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Decisions Make History

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It's inevitable! We all have to make decisions in life. Our parents decide for us when we're small, until we're capable of doing it ourselves. Every decision is followed by consequences, and we have to live with them; good or bad, only time will tell. Sometimes the outcomes of a decision can manifest themselves over several years, or decades or even centuries.

In my historical novel *Fateful Decisions*, set between 1915 and 1946, the protagonist, Rachel Williams, has to decide to marry either Fred Johnson or Rudy Holzmann after both propose to her. Based on her great aunt's advice, she chooses Fred Johnson, even though Rudy saved her life on the *Lusitania*. Her decision has good and bad consequences for her family and strangers alike, as their lives become entangled in world events, including World War II. Crime too affects them. After Fred's tragic death, Rachel falls in love again and almost remarries. A new chain of events is set off with suicide as well as assault and kidnap – just some of the misfortunes that impact Rachel. She discovers later just how much all that happens to her was directly related to her decision she made to marry Fred. At the end of the novel, while weighing the consequences of that decision, Rachel asks herself if she married the right man.

We don't generally think about this, but our lives are affected by those who came before us. History has shown that rulers like Julius Caesar, Alexander the Great and William the Conqueror had tremendous impacts on the nations they decided to conquer and the dynasties they founded. Not only that, the cultural exchanges between the conquered and the conquerors helped create a new blend of cultures as various groups of people mingled.

Henry VIII's divorce from Catherine of Aragon in order to marry Anne Boleyn had a tremendous impact on world history. Because of his decision, he no longer recognized the Pope as Head of the Church in England, breaking away from Rome and founding the Anglican Church. Numerous people died due to the religious turmoil that ensued. Ironically, his daughter, Elizabeth I, at one time declared illegitimate by Henry after he had her mother beheaded, became one of the greatest queens in British history. She found a compromise that eventually eased the religious turmoil started by her father and continued by her older half-sister Queen 'Bloody' Mary. Historians and scholars credit Elizabeth I with defeating the Spanish Armada, which led to England becoming a superpower for the next five centuries. England colonised much of the known world and parts of the New World; Canada, Australia and New Zealand. English became a global language used for trade and commerce, and still is today. Interesting points to consider: if not for Henry VIII's decision, society today could be very different and we might even be speaking Spanish. Who knows what might've been!

What about a crime that impacted world history? The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand

and his wife, Sophie, in 1914, led to the outbreak of World War I and, arguably, World War II two decades later. None of that would have happened if Gavrilo Princip, the assassin, hadn't fired. One man's decision to pull that trigger exacerbated an already volatile situation in the Balkans and led to two of the bloodiest wars in history – changing borders and breaking up ancient empires, not to mention costing millions of innocent lives.

Many morals can be drawn from historical events and from historical novels. Our decisions shouldn't be taken lightly. They impact our lives, the lives of others and the future. Decisions make history.