CLIC AS A HISTORICAL RESEARCH TOOL

This handout provides an overview of how our **CLiC Web App** can be used as an innovative historical research tool to cross-reference or verify historical details. CLiC can help writers save time and energy, as well as quickly immerse them in the particulars of their preferred period.

> " The time is out of joint; O' cursed spite! That ever I was born to set it right! "
>
> – *William Shakespeare, Hamlet, Act I, Scene 5.*

As a writer of historical fiction, you might often find yourself wondering if a specific phrase, idiom, or figure of speech would have existed in the cultural vernacular of your chosen era.

Say your novel is set in the early nineteenth century… you might need to check if the idiom 'bored to death' could have been uttered by your protagonist.

CLiC can tell you that the answer is yes, and that Lady Deadlock (of Charles Dickens's *Bleak House*) was partial to the phrase.

≡≡ CLiC v2.1.2   UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM   Arts & Humanities Research Council   University of Nottingham UK | CHINA | MALAYSIA

Showing 1 to 8 of 8 entries, Rel. Freq. 2.05 pm, from 4 books

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	Left	Node	Right	Book	In bk.
1	out of temper. My Lady Dedlock says she has been	"bored to death."	¶ Therefore my Lady Dedlock has come away from t	BH	
2	weather is extremely trying, and she really has been	bored to death	down at our place in Lincolnshire." ¶ CHAPTER III. A	BH	
3	ountry-houses where the great ones of the earth are	bored to death.	Here he is to-day, quiet at his table. An oyster	BH	
4	too fast, for even here my Lady Dedlock has been	bored to death.	Concert, assembly, opera, theatre, drive, nothing is i	BH	
5	surrounded by worshippers, and terribly liable to be	bored to death,	even while presiding at her own shrine. Mr. Tulkingh	BH	
6	Oxford man,' he returned; 'that is to say, I get	bored to death	down there, periodically - and I am on my way now	DC	
7	ntially alleged to thirty or forty friends that she was	bored to death.	All the old ladies with the burdens on their heads	DS	
8	ne last batch of books from Mudie's library, and half	bored to death.	Well, well! I know it has its good side. You	tombrown	

Maybe you need to know if your heroine can exclaim 'what the devil'?

CLiC can inform you that though the phrase would have been in use, it would have been predominantly used by men.

2a3a120				
	Left	Node	Right	Book	In bk.
1	Mr. Copperfield is at present in forty-four, sir.' ¶ 'And	what the devil	do you mean,' retorted Steerforth, 'by putting Mr. Cop	DC	
2	mirror, it certainly was not the earth or sky. ¶ 'Why,	what the devil	have we here, Sir!' cried the Major, stopping as this	DS	
3	nsolence, no foolery of state, no exaction of any sort!	What the devil!	are you man or mouse?' ¶ 'It would be strange if	DS	
4	They always went on agen me about the Devil. But	what the Devil	was I to do? I must put something into my	GE	
5	a rumble, and a fall of some light dry matter. ¶	'What the Devil	is it?' ¶ 'I don't know what it is, but I've	LD	
6	man from the beginning, and a gentleman to the end.	What the Devil!	A gentleman must be waited on, I hope? It's a	LD	
7	of money. I cannot say how much, or how little.' ¶	'What the Devil!'	he asked savagely.'Not after a week's grace to consi	LD	
8	Vhat's the good of Shakspeare, Pip? I never read him.	What the devil	is it all about, Pip? There's a lot of feet	MC	
9	ercy's husband. Jonas! ¶ Tom understood him to say,	what the devil	did he want; but it was not easy to make	MC	
10	skin. ¶ 'Serve him right,' said Jonas. 'I'm glad of it.	What the devil	are we stopping for? Are you going to spread him	MC	
11	father, was, in his old age; or than Chuffey is.	What the devil	do you mean,' he added, looking fiercely at John Wes	MC	

Perhaps you find yourself wondering the following…

• If your youngest character can refer to their parents as 'Mum and Dad'? (Yes to Mum, but no to Dad.)
• If your hero would have been termed a 'scientist'? (No, not in the early nineteenth century).
• If two girls would have dubbed each other 'best friends'? (Yes).
• If your character could refer to something as 'cool'? (Yes, but only to indicate temperature, standoffishness, or calmness, or in reference to money — as in 'a cool hundred a year' — but not as an expression of admiration or agreement.)

Or maybe you're looking for a source to learn more about a specific topic, but you're not sure which Victorian novel will have the answers…

CLiC has you covered:

• An early nineteenth-century novel that discusses the difficulties of courtship? George Eliot's *Middlemarch* is your best bet.
• A mid-Victorian novel that heavily features the railway? Turn to *Armadale* by Wilkie Collins.
• Or maybe one that contemplates gambling? CLiC recommends, George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*.
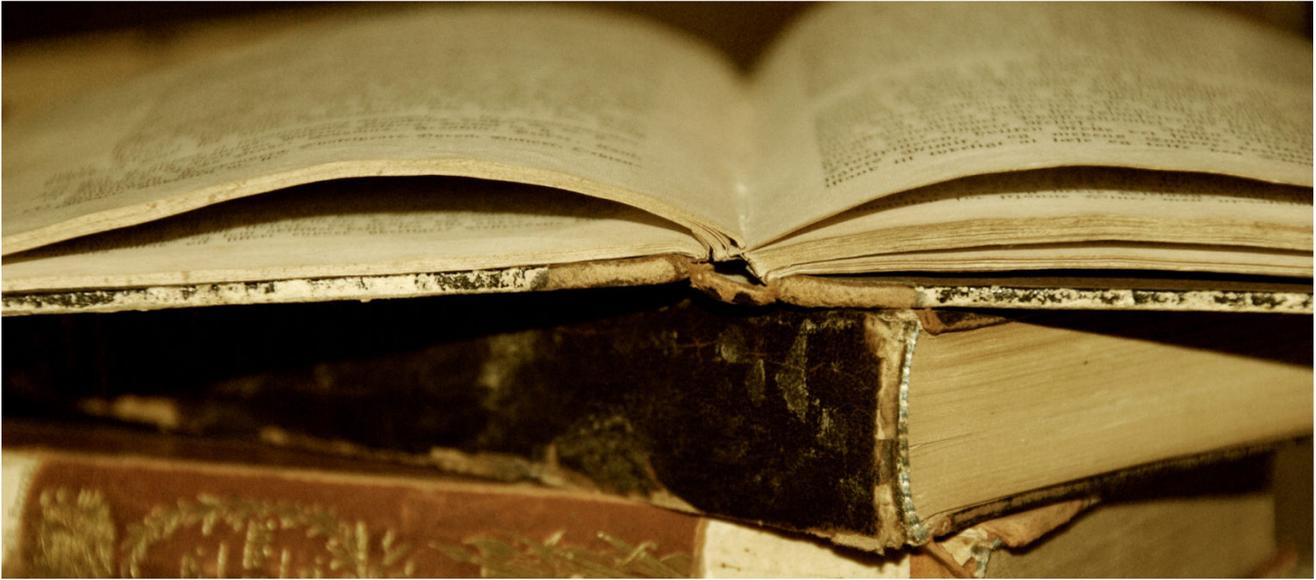
Timeless books by Lin Kristensen, licensed under Creative Commons.

BUILDING YOUR CORPORA

The following pages will give you an overview of the different periods that make up the long ninteenth century. This is followed by a sample of CLiC's texts grouped according to era.

Please note, this grouping is indicative of **when the story is set** not when it was penned by the author or when it was published.

If you would like to build your own corpus of texts yourself you can go to **clic.bham.ac.uk**, click 'concordance', and select these texts from the drop-down menu under 'search the corpora'.

If you would prefer to automatically select a sample of texts in a given era you can do so by using the following links:

-     works set in the Georgian era (1714-1837)
-     works set in the Regency era (1811-1820)
-     works set in the early nineteenth century (1800-1837)
-     works set in the mid-Victorian era (1837-1880)
-     works set in the fin de siècle (1880-1900)

1714-1837
GEORGIAN ERA

Named after the Hanoverian kings George I, George II, George III and George IV, the Georgian era was a period of rapid social and political change in which industrialisation began, the arts flourished, and the British empire expanded.

A fruit stall in Naples at Christmas, (1828) via Wikimedia Commons.

1811-1820
REGENCY ERA

A sub-period of the Georgian era in which Prince George acted as regent for his father, King George III, the regency era witnessed the Napoleonic Wars, the abolition of the slave trade, and the rise of the Romantic movement.

Women fashion in 1814. Hand colored wood engraving, published c. 1880.

1820-1837
EARLY 19THC

Another sub-period of the Georgian era spanning the years between the regency and Queen Victoria's reign. Watershed moments include the Reform Act of 1832, the chartist movement and the growth of the industrial revolution.
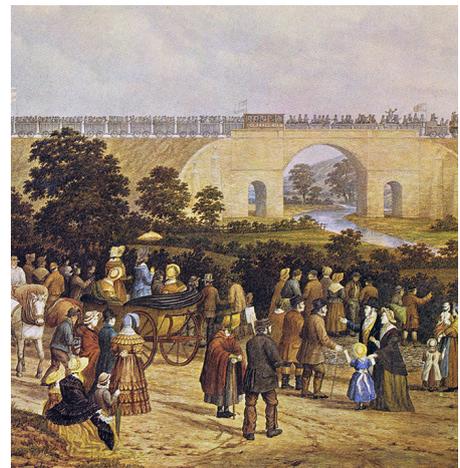
Opening of the Stockton and Darlington Railway in 1825 (1875) by John Dobbin, National Railway Museum via Wikimedia Commons.

1837-1901

VICTORIAN ERA

Queen Victoria's reign saw significant scientific and technological development, major economic growth, widespread political reform, and the rise of the middle-classes. With the industrial revolution in full swing, poverty, crime, and pollution grew exponentially.
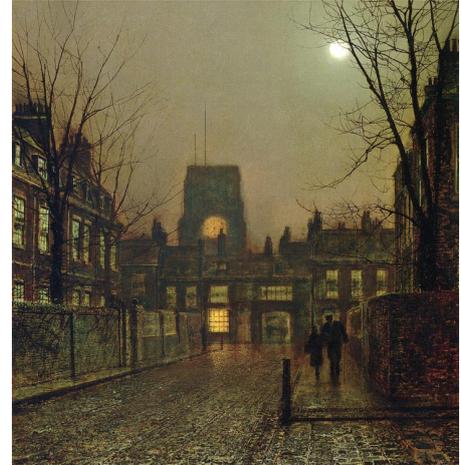
Old Chelsea (1893) by John Atkinson Grimshaw, via Wikimedia Commons.

1880-1900

FIN DE SIÈCLE

The fin de siècle (turn of the century) was a sub-period of the Victorian era, characterised by aestheticism, sexual and political experimentation, cultural decadence, and a fascination with the supernatural and the occult.
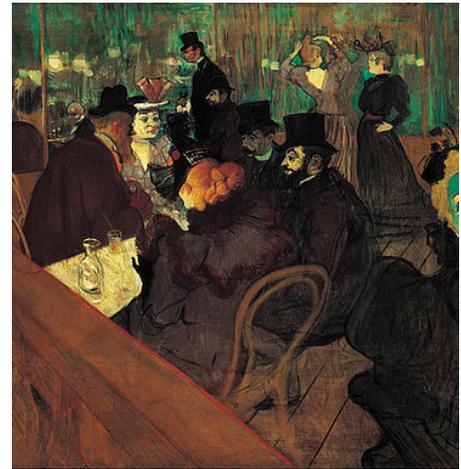
At the Moulin Rouge (1892) by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, via Wikimedia Commons.

1901-1914

EDWARDIAN ERA

Named after King Edward VII, the Edwardian era saw the rise of the suffragette movement, as well as the invention of the airplane, the automobile, and the wireless telegraph. Like the Victorian era, it was a period of sustained economic growth, socio-cultural change and political reform.

Paris Garden Party (1910), via Adobe Stock.

A SAMPLE OF OUR CORPORA (ORDERED BY DATE SET)

WORKS SET IN THE GEORGIAN ERA

SEARCH ALL TEXTS

Back-view watercolour of Jane Austen by her sister Cassandra Austen, via Wikimedia Commons.

1750 (approx.) | Stevenson, R. L. (1886). Kidnapped.

1750 (approx.) | Stevenson, R. L. (1883). Treasure Island.

1775 to 1793 | Dickens, C. (1859). A Tale of Two Cities.

1780 to 1802 | Brontë, E. (1847). Wuthering Heights.

1780 | Dickens, C. (1841). Barnaby Rudge.

1790 (approx.) | Shelley, M. W. (1818). Frankenstein.

1792 to 1797 | Austen, J. (1811). Sense and Sensibility.

1790 or early 1800s | Austen, J. (1815). Emma.

1798 | Austen, J. (1817). Northanger Abbey.

WORKS SET IN THE REGENCY ERA
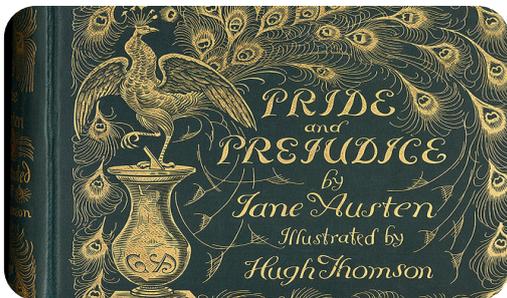
SEARCH ALL TEXTS

Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen (1894 edition), via Wikimedia Commons.

1795 to 1810 | Austen, J. (1813, January). Pride and Prejudice.

1800 (approx.) | Eliot, G. (1861). Silas Marner.

1800 to 1819 (approx.) | Brontë, C. (1847). Jane Eyre.

1804 to 1805 | Austen, J. (1871). Lady Susan.

1807 to 1809 | Austen, J. (1814). Mansfield Park.

1811 to 1812 | Brontë, C. (1849). Shirley.

1811 to 1820 | Austen, J. (1818). Persuasion.

1811 to 1820 | Thackeray, William M. (1847). Vanity Fair.

WORKS SET IN THE EARLY 19THC

SEARCH ALL TEXTS

1812 to 1838 | Dickens, C. (1849). David Copperfield.

1810 to 1840 | Dickens, C. (1861). Great Expectations.

1820 (approx.) | Dickens, C. (1839). Oliver Twist.

1820 (approx.) Dickens, C. (1841). The Old Curiosity Shop.

1820 (approx.) | Dickens, C. (1855). Little Dorrit.

1820 (approx.) | Disraeli, B. (1826). Vivian Grey.

1820 to 1832 (approx.) | Eliot, G. (1860). The Mill on the Floss.

1825 (approx.) | Dickens, C. (1839). Nicholas Nickleby.

1827 to 1828 | Dickens, C. (1837). The Pickwick Papers.

1827 to 1830 | Dickens, C. (1852). Bleak House.

1825 to 1835 (approx.) | Dickens, C. (1846). Dombey & Son.

1829 to 1832 | Eliot, G. (1871). Middlemarch.

1821 to 1847 | Brontë, A. (1848). The Tenant of Wildfell Hall.

1830 (approx.) | Dickens, C. (1843). Martin Chuzzlewit.

1830 (approx.) | Hughes, T. (1857). Tom Brown's Schooldays.

WORKS SET IN THE VICTORIAN ERA

SEARCH ALL TEXTS
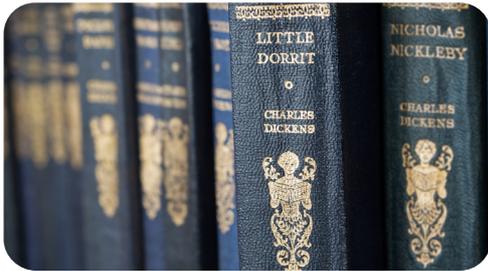
Close-up of antique books by Charles Dickens, via Adobe Stock.

1830 to 1840s | Brontë, C. (1857). The Professor.

1831 to 1851 | Collins, W. (1864). Armadale.

1840 to 1850 | Hardy, T. (1878). The Return of the Native.

1840 (approx.) | Brontë, C. (1853). Villette.

1840 (approx.) | Dickens, C. (1843). A Christmas Carol.

1840 (approx.) | Gaskell, E. C. (1848). Mary Barton.

1840 (approx.) | Gaskell, E. C. (1851). Cranford.

1840 (approx.) | Wells, H. G. (1897). The War of the Worlds.

1844 | Dickens, C. (1846). Pictures from Italy.

1845 (approx.) Dickens, C. (1845). Hard Times.

1848 to 1850 | Collins, W. (1868). The Moonstone.

1849 to 1850 | Collins, W. (1859). The Woman in White.

1850 (approx.) | Gaskell, E. C. (1855). North and South.

1855 to 1885 | Hardy, T. (1896). Jude the Obscure.

1857 | Braddon, M. E. (1862). Lady Audley's Secret.

1860 (approx.) | Dickens, C. (1865). Our Mutual Friend.

1865 (approx.) | Carroll, L. (1865). Alice in Wonderland.

1865 to 1866 | Eliot, G. (1876). Daniel Deronda.

1870 (approx.) Dickens, C. (1870). The Mystery of Edwin Drood.

1870 (approx.) | Hardy, T. (1892). Tess of the d'Urbervilles.

1870 (approx.) | James, H. (1881). The Portrait of a Lady.

1871 (approx.) | Carroll, L. (1871). Through the Looking-Glass.

WORKS SET IN THE FIN DE SIECLE

SEARCH ALL TEXTS

The Picture of Dorian Gray (1890) by Oscar Wilde as first published in Lippincott's Magazine, via The British Library.

1880-90 (approx.) | Wilde, O. (1890). The Picture of Dorian Gray.

1885 (approx.) | Stevenson, R. L. (1886). Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

1888 | Doyle, A. C. (1890). The Sign of the Four.

1890 (approx.) | Conrad, J. (1899). Heart of Darkness.

1890 (approx.) | James, H. (1897). What Maisie Knew.

1890 (approx.) | Stoker, B. (1897, May). Dracula.

1890 (approx.) | Wells, H. G. (1895). The Time Machine.

1892 (approx.) Gilman, C. P. (1892). The Yellow Wallpaper.

1899 | Chopin, K. (1899). The Awakening,

1899 | Doyle, A. C. (1901). The Hound of the Baskervilles.

RESEARCH ACTIVITY: CHECKING YOUR MANUSCRIPT FOR ANACHRONISMS

An anachronism is a chronological inconsistency: an entity, idea or expression that exists outside of the time in which it belongs. Often, a carelessly deployed idiom can derail an otherwise immersive read. Building up historical precision in smaller details does more than just maintain historical authenticity, it can often help support a writer's overarching story, by inspiring a new theme or plot point rooted in a forgotten aspect of the past.

From ahistorical hairstyles to curiously present-day parlance, anachronisms have the power to "jar" the reader and shake their suspension of disbelief. You can use anachronisms intentionally to create specific effects (you might be writing a story about time travel!). It's the unintentional ones that you want to avoid.

In storytelling, "suspension of disbelief" is the act of willingly accepting that which one knows to be imagined. It is an essential step on the path to enjoying any work of fiction.

As a genre, historical fiction must balance exactitude with clarity. Readers are liable to disengage if they feel as though you have been careless with historical facts or if they struggle to comprehend the world your characters inhabit.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Scan through your manuscript so far, and make a note of every phrase, descriptor or figure of speech that might be anachronistic. **CLiC** is particularly useful when it comes to detecting behavioural cultural, or linguistic anachronisms.
2. Armed with your potential anachronisms, you can employ the **CLiC Web App** as a cross-referencing tool by going to clic.bham.ac.uk.
3. Click 'concordance', and select your texts from the drop-down menu under 'search the corpora' (according to the time period in which your novel takes place).

Girl with a Pearl Earring and a Silver Camera. Digital mashup after Johannes Vermeer, by Mitchell Grafton. c. 2012.

TIP: *An anachronism could be a turn of phrase, a custom, a material, a piece of technology, a cultural debate, or a philosophical idea. When it comes to checking historical facts, leave no stone unturned.*

TIP: *Sometimes, writers deliberately use anachronisms to help their audience engage more readily with a historical period. While intentional anachronisms can create powerful textual effects too many can prevent readers from immersing themselves in your work.*

4. Select '*all text*' under the subsets option. If your anachronism is likely to occur in dialogue, you can select '*quotes*'. All texts in CLiC have been marked up so that it is possible to focus searches on the direct speech of the fictional characters, we refer to such text as 'quotes'.

5. Type your potential anachronism under '*search for terms*' and hit enter. An asterisk can be used as a wildcard – so *mum** would also find *mums,* and *best friend** would also find *best friends*. Make sure you have '*whole phrase*' selected.

What anachronisms did you detect in your manuscript? Alternately, what phrases or expressions — perhaps surprisingly — proved entirely in keeping with your chosen time period?

You can note down your findings in the boxes below, and, if you'd like, post them on Twitter under the hashtag **#CLiCCreative**, or by tagging us **@CLiC_fiction**.

POTENTIAL ANACHRONISM	CLIC RESEARCH FINDINGS