University of Basra /College of Arts
Department of Translation / Second Stage/Morning Studies Subject: Novel

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Lecture :Introduction 1

Define 'Novel'. Mention some of its common features.

The novel is a **genre of** fiction **writing** distinguished from the short story, the novella, and drama. The novel has much in common with these other forms of fiction writing, but is distinguished by certain formal traits and, especially, length.

The central defining trait of the novel as a form is the use of prose.

Prose is the most typical form of language, applying ordinary grammatical structure and natural flow of speech rather than rhythmic structure (as in traditional poetry).

The use of prose and dialogue used to tell a story involving one or more characters (usually more than one) distinguishes the novel from drama and poetry.

Often the novel is defined simply as an extended narrative, longer than a short story and longer than a novella.

A **novel** is a book of long narrative in literary prose.

Traditional novels offer a strong plot that poses a problem or set of problems to the characters in the narrative, some of which are resolved in the action of the novel.

Some novels break with tradition and eschew conventional plot structure, either by telling multiple stories that are interwoven involving characters that are not directly related (*A Visit from the Goon Squad; USA*), by utilizing a highly imaginative formula of story within story (*Naked Lunch)*, or by including mulitple prose forms within the novel and using these to supplement the narrative (*Moby Dick*).

Considering this type of flexibility in the genre, we can see that there is a great deal of variety allowed by the novel form.

Five Steps to make reading a novel easy

Reading a novel seems somewhat self-explanatory. Start reading at one cover and don't stop until you get to the other.

But the world's most successful students know that reading a novel is a unique type of reading. Just as there are important keys for reading any type of literary genre (check out our tips on reading a textbook), reading a novel is no different. It's a specific type of literature with specific things to which you need to pay attention.

Consider these tips to reading a novel effectively:

1. Read for comprehension

This is always the goal when we read anything. Hopefully that's your goal right now – to understand what I'm writing.

As fundamental as that seems to education, don't ignore it. It's easy to get mentally distracted, breeze through a page or two, and suddenly find yourself in a new scene with new characters and no idea how you got there.

If you find that you have no idea what is going on, it's always a good idea to back up and figure out what you're reading. An even better idea (though a difficult one) when reading a novel is to comprehend it as you go. For a quick tip on that, try reading with an index card covering the part you've already read. It tends to help you stay more engaged as you read.

2. Pay attention to repetition

Novelists are typically extremely detail oriented when writing their novels. When they repeat something, they meant to. When you are reading a novel and certain things show up again, pay attention to that repetition.

And repetition can take a thousand forms. This can be certain settings, certain thematic elements, certain characters, certain moods, certain descriptions, or way too many other things to mention.

3. Read with themes in mind

Themes are some of the most important elements to note when reading a novel.

Think about the book *Animal Farm* by George Orwell. It's a great book. If you haven't read it, you should. It's an easy read, and it makes a fantastic point. It's about animals on a farm.

Only the real point has nothing to do with animals on a farm.

The themes of corruption and totalitarianism are thicker than North Carolina bacon – which is thick. In fact, the point of the novel has nothing to do with pigs and chickens and goats. But if you miss those themes, you might begin to think that it is.

So what's the answer? Read a novel with themes in mind.

4. Know your literary elements

Plot, setting, characters, foreshadowing, imagery, etc., etc., etc.

These aren't just "etc.'s." They're highly important.

We understand that knowing all the major literary elements can be somewhat less-than-fun. But they're the building blocks upon which novelists make their points. Big ideas come in story format, so knowing how story elements work together is vital.

5. Watch for interpretations when reading a novel

Sometimes novelists toss you an easy one: they interpret a passage for you. When you're reading a novel and you come across any interpretation by an author, it's time to take notes.

Make sure you don't miss this. If you want to know how to read a novel

effectively and you miss this, it will be easy to misinterpret the entire book. Don't

miss the author's own interpretations. Honestly, they matter much more than

mine or yours do.

Do you have any other tips that you've found helpful? We'd love to hear any study skills tips you've found helpful when reading a novel.

What are the elements of novel?

The main elements of a novel are the same as all prose fiction. They include characters and point of view, setting, plot, and theme. Novels also usually have chapters, and are significantly longer than short stories. This allows a novel to have more depth and complexity, more fully-developed characters and settings, and multiple themes.

Characters are the people who populate the novel. A novel will typically have one or more main characters, as well as secondary characters.

Point of view refers to how the story is narrated. This can include first person (I, me, my, we), third person limited (one perspective, he, she, them, names) and third person omniscient (same as limited, but with an all-knowing narrator).

Setting is where the story takes place. This consists of the time and place, but also includes local customs and traditions and time periods.

Plot refers to what happens in the novel. We describe plot as exposition (introduces the story), rising action (the problem develops), climax (the turning point), falling action (wrapping up), and resolution (ending).

Theme is the message of the story, or the moral. This is essentially the reason for telling the story, to explore human nature and deeper meanings.