

[...] Here are a few of the biggest for the dysfunctional world of Westeros.

The War of the Roses

The 15th century battles fought for control of England are likely the best parallel, real-world event to *A Song of Ice and Fire*. The War of the Roses involved feuding between royal houses (one of which was named “Lancaster”); mentally unstable kings; and some pretty brutal murders. Some fans have gone as far as to create one-to-one comparisons between the historical players and their supposed fictional counterparts in Martin’s books. Martin himself has dismissed the notion: “I like to use history to flavor my fantasy, to add texture and verisimilitude, but simply rewriting history with the names changed has no appeal for me. I prefer to re-imagine it all, and take it in new and unexpected directions.” After all, there (probably) weren’t dragons in 15th century England. And, as Martin has also pointed out, there is a significant problem with historical fiction: “I know how the historical fiction is going to end! A story on the War of the Roses can only end one way!”

The Accursed Kings by Maurice Druon

Martin has called this 20th-century historical fiction series “the original game of thrones.” Depicting the French monarchy throughout the 14th century, Druon’s seven books (published between 1955 and 1977) have been adapted into two French miniseries [...]. “*The Accursed Kings* has it all: iron kings and strangled queens, battles and betrayals, lies and lust, deception, family rivalries, the curse of the Templars, babies switched at birth, she-wolves, sin and swords, the doom of a great dynasty and all of it (or most of it) straight from the pages of history,” Martin wrote for *The Guardian*.

Hadrian’s Wall

Also known as the Roman Wall, this 84-mile barricade, built by the emperor Hadrian in 122 A.D., ran east to west through northern Britain. It served as the model for the blockade, known simply as The Wall, that protects Westeros from the Wildings to the north in *A Song of Ice and Fire*. [...]

Two Scottish Massacres

The infamous Red Wedding is, according to Martin, based on two real-life Scottish events. In 1440, members of the rebellious Douglas clan were invited by King James II of Scotland to dine with him. As they ate, “[the king’s men] started pounding on a single drum. They brought out a covered plate and put it in front of the Earl and revealed it was the head of a black boar—the symbol of death.” The king then executed the Earl in the courtyard, and the incident became known as the Black Dinner. The other event, the Massacre of Glencoe, occurred in 1692. Thirty-eight members of Clan MacDonald were killed after they were invited to stay with Clan Campbell overnight; although the “rules of hospitality” dictated that the host should do no harm to their guests and supposedly applied, the feud between the two clans was strong enough for the promise to be broken.

Classic Science Fiction/Fantasy

Martin has named everyone from J.R.R. Tolkien to Isaac Asimov to H.P. Lovecraft as literary inspirations for his show. “It was all imaginative literature, or as my dad called it, ‘Weird Stuff,’” says Martin. “I never drew any sharp distinctions between science fiction and fantasy or horror. It was all good stuff.” [...]