

Important questions and answers on the course « INTRODUCTION TO ANGLOPHONE PROSE »

What is Prose ?

Prose is a form of written or spoken language that is organized into grammatical sentences and paragraphs. It is a type of literary genre that is not written in a metrical or rhythmic structure like poetry, but rather follows a natural flow of speech and syntax. Prose can be found in various forms, such as novels, short stories, essays, biographies, and even some speeches. It is the most common and practical mode of expression used in everyday communication and literature.

What is Fiction ?

Fiction is a type of literature that includes stories, characters, and events that are imaginary, invented, or not real. It can be in the form of novels, short stories, poetry, and even drama. Fiction often explores themes and emotions that are relevant to human experiences, even if the characters or situations are not real. **The writer of fiction uses imagination and creativity to develop characters, settings, and plots, and engages the reader in a way that allows them to suspend their disbelief and become fully immersed in the story.**

What is Prose fiction ?

Prose fiction is a genre of literature that tells a story using narrative prose. It is a work of fiction that is written in the form of prose, rather than poetry or drama. Prose fiction includes **novels, novellas, and short stories**. These works of fiction are characterized **by their use of narrative storytelling, which often involves a plot, characters, setting, and a point of view.** The aim of prose fiction is to **create a fictional world** that is believable and compelling to readers, and to explore the human condition through the experiences of the characters.

The origin of prose fiction ?

The origins of prose fiction can be traced back to **ancient times**, with early examples found in the tales of ancient Egypt, India, and Greece. However, the modern form of prose fiction as we know it today began to emerge during the 16th and 17th centuries in Europe, particularly in Spain, Italy, and England.

One of the earliest examples of a full-length prose fiction work is « The Golden Ass » by Apuleius, written in the 2nd century CE. However, it was the publication of **Miguel de Cervantes' « Don Quixote » in 1605 that is widely regarded as the first modern novel.** This work, which tells the story of a delusional knight and his loyal squire, became a cultural phenomenon and set the stage for the development of the novel as a distinct literary genre.

In the centuries that followed, the novel continued to evolve and expand in scope and popularity, with major works including **Daniel Defoe's « Robinson Crusoe » (1719), Jane Austen's « Pride and**

Prejudice » (1813), and Charles Dickens' « Great Expectations » (1861). Today, prose fiction remains one of the most popular and influential forms of literature, with countless new works published each year in a wide range of genres and styles.

What are the similarities and dissimilarities between prose fiction and history ?

Prose fiction and history share some similarities, but they also have distinct differences :

Similarities :

Both prose fiction and history are written forms of narrative storytelling.

Both can use characters and events to tell a story.

Both can include descriptions of places, people, and events.

Differences :

Prose fiction is a work of imagination, while history is based on factual events.

Prose fiction often includes dialogue and inner thoughts of characters, while history is usually written in a more objective, factual tone.

Prose fiction is usually meant to entertain, while history is often written to inform and educate.

Prose fiction is not necessarily bound by chronological or factual accuracy, while history requires accurate reporting of events and timelines.

Prose fiction can include fantastical elements, such as magic or supernatural beings, while history must remain grounded in reality.

In summary, while both prose fiction and history are forms of narrative storytelling, the difference lies in their purpose, tone, and accuracy in reporting events. Prose fiction is a work of imagination meant to entertain, while history is based on factual events and is meant to inform and educate.

What is an epic ?

An epic is a long narrative poem that typically tells the story of heroic deeds, legendary events, or mythological figures. Epics often involve a journey or quest by the hero, and include elements such as gods, supernatural beings, battles, and struggles. They typically have a grand scope and can cover a long period of time and multiple generations. Examples of famous epics include the Iliad and Odyssey by Homer, the Aeneid by Virgil, and the Mahabharata and Ramayana from Indian literature.

What are the characteristics of an epic ?

An epic is a long narrative poem that tells the story of heroic deeds and adventures. It often features a hero or protagonist who embodies the values and ideals of a particular culture or society. Here are some of the characteristics of an epic :

Elevated language : Epics often use a formal, elevated style of language, with a focus on poetic devices such as similes, metaphors, and allusions.

Heroic protagonist : The epic hero is a central figure in the story, often with supernatural abilities, who represents the values and ideals of the society from which the epic originates.

Epic setting : The story is set in a vast and exotic landscape, often with supernatural or mythological elements.

Supernatural elements : Epics often feature supernatural beings or events, such as gods or monsters, that interact with the human characters.

Extensive use of dialogue : Epics often use dialogue extensively to convey character and advance the plot.

Epic themes : Themes in epics often revolve around universal human experiences such as love, honor, courage, and redemption.

Long and complex plot : Epics typically have a long and complex plot, often involving a series of quests or challenges that the hero must overcome.

Importance to culture : Epics are often seen as important cultural artifacts that provide insight into the values, beliefs, and traditions of the society that produced them.

On what was based the subject matter of the early romance of prose fiction ?

The subject matter of early romance of prose fiction was typically based on the chivalric ideals of knights and courtly love, as well as mythical and supernatural elements. These stories often involved the adventures of knights and their quests, including battles with supernatural creatures or villains, rescue missions, and the pursuit of love and honor. Many of the earliest examples of romance prose fiction were influenced by medieval French literature, particularly the chansons de geste and Arthurian legends.

Apart from Romance, what are other forms of early writings that share some characteristics of prose fiction ?

Apart from romance, there are other forms of early writings that share some characteristics of prose fiction. One example is the medieval fabliau, a genre of short comic tales that often featured trickery and deception. Another is the chanson de geste, a type of epic poem that tells of heroic deeds and battles. Additionally, the medieval allegory, which uses symbolic characters and events to represent abstract concepts, has some similarities to prose fiction. These early forms of writing helped to shape the development of prose fiction as a literary genre.

What is Thomas Malory's major contribution to the development of prose fiction ?

Thomas Malory's major contribution to the development of prose fiction is his work « Le Morte d'Arthur, » which is a compilation of stories about King Arthur and his knights. Malory's work is significant because it is one of the earliest and most complete versions of the Arthurian legends in English prose. « Le Morte d'Arthur » was written in the late 15th century and became hugely popular, helping to establish the popularity of chivalric romance and contributing to the development of English prose fiction.

What are the contributions of Geoffrey Chaucer to the evolution of prose fiction ?

Geoffrey Chaucer is considered one of the most important figures in the development of English literature, particularly for his contributions to the evolution of poetry and the development of the English language itself. However, Chaucer also played a significant role in the evolution of prose fiction.

Chaucer's most famous work, « **The Canterbury Tales**, » is a collection of stories told by pilgrims on their way to Canterbury. The tales are written in verse, but they also contain elements of prose fiction, such as characterization, plot, and dialogue. Chaucer's use of vernacular English in « The Canterbury Tales » also helped to establish English as a literary language, and paved the way for future writers to experiment with the form and style of English prose.

Chaucer's influence on prose fiction can also be seen in his other works, such as « **Troilus and Criseyde**, » which is often considered one of the earliest examples of a novel in English. « Troilus and Criseyde » is a long narrative poem that tells the story of two lovers during the Trojan War, and it contains many of the same elements found in modern novels, such as character development, plot twists, and psychological realism.

Overall, Chaucer's contributions to the evolution of prose fiction include his experimentation with vernacular English, his use of characterization and plot in « The Canterbury Tales, » and his early examples of the novel form in « Troilus and Criseyde. »

What is the difference between time and space in prose fiction ?

Time and space are both important elements in prose fiction, but they serve different functions.

Time in prose fiction refers to the **chronological sequence of events** in the story. It includes the order in which events occur, the duration of each event, and the frequency with which certain events are repeated. The manipulation of time can affect the reader's experience of the story, as it can create tension, suspense, or surprise.

Space in prose fiction refers to the **physical setting of the story**. It includes the location, scenery, and environment in which the events take place. Space can have a significant impact on the story, as it can create a mood, establish a tone, and shape the characters' behavior.

In short, time is concerned with the sequence of events, while space is concerned with the physical context in which those events occur. Both elements work together to create the overall narrative of the story.

What is the importance of volume in the categorization of prose fiction ?

The importance of volume in the categorization of prose fiction lies in **its ability to distinguish between short stories, novellas, and novels**.

A short story is a brief work of fiction that typically focuses on a single incident, character, or theme. **It is usually less than 10,000 words in length, and can often be read in one sitting.**

A novella, on the other hand, is longer than a short story but shorter than a novel. It typically focuses on a more complex story or character than a short story, but is still more concise and tightly focused than a novel. **Novellas are usually between 20,000 and 50,000 words in length.**

A novel is a longer work of fiction that is more complex and involves a greater number of characters and plotlines than a short story or novella. Novels can be **several hundred thousand words in length and are usually divided into chapters or sections.**

Categorizing works of prose fiction by their length and volume helps readers and critics better understand the scope and complexity of the work, and can also help publishers and booksellers market and sell the works more effectively.

What differs from atmosphere and tone in prose fiction ?

Atmosphere and tone are both important elements of prose fiction that contribute to the overall effect and mood of a story.

Atmosphere refers to the overall feeling or mood that is created through the use of descriptive language, setting, and imagery. It can be described as the emotional or psychological environment that surrounds the characters and the story. **For example, a story set in a dark and stormy night with eerie music in the background would create a spooky atmosphere.**

On the other hand, **tone** refers to the author's attitude or perspective towards the subject matter or characters in the story. It is conveyed through the use of language, sentence structure, and style. Tone can be described as the emotional quality of the writing. **For example, a story with a sarcastic tone might be humorous and ironic, while a story with a solemn tone might be sad and serious.**

While atmosphere and tone are related, they are not interchangeable. **Atmosphere** is the mood or feeling that the author creates for the reader, while **tone** is the author's attitude towards the **subject matter**.

What are the types of prose fiction ?

There are several types of prose fiction, including :

Realistic fiction : Stories that depict events, characters, and settings that are true to life.

Historical fiction : Stories that take place in the past and often feature real historical figures or events.

Romance : Stories that focus on romantic relationships and the emotional experiences of the characters.

Mystery : Stories that involve a puzzle or crime that needs to be solved.

Science fiction : Stories that are set in the future or in imaginary worlds and often involve technology, aliens, or other speculative concepts.

Fantasy : Stories that are set in imaginary worlds and often involve magic, mythical creatures, and heroic quests.

Horror : Stories that aim to scare or frighten the reader with supernatural or grotesque elements.

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Satire : Stories that use humor and irony to criticize society and human behavior.

Bildungsroman : Stories that depict the development of a character from childhood to adulthood.

Gothic fiction : Stories that often feature dark, supernatural elements and are set in gloomy or mysterious settings.

What factors contributed to the development of prose fiction ?

There were several factors that contributed to the development of prose fiction, including :

The growth of literacy : With more people learning to read and write, there was an increased demand for books and literature, leading to the development of new forms of prose fiction.

The emergence of the novel : The novel as a literary form emerged in the 18th century and quickly gained popularity as a way to tell stories in a more realistic and detailed way than had previously been possible.

The rise of the middle class : As the middle class grew in wealth and influence, there was a greater demand for literature that reflected their values and experiences.

The influence of new literary styles : The development of new literary styles, such as the Gothic and the Romantic, contributed to the evolution of prose fiction by introducing new themes, characters, and settings.

Technological advancements : The development of printing technology made it easier and more affordable to produce books, which helped to spread the popularity of prose fiction.

All of these factors and more contributed to the evolution of prose fiction as a popular and important literary form.

What are the elements of prose fiction ?

The elements of prose fiction can vary depending on the author, genre, and style of writing. However, some common elements include :

Plot : The series of events that make up the story, including the conflict, climax, and resolution.

Setting : The time, place, and environment in which the story takes place.

Characters : The people, animals, or creatures that make up the story.

Point of view : The perspective from which the story is told, such as first person, third person limited, or third person omniscient.

Theme : The underlying message or meaning of the story.

Style : The author's use of language, including sentence structure, word choice, and tone.

Symbolism : The use of symbols or objects to represent abstract ideas or concepts.

Imagery : The use of descriptive language to create mental images and evoke the reader's senses.

Dialogue : The conversations between characters that help to develop the plot, characters, and theme.

Foreshadowing : The use of clues or hints in the early parts of the story to suggest future events.

What are theme, subject matter and title in prose fiction ?

In prose fiction, the **theme** refers to the underlying message or meaning of a work of literature, while the **subject matter** is the specific topic or events that the author is writing about. The **title** is the name given to a work of literature, which can give the reader an idea of what the story is about or hint at its themes or subject matter.

For example, in the novel « To Kill a Mockingbird » by Harper Lee, the theme might be the dangers of prejudice and the importance of empathy, while the subject matter includes the trial of a black man in a small Southern town and the experiences of a young girl growing up in that community. The title « To Kill a Mockingbird » alludes to the idea that it is a sin to harm innocent beings and could be seen as a metaphor for the injustices faced by marginalized groups in society.

What is characterization ? Cite different types of characters in prose fiction ?

Characterization is the process by which an author develops and reveals the personalities, traits, and motivations of the characters in a work of literature. This can be achieved through a variety of techniques, including description, dialogue, and actions.

There are different types of characters in prose fiction, including :

Protagonist – The main character of the story, often the hero or heroine.

Antagonist – The character or force that opposes the protagonist, creating conflict and tension.

Major Character – A character who plays a significant role in the story, and whose actions and decisions have a significant impact on the plot.

Minor Character – A character who appears briefly in the story, often to provide context or support to the major characters.

Flat Character – A character who is one-dimensional and lacks complexity or depth. They are often used to support the main characters.

Round Character – A character who is complex and multi-dimensional, with a wide range of emotions and motivations. They often experience significant growth or change over the course of the story.

Static Character – A character who does not change over the course of the story, often serving as a foil to the dynamic characters.

Dynamic Character – A character who undergoes significant change or growth over the course of the story, often as a result of the challenges they face.

Stock Character – A character who embodies a familiar stereotype or archetype, often used to represent a certain group or type of person.

Foil Character – A character who contrasts with another character, often highlighting their strengths or weaknesses by comparison.

What is setting and the types of setting in prose fiction ?

In prose fiction, **setting** refers to the **time** and **place** in which the story takes place. It includes the physical location, the historical and cultural context, and the social environment that surrounds the characters and their actions. The setting can have a significant impact on the plot, themes, and characters of a work of fiction.

There are different types of setting in prose fiction, including :

Historical Setting – The time period in which the story takes place, often with a focus on significant events, cultural norms, and societal changes.

Geographical Setting – The physical location of the story, including the landscape, climate, and natural features.

Cultural Setting – The cultural context of the story, including the customs, traditions, beliefs, and values of the society in which the characters live.

Social Setting – The social environment of the story, including the social class, political climate, and power dynamics that influence the characters' lives.

Imaginary Setting – A fictional world created by the author, often with its own unique rules, geography, and culture.

Atmospheric Setting – The mood or atmosphere created by the setting, such as a dark and foreboding forest or a bright and cheerful beach.

Symbolic Setting – The setting that serves as a metaphor or symbol for larger themes or ideas in the story, such as a rundown city representing the decay of society or a pristine wilderness representing the purity of nature.

What are the ways of identifying setting in prose fiction ?

There are several ways to identify the setting in prose fiction :

Description – The author may provide detailed descriptions of the physical location, such as the landscape, architecture, or weather conditions.

Dialogue – Characters may reference the location or time period in their conversations, providing clues about the setting.

Cultural and Historical Context – References to historical events, societal norms, or cultural practices can help place the story in a particular time and place.

Character actions – The actions of the characters may be influenced by the setting, such as using specific modes of transportation or engaging in certain cultural traditions.

Symbols – Objects or symbols that are associated with a particular place or time period can indicate the setting.

Narrative voice – The narrator's tone or voice can give clues about the setting, such as a nostalgic tone for a story set in the past or a more detached, objective tone for a story set in the present.

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By considering these various elements, readers can gain a deeper understanding of the setting and its impact on the story and its characters.

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