

1. Make a chart of major novelists beginning from the four wheels of the novel to 20th-century novelis Give the background, style, themes, and examples of their novels.

Assignment Title:

Charting the Major Novelists: From the “Four Wheels of the Novel” to the 20th Century

Course:

English Literature

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I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my English literature teacher for their valuable guidance and support throughout the completion of this assignment. I am also thankful to the library and online resources that provided access to critical materials and historical insights into the evolution of the English novel. Special thanks to my classmates and family for their encouragement and help during the preparation of this work.

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Introduction

The English novel, as a literary form, evolved gradually from the early 18th century to the 20th century, reflecting the changing ideals, emotions, and experiences of society. Emerging from the shadows of poetry and drama, the novel became a vehicle for moral reflection, social commentary, and the exploration of individual consciousness. What began as a simple narrative experiment in realism and moral instruction evolved into a vast and complex art form that captured human psychology, social struggle, and the intricacies of modern life. This assignment traces the growth of the English novel from its foundational “Four Wheels” — Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding, and Tobias Smollett — to the great Victorian masters and the modernist innovators of the 20th century. Through their backgrounds,

styles, themes, and representative works, we can understand how each generation of writers contributed to shaping the novel into one of the most profound and enduring literary forms in the English canon.

The Four Wheels of the Novel

The early 18th century marked the birth of the English novel, and its foundation was laid by four pioneering writers: **Daniel Defoe**, **Samuel Richardson**, **Henry Fielding**, and **Tobias Smollett**. These figures, often referred to as the “Four Wheels of the Novel,” established the fundamental features of narrative prose — realism, characterization, moral purpose, and psychological insight.

Daniel Defoe (1660–1731) is widely regarded as the father of English realism. A journalist, merchant, and moralist, he infused his fiction with a sense of authenticity drawn from his journalistic experience. His *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) is often considered the first true English novel, depicting the solitary struggle of man against nature. The narrative’s journal-like tone and realistic detail give it a profound psychological depth. Similarly, in *Moll Flanders* (1722), Defoe explores human vice and redemption, blending adventure with moral introspection. His style is simple yet powerful, characterized by a factual tone and a close observation of everyday life.

Samuel Richardson (1689–1761), a printer by profession, brought a new dimension to the novel through his use of the **epistolary form** — narratives told through letters. His works, such as *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1748), emphasize moral virtue, inner emotion, and social propriety. Richardson’s innovation lay in his psychological realism; he was one of the first English writers to depict the emotional lives of his characters in detail. His heroines’ moral trials mirrored the ethical dilemmas faced by contemporary readers, thereby transforming fiction into a tool for moral and sentimental education.

In contrast, **Henry Fielding (1707–1754)** adopted a more humorous and satirical approach. Trained as a playwright, Fielding viewed the novel as a form of comic epic in prose. His works, notably *Joseph Andrews* (1742) and *Tom Jones* (1749), combine wit, irony, and keen social observation. Fielding rejected the moral rigidity of Richardson’s sentimentalism and instead celebrated human imperfection, portraying life as a mixture of folly and virtue. His omniscient narrative voice, filled with humor and irony, helped establish the narrator as an active moral commentator — a feature that would become central to the Victorian novel.

Tobias Smollett (1721–1771) added vigor and adventure to early English fiction. A physician and traveler, Smollett brought to his novels a vivid sense of movement and realism. His works, such as *Roderick Random* (1748) and *Peregrine Pickle* (1751), follow the picaresque tradition — episodic tales of roguish heroes navigating society’s corruption and absurdity. Smollett’s energetic style, lively dialogue, and sharp social satire enriched the English novel’s variety and scope.

Together, these four novelists established the groundwork for future writers. They transformed prose storytelling into an art that could capture both the external world and the inner life, balancing moral reflection with entertainment and psychological truth.

19th-Century Novelists: Realism, Society, and Morality

The 19th century is often hailed as the **golden age of the English novel**, when the genre matured into a rich medium of social, moral, and psychological exploration. The Victorian period, in particular, witnessed a surge of novelists who depicted the moral dilemmas, social inequalities, and emotional complexities of life with unmatched depth and diversity.

Jane Austen (1775–1817) occupies a unique position as a bridge between the 18th-century tradition and Victorian realism. Her novels combine wit, irony, and moral precision. Works like *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma* reveal the nuances of social manners, class expectations, and the moral values of domestic life. Austen's narrative style is disciplined yet emotionally intelligent; her heroines are strong, reflective, and conscious of moral choice.

Charles Dickens (1812–1870) became the voice of social reform and human sympathy. His novels — *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*, and *Great Expectations* — expose the cruelty of child labor, the corruption of urban life, and the moral failures of Victorian society. Through humor, pathos, and unforgettable characters, Dickens fused moral criticism with storytelling genius. His realism lies not in photographic detail, but in emotional truth — in his capacity to portray virtue and vice with compassion and satire alike.

The **Brontë sisters** — **Charlotte**, **Emily**, and **Anne** — brought romantic passion and psychological depth to the English novel. *Jane Eyre* (Charlotte) blends gothic mystery with moral growth, while *Wuthering Heights* (Emily) explores obsessive love, revenge, and the wildness of human emotion. Their works revolutionized women's writing, introducing emotional intensity and individualism rarely seen before.

George Eliot (1819–1880) deepened the novel's intellectual and moral dimension. In *The Mill on the Floss* and *Middlemarch*, Eliot examines moral choices, ethical failure, and the search for meaning in a changing world. Her prose is thoughtful, analytical, and humane — blending realism with philosophy.

Thomas Hardy (1840–1928) represents the late-Victorian turn toward naturalism and pessimism. His novels, including *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*, portray the conflict between human aspiration and social constraint. Hardy's tragic vision reflects a world where fate and circumstance often overpower human will, marking a profound shift from moral optimism to existential questioning.

Collectively, these novelists transformed the English novel into a canvas of moral reflection, psychological truth, and social critique.

Transition to the Modern Age

The closing decades of the 19th century brought intellectual and artistic change that reshaped the novel's form and purpose. Industrial progress, Darwinian science, and Freudian psychology encouraged writers to explore the complexities of consciousness and moral ambiguity.

Henry James (1843–1916) stands as a transitional figure between realism and modernism. In *The Portrait of a Lady*, James focuses on psychological depth, perception, and moral consciousness. He transforms the external realism of his predecessors into an internal, introspective form of storytelling.

Joseph Conrad (1857–1924) carried the novel into philosophical territory. His *Heart of Darkness* (1899) explores imperialism, isolation, and the darkness within the human soul. Conrad's narrative technique, built on symbolism and ambiguity, prepared the ground for the modernist focus on fragmented perspective and moral uncertainty.

This transitional phase reflects a growing awareness of complexity — of characters who no longer act out moral lessons but struggle with identity, choice, and alienation.

20th-Century Novelists: Modernism and Beyond

The 20th century revolutionized the novel by rejecting conventional plot, time, and structure. The **modernist movement**, influenced by psychoanalysis, war, and industrial alienation, sought new ways to express the fragmented consciousness of modern life.

James Joyce (1882–1941) stands at the forefront of this transformation. His novel *Ulysses* (1922) employs the stream-of-consciousness technique to depict a single day in Dublin with microscopic psychological detail. Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) portrays artistic awakening and individual rebellion against tradition.

Virginia Woolf (1882–1941) redefined narrative form through psychological realism and lyrical prose. Her works *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and *To the Lighthouse* (1927) explore time, gender, and consciousness. Woolf's writing emphasizes subjective experience over external action, blending poetic rhythm with introspection.

D.H. Lawrence (1885–1930) sought to reconcile instinct and intellect, body and mind. In novels like *Sons and Lovers* (1913) and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928), he explored passion, repression, and the impact of industrialization on human relationships.

E.M. Forster (1879–1970) bridged modernism and humanism. His *A Passage to India* (1924) examines race, class, and spirituality in colonial India, reflecting the tensions of modern civilization.

George Orwell (1903–1950) gave modern fiction a political conscience. *Animal Farm* (1945) and *1984* (1949) combine realism with allegory to expose the dangers of totalitarianism and the fragility of truth.

Through these diverse innovations, the 20th-century novel became introspective, experimental, and socially conscious – reflecting both the fragmentation and the freedom of modern existence.

Comparative Themes and Styles

From Defoe’s moral realism to Joyce’s narrative experimentation, the English novel’s journey reflects the evolution of human thought and art. The early novelists sought moral clarity; the Victorians emphasized social order and ethical struggle; the modernists embraced complexity, fragmentation, and subjectivity. While Richardson and Fielding examined virtue and human folly through structured plots, Woolf and Joyce dismantled structure to explore the fluid nature of thought. Across centuries, the English novel transformed from moral storytelling into a psychological and artistic exploration of existence itself.

Conclusion

The journey of the English novel from the “Four Wheels” to the 20th century represents not merely the growth of a literary genre but the intellectual history of modern humanity. Each era introduced new dimensions of realism, morality, and consciousness, reflecting the changing face of society and the human mind. From Defoe’s adventurous individualism to Woolf’s interior landscapes, the English novel evolved into a powerful mirror of life – one that continues to capture the complexities of emotion, identity, and truth. Its enduring legacy lies in its adaptability and depth, making it a timeless reflection of the human spirit.

References

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2. Trace the development of the English novel and make a chart of different genres of novels with four examples from each genre.

Assignment Title:

Tracing the Development of the English Novel and Classifying Its Major Genres

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Introduction

The English novel has evolved as one of the most dynamic and enduring forms of literary expression, mirroring the intellectual, emotional, and social transformations of society across centuries. It emerged as a distinct genre in the 18th century, combining narrative prose with realism and characterization to depict the complexities of human life. Over time, the English novel developed into a powerful artistic medium through which writers explored themes of love, morality, society, alienation, and identity. From its origin in the works of the early pioneers known as the “Four Wheels of the Novel” to the innovative modernist experiments

of the 20th century, the English novel has continuously adapted, diversified, and expanded its thematic and stylistic range.

The Emergence and Early Development of the English Novel

The novel as a literary form took shape in the early 18th century, reflecting a shift from poetry and drama to prose fiction that represented individual experience and social reality. The rise of literacy, the spread of printing, and the growth of the middle class created an eager readership seeking realistic stories that mirrored their lives. Writers such as **Daniel Defoe**, **Samuel Richardson**, **Henry Fielding**, and **Tobias Smollett**—often referred to as the “Four Wheels of the Novel”—laid the foundation of the English novel.

Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) introduced realism and individualism, portraying man’s struggle for survival and moral endurance. Richardson’s *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1748) deepened the psychological dimension through the epistolary form, exploring virtue, morality, and female sensibility. Fielding, with *Joseph Andrews* (1742) and *Tom Jones* (1749), brought humor, irony, and social satire to the genre, emphasizing human nature’s complexity. Smollett, in novels such as *Roderick Random* (1748), employed picaresque adventure and vivid realism to depict contemporary society. Together, these writers transformed prose narrative into an art form that reflected individual experience, social context, and moral introspection.

The 18th Century: Foundation of Realism and Characterization

The 18th century was an age of reason and empiricism, and these intellectual currents strongly influenced literature. The English novel became a medium for moral instruction, social criticism, and emotional exploration. Writers combined narrative realism with moral allegory, crafting stories that portrayed human behavior and ethical struggle.

Authors such as **Laurence Sterne** and **Oliver Goldsmith** expanded the genre’s scope by infusing sentiment and humor into their narratives. Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* (1759) experimented with structure and style, anticipating the playfulness of modern fiction, while Goldsmith’s *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766) offered a blend of sentiment and moral reflection. By the end of the 18th century, the English novel had established itself as a flexible literary form capable of addressing both personal and societal concerns.

The 19th Century: The Age of Social and Moral Realism

The 19th century witnessed the full flowering of the English novel as the dominant literary form. With the growth of industrialization, urbanization, and social reform movements, novelists began to address the moral and social conditions of their age.

Jane Austen (1775–1817) refined the novel of manners with her sharp wit and moral realism. In *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma*, she portrayed the complexities of love, marriage, and class within the constraints of social decorum.

Charles Dickens (1812–1870) emerged as the great chronicler of Victorian society. His novels such as *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*, and *Great Expectations* exposed the harsh realities of child labor, poverty, and social hypocrisy, blending humor with pathos to advocate for human compassion and moral reform.

The **Brontë sisters**—Charlotte, Emily, and Anne—introduced psychological intensity and gothic elements. *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* explored passion, rebellion, and moral endurance. **George Eliot**, with works like *Middlemarch*, brought intellectual depth and moral seriousness to the form, emphasizing human relationships and ethical dilemmas. **Thomas Hardy**, in novels like *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*, portrayed tragic conflicts between human desire and rigid social laws, marking the transition toward naturalism and pessimism.

The 20th Century: Modernism and Psychological Exploration

By the early 20th century, social upheaval, world wars, and changing philosophical ideas led to the rise of modernism, which sought to redefine narrative art. The modernist novel moved away from linear plots and objective realism toward introspection, subjectivity, and fragmented experience.

James Joyce revolutionized narrative technique with *Ulysses* (1922), using stream-of-consciousness to represent the flow of thought and memory. **Virginia Woolf** expanded psychological realism through her emphasis on consciousness, perception, and time in novels like *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*. **D.H. Lawrence**, in *Sons and Lovers* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, examined human instincts, emotional repression, and industrial alienation. **E.M. Forster**, with *A Passage to India*, combined humanism with a critique of colonialism and cultural conflict.

Later, writers such as **George Orwell** (1984) and **Aldous Huxley** (*Brave New World*) used fiction to question political power and moral freedom, marking the emergence of dystopian and political allegory as powerful modern genres.

Genres of the English Novel

The Realistic and Social Novel

The realistic novel seeks to portray life as it is, focusing on ordinary people and social issues. Pioneered by writers like Jane Austen and Charles Dickens, this genre explores class, morality, and personal growth. Dickens' *David Copperfield* and Eliot's *Middlemarch* exemplify the realistic portrayal of society and human emotion. The social novel, closely related to realism,

serves as a critique of social inequality and injustice, as seen in *Hard Times* and *North and South* by Elizabeth Gaskell.

The Historical Novel

The historical novel reconstructs past eras and events, blending fact with fiction. **Sir Walter Scott's** *Waverley* (1814) laid the foundation, portraying the clash between tradition and progress. Later, **Charles Dickens's** *A Tale of Two Cities* and **George Eliot's** *Romola* continued the tradition, while **Leo Tolstoy's** *War and Peace* (though Russian) became a global model for the genre. These novels combine historical accuracy with human drama, exploring how individuals are shaped by history.

The Gothic Novel

Emerging in the late 18th century, the gothic novel combined romance, horror, and the supernatural. **Horace Walpole's** *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) initiated the genre, followed by **Mary Shelley's** *Frankenstein* (1818), which explored the dark side of science and human ambition. **Emily Brontë's** *Wuthering Heights* and **Bram Stoker's** *Dracula* carried gothic intensity into psychological and supernatural realms, blending passion, fear, and mystery.

The Psychological Novel

The psychological novel delves into the inner workings of the human mind, emphasizing emotion, consciousness, and motivation over external events. **Henry James**, with *The Portrait of a Lady*, pioneered the subtle portrayal of moral choice and self-awareness. Later, **Virginia Woolf** and **D.H. Lawrence** deepened this exploration, turning the novel into a space of introspection and psychological truth.

The Romantic Novel

Romantic fiction focuses on emotion, imagination, and individual experience. Writers like **Charlotte Brontë** and **Jane Austen** infused their novels with passion, moral growth, and personal integrity. *Jane Eyre* and *Persuasion* exemplify how love becomes both a moral test and a source of freedom. The romantic novel often celebrates idealism and personal authenticity amid societal constraint.

The Satirical Novel

Satirical novels employ humor, irony, and exaggeration to expose human folly and social hypocrisy. **Jonathan Swift's** *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) ridicules political corruption and moral blindness. **Henry Fielding's** *Joseph Andrews*, **William Thackeray's** *Vanity Fair*, and **George Orwell's** *Animal Farm* continue this tradition, using laughter as a tool for moral and political critique.

The Modernist and Experimental Novel

Modernist fiction challenged traditional narrative structure. Writers like **James Joyce**, **Virginia Woolf**, and **William Faulkner** focused on consciousness, perception, and time. Their works—*Ulysses*, *To the Lighthouse*, and *The Sound and the Fury*—reject linear storytelling in favor of fragmented, introspective perspectives that mirror the complexity of modern life.

The Science Fiction and Dystopian Novel

Science fiction explores futuristic and technological possibilities, often serving as social commentary. **H.G. Wells’** *The Time Machine* (1895) and *The War of the Worlds* (1898) initiated the genre, combining scientific imagination with human curiosity. Later, **Aldous Huxley’s** *Brave New World* and **George Orwell’s** *1984* offered dystopian visions of totalitarian societies, warning against the loss of individuality and freedom.

The Detective and Mystery Novel

The detective novel thrives on suspense, logic, and moral inquiry. **Wilkie Collins’** *The Moonstone* (1868) established many conventions of detective fiction, while **Arthur Conan Doyle’s** *Sherlock Holmes* stories made deduction and intellect central themes. Later authors like **Agatha Christie** and **Raymond Chandler** expanded the genre, transforming it into both entertainment and a study of justice and morality.

The Postcolonial and Multicultural Novel

Emerging in the aftermath of empire, postcolonial fiction examines identity, hybridity, and the effects of colonialism. **E.M. Forster’s** *A Passage to India* opened the discourse, while **Chinua Achebe’s** *Things Fall Apart* and **Salman Rushdie’s** *Midnight’s Children* redefined English fiction through non-Western voices. These novels emphasize cultural conflict, national identity, and the search for belonging in a globalized world.

Conclusion

The English novel’s development is a reflection of both literary innovation and human evolution. From the moral realism of the 18th century to the psychological experimentation of the 20th, it has adapted to express the shifting values, conflicts, and aspirations of society. Each genre, whether realist, gothic, satirical, or postcolonial, represents a new mode of understanding human experience. What began as simple storytelling has become an expansive and complex art form that continues to question, entertain, and illuminate the world of its readers.

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