1. **Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:1**

All of Israel has a share in the world to come, as it is said “All your people also shall be righteous, forever they shall inherit the land” (Isaiah 60:21). And these do not have a share in the world to come: one who says there is no resurrection of the dead, one who says the Torah is not from heaven, and an *apikoros*. Rabbi Akiva says: also one who reads the external books [...]”

2. **Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 100b**

“R’ Akiva says even one who reads the external books etc.” A tanna taught, books of the tzdukim. Rav Yosef said, it is also forbidden to read the book of Ben Sira.

3. **Rashi on Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 100b**

Rav Yosef said also the book of Ben Sira. Because there is nonsense there which leads to *bitul Torah*. 
חסק פור אזור שגורר

2. Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 100b

3. Rashi on Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 100b
External books. They said they were the books of the heretics (Sanhedrin 100b) and so is the book of Ben Sira. He was a man who wrote books containing foolishness like physiognomy, they have no reason and are useless except to waste one’s time with vain matters, like the books that one finds among the Arabs, such as books of history, legends of kings, genealogies of the Arabs, and books of music and the like which have no wisdom or physical (material?) use but are merely a waste of time.
4. Maimonides Commentary on the Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:1
5. **Shulhan Arukh Orah Hayim, Hilkhhot Shabbat 307:16**

Poetry and fables about profane matters and writings of desire like *Sefer Imanuel* as well as books of wars, it is forbidden to read them on the Sabbath. Even during the week, they are prohibited because [of the injunction against sitting in] “the seat of scoffers” (Psalms 1:1). And he [who reads these] transgresses “do not turn to idols [or make molten gods for yourselves]” (Lev. 19:4), do not remove God from your thoughts. And furthermore with regard to writings of desire, it is [the transgression of] arousing the evil inclination. And those who write, copy, and, needless to say, print these [works] cause the multitudes to sin.

| Meli'ot omshilim shel Sh'hit hol'ei derei hashkaron sefer emanuel va-ezer melhomot avor lenikhot bem bashat va-behol asor meshom moshe levim ovur meshom ale tefon al ha'ilim le a tafon al mi'stvenem orbir hashkan ivi meshom megure yizur huru mi shihiyot mi sh'heitik v'az Yo'ir lome ha'medpis ma'tzayim at ha'revim. |

6. **Rama Orah Hayim, Hilkhhot Shabbat 307:16**

It is necessary to be more precise about what it is forbidden to read from frivolous talk and histories of wars. It is specifically [prohibited to read them] if they are written in the vernacular, but if they are written in the Holy Tongue, it is allowed (thus it appears to me from the language of Tosafot on the chapter כל ככתביה and thus the custom is to be lenient on this).

| Haga: norah le'dke'kon ha'asor lekorot beshita hol'ei asor melhomot avi dono ba'mohim bleshon leye avel bleshon hakdosh sheti vok nora le'melshon shchutah hakaposet perk le'utei vok noko le'hukla ba'hah. |
5. Shulhan Arukh Orah Hayim, Hilkhot Shabbat 307:16

6. Rama Orah Hayim, Hilkhot Shabbat 307:16
Regarding the books of Homer and a book of idolatry, and the other books of heretics, with respect to all of them [the ruling] is specifically about one who reads in them regularly, but if they are read irregularly, the believer should not fear reading them in order to know how to answer heretics; and especially in the bathroom it is appropriate for a Torah scholar to browse in them. However, lustful writings are forbidden there too.
Tiferet Yisrael on Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:1
Israel Lipschitz, Danzig (1782-1860)
David Gans (1541-1613), Tzemach David

THE BENEFITS OF STUDYING WORLD HISTORY

I see in advance that many will speak out against me, condemn me, and consider me sinful because I have taken material from non-Jewish writers. Moreover, Part Two of my book contains tales of war and similar events which in their eyes have no religious value. At the very least, they will regard it as forbidden reading on the Sabbath. However, I shall not make lengthy excuses since many of the great men of Israel can serve as my defense. For all the religious philosophers already took from the works of Aristotle and from the other philosophers what was correct and true; they ate the kernel and threw away the husk. In our own time, as well, there have been Jewish writers who have transmitted to us information concerning historical events which they took from non-Jewish sources: for example, Abraham Zacuto in his Book of Genealogies, Joseph ha-Kohen in his Chronicles of the Kings of France and the Ottoman Empire, Abraham Farissol in his Ways of the World, and others. And if the objection be to the secular contents of Part Two, note well what the illustrious Rabbi Moses Isserles, model of piety for our time, wrote in his glosses on The Prepared Table, in the section “Way of Life,” 307a: “People who derive enjoyment from reports and tales of historical events are permitted to relate them on the Sabbath as on weekdays.” Further on, in Paragraph 16, he wrote: “The prohibition against reading about profane matters and tales of wars, if taken precisely, refers only to works written in other languages, but in the holy tongue it is permitted. Thus it appears to me from the Tosafot to Chapter ‘All the Holy Writings’ in the Talmud, and thus it has been the custom to be lenient in this matter.”

I further contend that Scripture has allowed us to search in non-Jewish books for accounts of events which can be of some use to us. Thus it is written at the end of the Scroll of Esther: “And the full account of the greatness of Mordecai . . . . is it not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia?” Likewise in Jeremiah 18 it is written: “Ask ye now among the nations. . . .” Also in the weekly portion, Ve’ethanan, Scripture says: “For ask now of the days past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth . . .” (Deut. 4:32). Therefore, since many pious men, who desire to know the events of history, have urged me to write them down, I have written Part Two of my book for this generation, weary of the Exile. I hope to bring joy to householders who earn their bread in sorrow and by the sweat of their brow, so that after their toil and effort they may be able to rest from their labors by reading of matters old and new.

I have perceived many benefits to be derived from the accounts contained in this book:

1. The incidents related here give abundant evidence of Divine Providence watching over the people of Israel. For great and mighty kings conquered other states and kingdoms—destroyed, uprooted, and annihilated them so that not even their memory remained. But God, the Blessed and Exalted, protected us and did not let us be devoured by them. He always fulfilled His promise to defend us. Consider what happened when many and great wars arose on account of differences in religion, or even merely on account of differences in customs. As is known, the difference between the Papal party and the Lutheran one is only concerned with practices, yet they have been fighting each other these last fifty years and have killed more than a million Christians. But for all that, “Against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog whet his tongue” (Ex. 117). Praiseworthy is the Lord who has bestowed His wondrous love upon us.

2. A person should beware, if he rise to greatness and power, that he be humble, contrite, and beloved by the people. He should not trust in his power and might, thinking: “My hand is raised; who is lord over me?” Nor should he doubt divine punishment, for although there was never a power like that of the Roman Empire, yet we find that more than fifty emperors were slain by the sword, a number were poisoned, and some were driven to suicide. Others were blinded and their eyes poked out; still others had their noses chopped off, were flayed, drowned, or eaten by vermin. All such you will find written in this book with regard to each of them.