**4**

**NOVEL**

The novel is defined as a ‘fictitious narrative’ with a closely knit plot of some intricacy. The characters in a novel approach human reality. The plot may be subordinated to characters or characters to the plot, but there is some kind of narrative action; and even if the limits of space and time covered are small, there is a sweep or sense of bigness about a novel to differentiate it from a tale of a short story.

It is a product of the writer’s imagination so it is an imaginative work of art which recreates the truth of human experience. This means that it recreates everyday life as it is lived in what is known as verisimilitude. This does not mean that novelists report life incidents in a verbatim form. What they do is to choose some incidents, experiences or personalities and compose their stories around such experiences or personalities. They may choose realistic towns or communities but the characters and greater part of the incidents are fictitious. However, some scholars consider biographies as forms of novel but we may concern ourselves with the general definition of the novel as an imaginary art.

The novel is a genre of the prose narrative of literature. This means that when you are reading a novel, it is as if someone is narrating the story to you. Sometimes, minimal dialogues are interjected in the story but not like in drama where the entire story is told in dialogue. Narration therefore distinguishes the novel from other genres of literature. However, some types of poems are presented in narrative forms but other elements of the novel distinguish it from such poems. Generally, the novel is seen as a form of entertainment but it is pragmatic. It serves as a guide for man to see how to live wholly as a man. The novel teaches more than theories and sermons on the notion of right and wrong. The novel presents the truth of life which is not absolute. In life there is right and wrong, good and bad every time and everywhere. However, what is wrong or bad in a particular situation may be right or good in another situation.

The novel therefore presents people who live normally, acting and reacting to issues as circumstances demand. All aspects of human beings are explored in the novel and from that the reader gains an insight into various aspects of life and learns from the experiences of the characters.

Scholars trace the origin of the novel to the oral tradition of storytelling of the English people which were presented in the form of fairy tales, jokes and little funny stories used for illustration in a conversation. This is why they link the origin of the novel to Geoffrey Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales (1386–1400) which is a collection of lifelike stories with realist characters, with the narrators, representing different people with different backgrounds, professions, tastes and social statuses.

Another important point in favour of the*Canterbury Tales*is its plot presentation, character sketches, and vivid description of incidents and setting which imbues it with the element of verisimilitude so one could be justified to say that it the precursor of the English novel, but the snag is that it is presented in verse and not prose. Another important factor in the novel is that though it is fiction, it is presented in a realistic manner and presents a slice of life known as verisimilitude. This means that events are presented in a way that it will look like a real-life story; factual account but they are not. In the novel we extend our sympathies.

In a novel, the plot involves the quest or a mission the knight who fights to prove himself in a personal task and problem he accepted. The popular ones are presented in plots that involved the separation and reunification of lovers in the course of adventures that are designed to prove their love and value.

The story in the novel is not usually presented in a chronological order of their occurrence. This artistic reorganisation of this story by the author to suit his purpose is what we call plot. This means that you may find a novel which does not begin at the chronological beginning of events but in the end or in the middle. The story then moves forwards or backwards in time and space depending on the writer’s purpose or style. The writer uses foreshadowing or flashbacks to plot the story to make it interesting and to create suspense. Plot therefore is the plan of action, the arrangement or order of events in a novel.

A good novel is made up of credibility and craft of the work. Credibility in the novel dictates that it should recreate incidents and events that are plausible and possible. The events created in the novel should be as close to reality as possible so the reader can identify with the characters and also empathise with them. Craft in the novel is the ability of the writer to balance the various elements that make up the story together in a coherent whole that makes it an interesting work. Try to understand the terms explained below.

**Theme** is the controlling idea behind the story which the reader gets consciously or unconsciously as he or she reads the novel. Usually, the story is built around the theme. The theme could be literal or symbolic.

**Setting** refers to the place and time the events of the story took place. The place could be fictitious or real. Setting could be symbolic or literal which means that there could be specific mention of known or unknown places, or the setting may not be mentioned specifically. Setting is the general environment of the work. Time setting refers to the period, year, or time the events took place. Setting helps to give an element of authenticity to the story.

**Characterisation** refers to the ability of the novelist to create human beings in plausible human relationships in the novel. These human beings are called characters. The characters include the protagonist, antagonist, dynamic, static, and archetypal. Usually, the story revolves around the protagonist who is the major character. The antagonist is the character or thing that works against the protagonist. It may come in the form of one of the characters, conflict, flaws in his character or other qualities. These forces act against him and may eventually destroy him. A dynamic character is influenced by personal experience and grows from innocence to maturity by coming to terms with issues as realisation dawns on him/her. The static character does not grow in the course of the story but remains the same from the beginning to the end. The archetypal character conventionally overcomes all obstacles and still survives.

It is however important to recall that in characterisation, the author takes a bit from different people in an art and technique that synthesises the various traits of living people, combines them in a single character whose existence is fictitious but whose traits are an agglomeration of various people. Generally, the growth of a character in a novel is usually from innocence to maturity, from egoism to experience, from ignorance to self-knowledge.

**Verisimilitude** refers to the subject matter in a novel is drawn from man and his environment, from life as it is lived by human beings. The novel does not present an aspect of man like in poetry but man in his entirety, his hopes, aspirations, ambitions, disappointments, successes, and failures. The novelist treats man as “…. a complete whole and talk of an aspect as the parson emphasises the soul and the philosopher the intellect” (Enright and De Chickera, 1962, 65). It is true that the novel presents life but it is still a fictional work, a product of the writer’s imagination but not concrete reality so the reality presented in the novel is seen as a slice of life which is called verisimilitude.

The English novel is said to have appeared in the Romantic period with the Romantic novel, but it presents incidents that are not realistic and human characters that are manipulated by the supernatural forces thereby directing and controlling human fate. This genre of the novel appeared when Romantic poetry flourished so it is possible that the novelists may have been influenced by the Romantic poets’ passion for nature and rustic life. However, in the novel, the passion was directed towards romance and unrealistic incidents that tend towards the melodramatic and lacks the element of verisimilitude which is a vital aspect of the novel. The word romance is a term that is traced to the beginning of the 13th and 14th century to denote a form of story that was initially derived or adapted from Roman and Greek historians. The early form of this genre is known as Arthurian romance which focused on a single hero who is involved in “a double course of episodes”. The Arthurian romance generally, presents the exploits of a knight who strives to prove both his prowess as an independent knight and his readiness to function as a perfect courtier under King Arthur.

The Gothic novel presents a story that combines elements of horror and romance in the plot and was said to have originated with Horace Walpole’s The Castle of Otranto (1764). In allegory the story is presented through the manipulation of characters, actions and setting to convey a double meaning in a way that the literal meaning as well as an underlying or deeper meaning is communicated to the reader. This helps us to understand an aspect of human life that we would have missed if we did not read the novel which is an extension of life. When we empathise with others, we also understand them. The novel presents the closest imitation of life because of empathy and sympathy in it whereby the readers identify themselves with the characters. The novel is a fictitious artistic account that is the product of the writer’s imagination and is presented in a narrative form.

Novel means new. In fact, it is the latest arrival of the literary genres. It is a literary medium that attempts to mirror the language of everyday speech. It is distinguished from poetry by its use of unmetered, unrhymed language consisting of logically related sentences. Prose is usually grouped into paragraphs that form a cohesive whole such as an essay or a novel. Fictions are imagined or invented stories. Thus, the events presented did not occur in real life, although they may be real to life, because all literary work should depict life of various types.

We often talk about a book written in prose style or continuous form. Essays and novels fall under prose. The prose could be fiction or non-fiction. Fictions are imagined or invented stories. Thus, the events presented did not occur in real life, although they may be real to life, because all literary work should depict life of various types. They include fables common in Indian literature. In George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, where the characters, mainly animals are made to talk, act, and behave like human beings. Allegories are like fables, but whose characters represent ideas, such as love, hope, meekness and the like, as is seen in John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. Also included in the class of prose are parables, romance, and short stories. Non-fiction prose is true-to-life stories. They include biography, autobiography, travels and adventures and the essay.

**FEATURES OF NOVEL AS A PROSE TEXT**

**1. Prose is a literary work of the writer's imagination.**

It recounts the 'writer's life experience in an imaginative manner. When prose recounts only the artist's actual life experiences, it becomes, autobiographical, when it presents historical facts in an imaginative, but not necessarily an accurate manner, it becomes historical literature. When it is restricted to the record of the life of another person by the writer, it is biographical. If the characters in the story go from one adventure to another, it is picturesque or episodic.

**2. Prose work is dramatic.**

The writer creates a real or imaginary world and presents actions and reactions to this world in form of dialogues, conversations, symbols (concrete objects used to represent serious ideas), images (a series of concrete objects represent ideas, one following the other in the story), and vivid descriptions.

**3. Prose works are centred on narration.**

By this we mean recounting events as they occur in spatial or chronological order. In doing this, the writer packs the narration full of sensation, emotion, conflicting situations, sources of happiness, sadness, and different responses to life situations.

4. Prose works combine description, argumentation, exposition, compare and contrast, cause and effect, classification, and other rhetorical forms to make the story line vivid and the message to come out as clearly as possible.

5. Prose works are largely to render a message or messages. While we cannot rule out art for art sake, that is, writing to display sophisticated work of art, most prose works are presented to pass to the readers important messages regarding life in general, political, socio-economic life of a community, people or a nation, historical consequences of the action of some people on other groups, and so on.

**NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES**

The term ‘narrative’ refers to the telling of a series of events, real or invented. A narration may be either a simple narrative, in which the events are recounted as chronologically, or a narrative with a plot, in which the account is given in a style reflecting the author’s artistic concept of the story. Narration is sometimes used as a synonym for ‘storyline’. The recounting of scary stories around a campfire is a form of narration. The term ‘narrative’ is used as an adjective in the sense ‘method of narration’, and ‘narrative technique’ usually refers to the way the author structures and presents his or her story. Narratives range from the shortest accounts of events, as in Julius Caesar’s remark, ‘I came, I saw, I conquered’ to the longest historical works, as in Edward Gibbon’s “ The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire’, as well as diaries, travelogues, novels, ballads, epics short stories and other fictional forms.

The term narrative refers to:

1. The process of telling or recounting, in any medium, one or more actual and fictional events.
2. The ‘content’ of the narration, the story told.

3. The plot, that is, the story regarded under the aspect of cause.

4. The total form in which the story is told.

5. An explanation of a state of affairs by means of a story. In common use, however, narrative easily replaces the term story as used by many writers.

The emergence of the writing tradition led to the changes in the nature or form of prose narratives (from oral to written). The techniques of storytelling changed from oral to the adoption of new traditions that suited the new tradition. Scholars have worked on the new techniques adopted in written novels and they have been able to come up with the following narrative techniques which include plain narrative, letter, conversation, interior monologue, or stream of consciousness. Plain narrative is broken into two different categories by other authors.

These categories are: (i) First person narration**,** and (ii) Omniscient narration

**i. First person narration**: This is the nearest to the oral narration of a folktale. It gives the impression of authenticity, because the narrator, who is usually an eyewitness, gives first-hand information. The eyewitness may be the observer and not the protagonist. This gives room for the observer to pass judgment on the actions in the novel, including that of the protagonist. This would not have been possible if the protagonist is also the narrator. Let's now go to the second aspect of plain narrative technique.

**ii. OMNISCIENT NARRATION**

The writer, who adopts this technique, frees narration from the limitation of time and space. The narrator may or may not be a commentator. Apart from telling the story, the narrator stops over at various points to pass moral comments or to try to guide the reader in his interpretation of the episode. At other times, the narrator of the story tells the story without stopping to moralize or make comments. In this way the story is presented as it is. Readers are left to make their own deductions, to read between the lines or to take hints from characters. The narrator not only describes the outward behaviour and actions of his characters, but also their thoughts and feelings. The disadvantage of this kind of presentation is that the writer may find it difficult to write in different styles. An example is Mariama Ba's *So Long a Letter*.

**CONVERSATIONAL TECHNIQUE**

Many creative writers use conversational techniques in their novels. The successful novelists have a good ear to catch and imitate the speech habits and voices of people in conversation. Interior monologue or stream of consciousness is the technique which is based on the assumption that some of the most important activities of the human mind take place below the level of consciousness. They feel that the traditional method of telling a story in chronological order, and showing human characters as though they were reasoning, conscious beings and no more, give a picture of life that is incomplete and superficial. Thus, the novelist may invite the readers to enter the mind of his characters and share their streams of consciousness and feel the 'incessant shower of innumerable atoms', almost indeed to become the characters.

**COHERENCE AND UNITY IN PROSE WORKS**

Another way a prose work can be looked at is from the way coherence and unity is achieved. The technique of a good prose writer includes the ability to organize the prose work in a clear-cut fashion that has a beginning, middle, a climax, and an end. Of course, flashback is possible, in which the end comes to the beginning before the proper beginning of the prose work. Prose works are generally done in such a way that they give coherence, continuity, and wholeness.

**VARIETY OF RHETORICAL FORMS**

Prose works should contain a variety of rhetorical forms such as dialogues, conversations, monologues, explanation or exposition, argumentation, cause and effect, and so on. The ability to use the different rhetorical forms that suit the particular event, character or situation and setting is a mark of great craftsmanship of the writer. A combination of rhetorical forms knits the prose together and brings the message out vividly.

**DIFFERENT LEVELS OF LANGUAGE USE**

Prose work blends a variety of language forms such as Standard English, Pidgin English, non-standard English, colloquial, and slang expressions. The use of these varieties of English depends on the characters, the level of education of such characters, and the nature of the interaction going on. You may go through novels at your disposal and find varieties of English used in them. For example, with varieties of language use, Achebe and Raja Rao were able to bring the real lives and communities into their novels.

In the midst of different characters playing out different roles in a novel, the author reserves the right to interrupt narrations, conversations, dialogues, and presentations, being done in the novel to address the reader directly. If you go through any prose work or if you have been reading them, you will find a lot of examples of this. Most writers often use a mixture of techniques in writing. Their choice of any of the techniques is controlled by suitability to the aspect of the novel, relevance to the purpose of the novel and meeting the demand and the intention of the author at a given time or stage of the novel.

The writer manipulates language in a way that animals, ideas, and abstract nouns as characters could speak and act as humans while one subject is discussed under the guise of another. It is used mostly in satires, and a good example is George Orwell’s Animal Farm, which uses the animals’ revolt against their owner to present a satirical attack on the Russian communist system. Orwell uses animals to portray the injustice and double standard which reflect the insincerity of the communist system of government.

The development of the novel is hinged on the media that enhanced its circulation to as many readers as possible. Although the novel is seen as the counterpart of prose narratives in the traditional society, it is much longer than the folktale and other forms of oral narratives, or various forms of early documented fiction in prose or verse.

Literacy is an important factor in the development of the novel. As more people became literate in the 14th and 15th century more people joined in the reading of prose fiction. More women of wealthier households were among the literate class of this period and gradually literacy spread among the urban populations of Europe and increasing the number of literate people and the readership of prose fiction. Another factor that influenced the increase in readership of prose fiction was the Protestant Reformation which enkindled propaganda and press wars that lasted into the 18th century.

Before the invention of paper, the verse epics were presented in parchment and their owners recited them on festive occasions. The parchment was prestigious but was too expensive to be used for stories that one would read for leisure. Consequently, only libraries and a few wealthy individuals could afford them. The invention of paper made books cheaper and available to a wider audience and an individual could buy a book exclusively for him or herself read it as many times as possible without going to borrow from the library.

Many novels of the Victorian period were published in serial form in journals. Many of the novels made their debut in such journals as chapters or sections appeared in each edition of the journals so like modern soap opera, readers eagerly awaited the appearance of the unfolding and conclusion stories of novels. This helped to sustain the reader’s interest in such novels and increased the eagerness of readers to see each new appearance of the novel and the introduction of some new element in the plot twist or a new character.

The circulating libraries contributed immensely to the rise of the novel. The libraries were established in Britain in the 18th century with a cheap and affordable subscription rate. They stocked wide varieties of novels in different genres to cater for the reader’s interest.

Initially, the novel developed as aristocratic entertainment but as the spread of the novel increased, its readers included almost all classes as the scope of readership widened and the reading habits differed as more people irrespective of class tried “to follow fashions” by reading more books. Novels were read for leisure mostly by women who were left on their own a greater part of the time since “most men led full and busy lives and were hardly at home for most of the day, weeks or even months depending on their profession” (Ezeigbo, 1998). The women therefore spent their leisure reading voraciously since they could not be part of in their husbands’ leisure activities.

The emergence of the prose fiction heightened the reader’s interest in secular subjects and in turn influenced the development of the novel. This is against the medieval practice whereby most literate people in Britain read the Bible and other books for spiritual growth at their leisure. The industrial revolution brought with it economic and social transformation which increased interest in secular issues presented as articles in journals or in books.

The invention of printing complemented the invention of the paper in the acceleration of the growth of the novel. Printing aided the creation of a medium of comparatively cheap entertainment and knowledge through the chapbooks which appeared in the 17th and 18th century. The chapbooks presented a more elegant production known as the belles letters, a popular genre that transformed into an amalgamation of the poetry and fiction genres of literature which gained popularity in late 18th century, but the genres were separated in later centuries.

A few major English novelists are introduced for your reference.

Daniel Defoe

Frances Burney

Henry Fielding

Tobias George Smollett

Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* which is generally accepted as the first English novel. However, there are other novels that were written at about the same time, but Defoe seemed to be luckier than others and was projected more than his contemporaries. Defoe was a literary artist and a journalist who is perceived to be one of the greatest journalists of his time. Defoe as the son of a butcher was not born or raised as a gentleman but he became a gentleman and subsequently, he changed his name from Foe to Defoe and bought a coach with his coat of arms on its door to suit his elevation to a higher class. He was a prolific writer with over three hundred and seventy (370) known publications that he had the ability to write on almost any topic.

Frances Burney (1752 -1840) also known as Fanny Burney was an English novelist, diarist and playwright, self-educated, who started her writing career at the age of ten with what she referred to as “scribblings”. She got married to a French exile, General Alexandre D'Arblay, and became Madame D’Arblay. Her long writing career and travels took her to France but she finally settled in Bath, England, where she died on 6, January 1840.

Henry Fielding is one of the forerunners of the English novel with the publication of the novel Joseph Andrews in 1742. He was born in 1707 into an aristocratic family and educated at Eton and later in Poland. He started his writing career as a playwright before writing novels. His novels include epic of the nation in Tom Jones; and comic epic in Joseph Andrews the popular Moll Flanders.

Tobias George Smollett (1721 – 1771) was a medical doctor, a poet, a playwright, and a novelist. He was born in Scotland and his father was a judge and landowner. Tobias was educated at the University of Glasgow where he qualified as a surgeon but his medical career came secondary to his literary ambitions. The novels that popularised him were his picaresque novels like The Adventures of Roderick (1748) and The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle (1751), which influenced later novelists such as Charles Dickens.

Tobias George Smollett (1721 – 1771) was a medical doctor, a poet, a playwright and a novelist. He was born in Scotland and his father was a judge and land-owner. Tobias was educated at the University of Glasgow where he qualified as a surgeon but his medical career came secondary to his literary ambitions. The novels that popularised him were his picaresque novels like The Adventures of Roderick (1748) and The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle (1751), which influenced later novelists such as Charles Dickens.

**LEGITIMACY OF THE NOVEL**

The authority and the thing that makes it a unique genre of Literature is what we refer to as the legitimacy of the novel. Novel like every other literary genre is made up of form and content. Content is the theme, the central idea which the writer explores in the novel generally known as the theme. Theme is explicated through the interpersonal relationships of the characters. To a large extent the success of a novel depends on the liveliness and interaction of the characters that are used to explore the theme in order to entertain and educate the readers.

Certainly, the novel is a very popular genre of written literature. We know that it is a type of book which we read for pleasure, as a form of diversion or as a literary text. There are many elements that distinguish the novel from other types of books. Some more novels are introduced for your understanding.

**EIGHTEENTH CENTURY NOVELS**

Charles Dickens – Great Expectations (1861)

George Elliot- Silas Manner (1861)

Thomas Hardy- The Mayor of Caster bridge (1886)

Twentieth Century Novels

William Golding - Lord of the Flies (1954)

D. H. Lawrence-Sons and Lovers (1913)

Virginia Wolf – Mrs. Dalloway (1925)

Let us go through:

Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* (1705)

**BACKGROUND**

Jonathan Swift (1677 - 1745) was a satirist, essayist, political pamphleteer, an author, a poet and cleric. He was born in Dublin to a very poor English father but was supported grudgingly by his uncle. He received his Doctor of Divinity degree from Trinity College Dublin and later travelled to England where he published his first major prose works: A Tale of the Tub and The Battle of the Books (1704). His master piece, Gulliver’s Travels was published in 1726. He lived during the Age of Reason and his life and character were full of surprising and ironic contradictions.

Plot: In Gulliver’s Travels, Jonathan Swift presents the story of Captain Lemuel Gulliver, a surgeon whose business fails and he decides to go on a sea voyage. The novel presented in first person narrative as Gulliver narrates his experiences during the four voyages he undertakes in the book to imaginary lands. Swift uses the travel book form which hovers between fact and fiction. The first trip takes him to Lilliput where Gulliver wakes up after his shipwreck to find himself bound by innumerable tiny threads and addressed by tiny captors who were six inches tall. There he observes their customs and traditions.

Theme: Gulliver's Travels presents a criticism of humanity and insists that for a healthy relationship to exist in life, people should realise that everything is a matter of proportion and balance of keeping proper perspective. Human beings claim to value reason which but Gulliver sees it as an ideal which we pay lip service to. He therefore points out the discrepancy between the ideal and actual experience which has made it impossible for him to function in his own society.

Characterisation: Jonathan Swift presents Gulliver as a member of the Middle-class English society of the Age of Reason or Enlightenment Age who is a scientist and actually trained as a doctor, so is a very good representative of his age. He is the narrator and protagonist of the story. It is clear that the journey undertaken by Gulliver is an imaginary one. However, since it is written in the Age of Reason, Swift tries to relate it in a realistic style in conformity with the convention of that Age. The physical setting of the story is at The Court of Lilliput, the Capital of Lilliput, and the Emperor's Palace where greater part of the action takes place. He gives a vivid description of the environment in each of the settings.

**DANIEL DEFOE – *ROBINSON CRUSOE (1719)***

Background of the Author Daniel Defoe was a prolific writer with over 370 known publications, who could in fact actually wrote on almost any topic. However, many of his contemporaries saw him as a man without integrity because they claim that “he was a man who sold his pen to the political party in office…”

Robinson Crusoe is widely acclaimed as the first English novel. It presents the story of Robinson Crusoe’s adventures. It is presented in first person narrative technique and this makes it look like an autobiography and also gives a note of authenticity to the narrative. The story presented in the novel takes the reader through the account of Crusoe’s background, his life history, his strange adventure and incursions into precarious situations and survival through his tenacity, determination and hard work.

Plot: The story begins with the narrator who is also the protagonist, Robinson Crusoe giving us an insight into his family background. As the story progresses, we discover that his ambition for adventure is so strong that he sets sail in spite of his parents’ objection.

Theme: The main theme of the novel is dignity of labour which is exemplified in Crusoe who, in the novel, strives very hard to achieve mere subsistence. His sense of industry is also highlighted in Brazil.

Characterisation: Crusoe Robinson Crusoe is the main character in the novel and the whole story revolves around him. He is strong-willed, ambitious, tenacious, and kind hearted. His generosity is handsomely rewarded one way or the other. He is creative, resourceful, and hardworking, hence, he was able to build an Island out of nothing and made it fit for human habitation. He is magnanimous and shared his wealth with the poor and all those who were helpful to him.