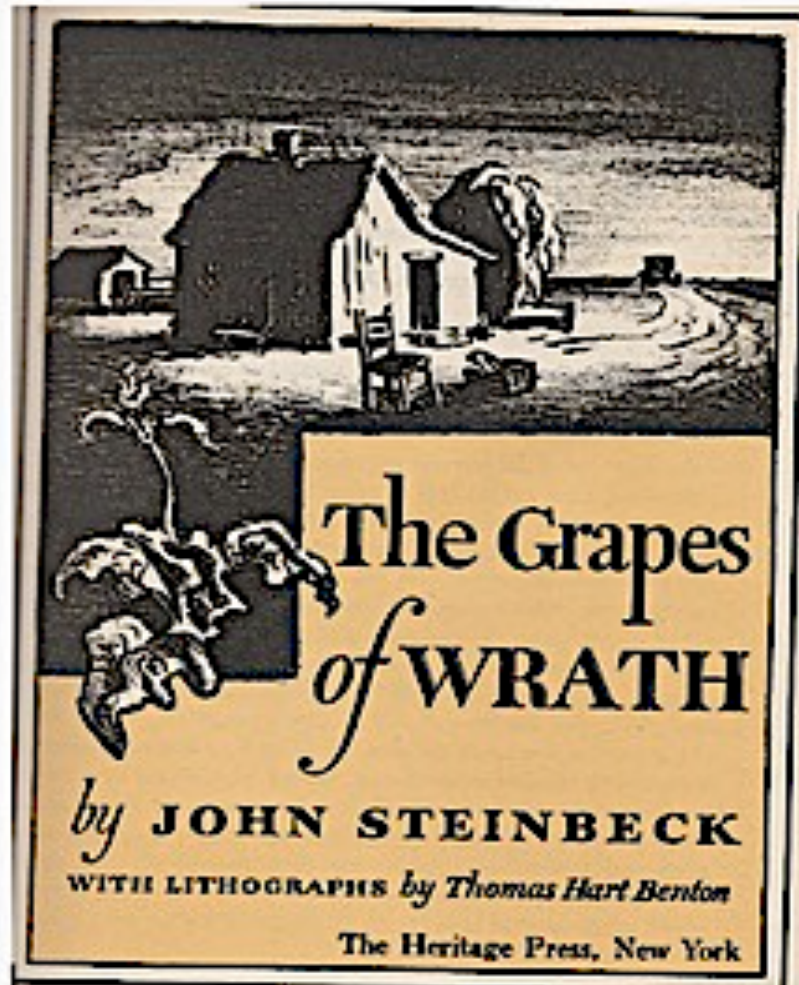
Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) and Charles Dicken's *A Christmas Carol* (1843) were both copiously illustrated throughout. Victorian novels were customarily illustrated until around World I. Around the 1840s, engravings of photographs began to be used in some novels and periodicals.

🍷 1811 🍷



The Wonderful Wizard of Oz (1900), by L. Frank Baum and illustrated by W.W. Denslow, was an instant blockbuster bestseller for both adults and children. It was such a sensation, two years later it was produced as a wildly successful Broadway play, then a 1939 Oscar winning-movie that became a classic.

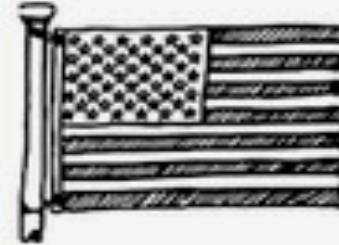
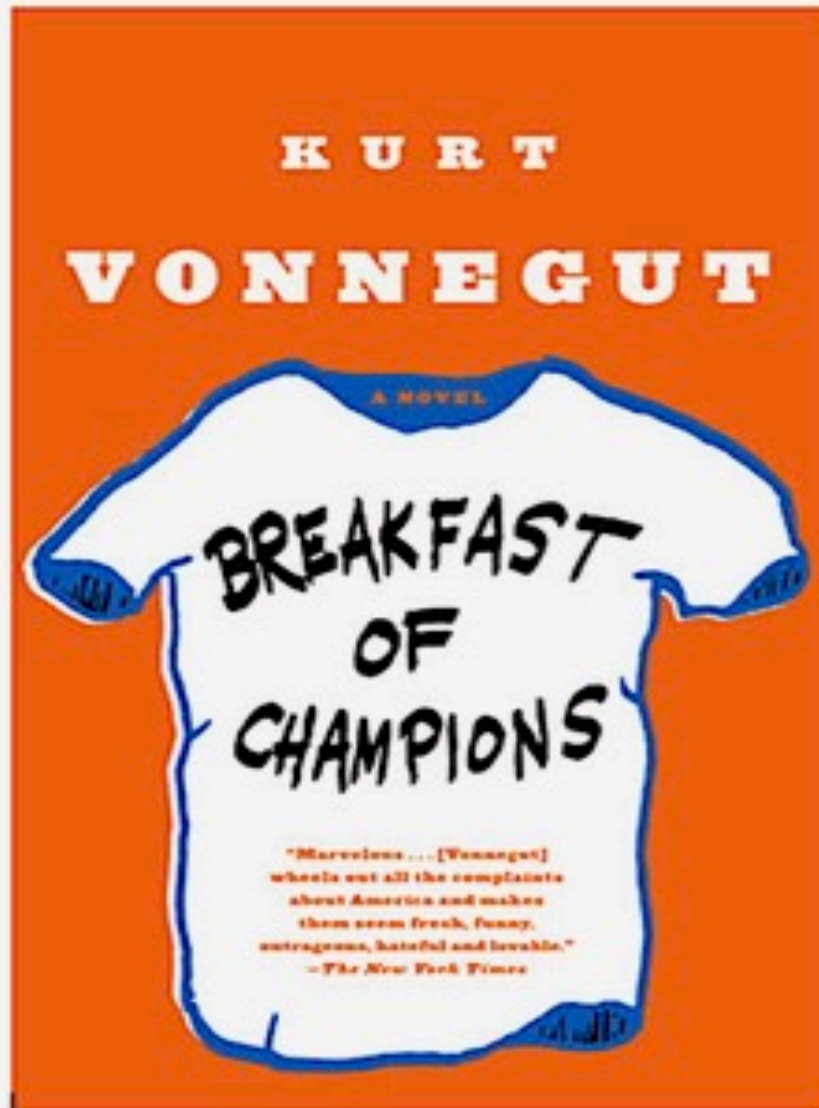
🍃 1900 🍃



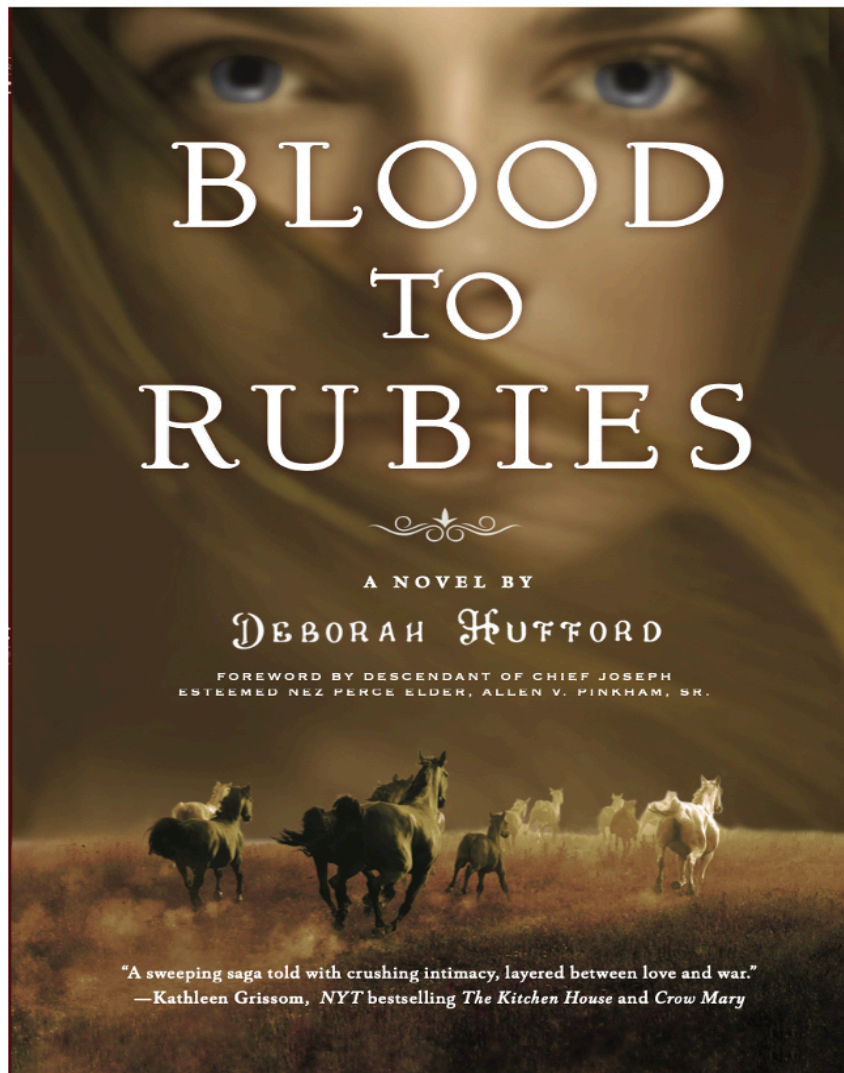
"Tom leaped silently. He wrenched the club free"

***The Grapes of Wrath*, by John Steinbeck, was published in 1939, quickly followed by a first edition illustrated by Thomas Hart Benton, no less. The collaboration of the famous writer and the famous artist, both known to champion "the common man" during the Depression, was a marriage made in publishing heaven. The illustrated edition was a huge bestseller. Steinbeck's book would win the Pulitzer and National Book Award. Steinbeck would also win the Nobel for Literature.**

🍷 1939 🍷



Kurt Vonnegut's 1973 novel, *Breakfast of Champions*, includes dozens of the author's drawings throughout. The story, about a wealthy Ohio businessman, Pontiac dealership owner and city leader who is slowly going insane, features themes of race relations, free will and suicide. Vonnegut was part of "The Beat Generation," whose ethos stood for rejection of mainstream values, and were anti-establishment, anti-war, anti-racist, and feminist. Thusly, his illustrations in the book, like his writing, are deceptively simple, ironic, cutting, and irreverent. The bottom illustration, for example, is Vonnegut's rendition of an asshole.



FIFTY THREE

A GOOD DAY TO DIE



WHEN LOOKING GLASS and other chiefs joined Joseph, the Nez Perce had five consolidated bands numbering about 750 people, including 200 warriors, and 3,000 horses. They headed east to the ancient Lolo Trail through the mountains, then over the Continental Divide into buffalo country. At the south fork of the Clearwater River, they pitched hundreds of tipis. Steep, rocky bluffs flanked the river, its bed grassy and strewn with large boulders.

Howard's scouts spotted the Nez Perce camp, and the general, now freshly supplied, forced a march to the Clearwater. They reached the bluffs

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***Blood to Rubies*, a debut historical novel by award-winning author Deborah Hufford, is published in September 2023 to high praise by *New York Times* bestselling historical novelists. The novel, about a young frontier photographer who goes West to escape the Civil War draft, befriends Chief Joseph and the Nez Perce and finds himself entangled between love and war. The book's use of 70 stunning archival images—many by actual frontier photographers of the 1800s—are lauded as an innovation in storytelling and a powerful marriage of prose and photography.**

