UNIT – 2 MAJOR ASPECTS OF NOVEL AND ITS TYPES

STRUCTURE

2.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we shall

- Discuss various aspects of novel and
- Discuss various types of novel.

On completing this unit, you should be able to

- Know various aspects of the novel
- Know various types of novels with their appropriate examples.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

As we discussed in the previous unit, novel**,** is a relatively new form of prose narrative developed somewhere around second half of 16th century and onward. It is broadly defined as a prose narrative of significant length and a certain complexity that deals with imaginary characters and events. It has usually a connected sequence of actions with a specific setting. There is a wide range of types and styles of works under this broad definition: epistolary, picaresque, Gothic, romantic, historical - to name a few. However, there are some common components or elements that can be seen in most of the types of novel. In the present unit, we will study some of the major components of novel writing. Moreover, we shall also discuss major types and styles of the novel writing in English Literature with appropriate examples.

2.2 ASPECTS OF NOVEL

i. Plot:

As the novel is a prose narrative that has certain length, it has a series of events that are documented in a certain style. Plot is some logical sequence or structure given to the events of narrative. It is expected from a plot to generate curiosity in reader as to what may happen to the

characters or the situation. A plot or novelist offers the resolution of the conflict through external conflict with some physical violence that lead to the victory of the central character. Nevertheless, a mature novelist prefers to develop the plot on the bases of psychological situations and internal conflicts. Such a plot would lead to a climax through some internal struggle, which leads to a new state of awareness, mostly self-awareness, on the parts of the protagonists.

The plot that depends on coincidences or improbabilities is known as a 'melodramatic plot'. This kind of plot can be seen in many prominent works of fiction. *Howards End* (1910) of E.M. Forster has a melodramatic plot, which is an example of classic British novel. However, the novelist always has to choose from either to create a plot and provide a form to his narrative or to keep the narrative formless as real life in which there are no beginnings and no ends.

There are, nevertheless, techniques of plot construction for novels in which plot plays an insignificant part or no part at all. For example, the picaresque novel of usually has such plot that is insignificant as the novel has a rogue as its central character. In *Gil Blas* (1715) by Alain Lesage or *Tom Jones* (1749) by Henry Fielding, the flow of the events depends on a sequence of chance incidents. In the works of 19th century novelists such as Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, they employed a unique narrative technique known as *stream of consciousness*. In this technique, they used the consciousness of the characters as their narrative technique. Thus, a sequence of events that serves the purpose of binding a novel together can be termed as plot. Nevertheless, it is expected that it represent the human life with credibility and authenticity so that it appeals the reader.

i. Theme

Theme is a general concept or doctrine that a novelist uses to convey his or her imaginary work. It may provide a hint as to what conflicts or mysteries that will unfold in the following narrative. Usually, the novelist conceives the theme of a novel in a very simple terms, a sentence that encompasses the entire canvass of the novel: for example, the theme of *Christmas Carol* (1843) of Charles Dickens can be described as "a misanthrope is reformed through certain magical visitations on Christmas Eve," or the theme of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) can be conceived as "a young couple destined to be married have first to overcome the barriers of pride and prejudice." The novelist develops his narrative around this idea statement in his or her unique style of sequence. It is the theme of a novel that differentiates one novel from another in terms of style and manner. However, it needs to be noted that there are very few basic human situations based on which a story can be developed.

ii. Character

Broadly speaking there are two kinds of novel: 'novel of character' and 'novel of incident'. The novel of incident deals with the

external conflict of the characters, whereas the novel of character deals with the internal conflict, dilemma struggle and ultimate enrichment of a character. The novel of character is therefore considered to be greater value compared to that of incident. Portrayal of vivid character and their development in considered being of higher order writing skills in the world of fiction. According to E. M. Foster, there are two types of characters namely 'round' and 'flat'. Round characters are the ones that show transformation in their personality and way of thinking. They may show transformation from good to bad or bad to good. These round characters are also known as 'complex' or 'dynamic' characters. On the other hand, 'flat' characters remain unchanged and unmoved throughout the narrative. They undergo all the situations and hardship without displaying any change in their personality. If they are good, they remain good throughout the narrative and if they are bad or below average, opportunist or any other type, they remain as they were in the beginning of the narrative. These flat characters are also known as simple characters. The variety of characters are also referred as 'black', 'white' and 'gray' characters depending on the personality traits they possess. For instance, 'black' characters are villainous characters who display the darker and baser sides of human characters. 'White' characters are bright, pure, flawless and embodiment of good qualities. Interesting characters are 'gray'; they may be predominantly 'black' characters with some 'white' tint in their personality or they may be predominantly 'white' characters with some 'black' or dark tint in their character. There may be a huge variety of 'gray' characters in the creative writing.

iii.Setting

The development and action of the characters in any fictional work need their environment. Many a times, a novel is developed by the locale in which it is set. The setting of a fictional work is the general location, certain time zone in history and milieu in which narrative takes place. The setting of a single episode or scene within such a work is the particular physical location in which it takes place. For example, Shakespeare used medieval Scotland as a general setting for *Macbeth*. James Joyce used Dublin of 1904 as his setting in *Ulysses*.

The setting of a fiction can also be drawn from a non-real-life locality. The fiction writer at times creates his setting along with his fiction, characters and their actions. In Vladimir Nabokov's *Ada* (1969) and in J. R. R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* (1954–55) an "alternative world" away from the real world setting has been created. There are authors who could imagine the locale of the futuristic time zone. H.G. Wells had imagined such futuristic settings in his science fictions. Aldous Huxley in *Brave New World* (1932) is yet another example of such an imaginary setting.

iv. Narrative Technique

If there is a great story, there has to be a great storyteller. Conventionally, there used to be a storyteller, a narrator in the performing

arts such as drama, who used to act as a mediator between the characters and the reader. Narrative technique or point of view is the way in which the story is told or unfolded to the reader. It is through narrative technique that the author presents characters, dialogues, setting and action to the reader. Narrative technique thus, is a practical concern of every author. There are many methods or techniques used by various authors. However, broadly speaking there is two narrative techniques prevalent in functional writing, namely 'third-person narrative' and 'first-person narrative'.

In a third-person narrative, the narrator is an outsider and yet omnipresent in the story. The author narrates all the characters from outside the story and refers to them by their names, or by their personal pronoun such as 'he', 'she,' 'they' etc. Most of the traditional novelists used this narrative technique in their novels. On the other hand, in a first-person narrative, the narrator is not an outsider; rather he is a part of the story. He narrates his story as "I" and is directly or indirectly involved in the story as a character. This technique is also known as 'fictional autobiography'. *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) by J. D. Salinger for example begins: "If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you'll really want to know is where I was born, and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all that before they had me, and all that David Copperfield kind of crap…" Usually this 'first person' is the protagonist of the narrative. Such a protagonist expresses the views, ideas and opinions of the author and therefore is also known as the 'mouth-piece' of the author. Apart from popular 'first-person' and 'third-person' narratives, there is a 'second-person' narrative technique as well. In this method of narrative, the entire or part of the story is addressed to 'you' by the narrator. This mode of narrative appears in many traditional novels in small episodes, however, in the second half of 20th century French and Italian novelists such as Michel Butor and Italo Calvino.

Samuel Richardson in *Pamela* (1740) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau in *La nouvelle Héloïse* (1761) used 'the epistolary method' for the first time. In epistolary method, the narrative is developed in almost the same way as 'first-person narrative', however, here the narrative is developed through the exchange of letters between two or more characters. Joseph Conrad and Somerset Maugham later used this technique in their novels.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS – 1

Answer The Following Questions Briefly

1. What is a 'melodramatic plot'?

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2. What are the two main kinds of character according to E. M. Foster?

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3. What is the use of setting in a novel?

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4. What is the difference between 'first-person' and 'third-person' narratives?

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2.3 TYPES OF NOVEL

i. Historical Novels

In order to provide authenticity to their writing, many novelists use historical facts and events as their background. It provides ready-made plots and characters; however, a novel on real historical persona such as Chanakya or Rani Laxmibai would become too predictable. Nevertheless, the historical themes, where storyline is woven around a historical event can provide creative space to the author and generate interest among the readers. Many novelists such as Leo Tolstoy and Charles Dickens used the real historical events in their novels *War and Peace* and *A Tale of Two Cities respectively*. It is needless to say that they are the masterpieces of world literature. Stendhal's Charterhouse reveal, in the 20th century, distinguished historical novels such as Arthur Koestler's *The Gladiators* (1939), Robert Graves's *I, Claudius* (1934), Zoé Oldenbourg's *Destiny of Fire* (1960), and Mary Renault's *The King Must Die* (1958) exemplify an important function of the fictional imagination—to interpret remote events in human and particular terms, to transform documentary fact, with the assistance of imaginative conjecture, into immediate sensuous and emotional experience.

The credit for initiating the historical novel goes to Sir Walter Scott in the 19th century. Sir Walter Scott pioneered the uses of historical setting, characters and events and made the historical events and subjects vital for the course of narrative as well as for the leading characters. His *Ivanhoe* (1819) is the best example of historical novel, with setting of the Norman domination period of the Saxons during the time of Richard I. *Romola* (1863) by George Eliot is also an outstanding example of historical novel based on the history of Florence during the Renaissance. Virginia Woolf also uses much historical reference in her *Orlando* (1928) and *Between the Acts* (1941).

ii. Picaresque Novel

The form of Picaresque novel was developed in Spain around 16th century. Such a novel deals with the life of a rogue or *pícaro* who leads a carefree life full of adventures and travelling. A typical picaresque story deals with a protagonist who has no or little moral values and who shows little or no change in his or her character. Such a story is realistic in manners and episodic in structure. It also often uses satire as a treatment. Daniel Defoe wrote two English novels, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and *Moll Flanders* (1722) that were having picaresque elements. *Tom Jones* by Henry Fielding has a hero who shows indifference towards moral things and, hence, is called a picaresque novel. Dickens' *Pickwick Papers* is yet another example of a picaresque novel due to its treatment of the narrative and the protagonist, Pickwick Papers.

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer (1876) by Mark Twain, *Felix Krull* (1954) by Thomas Mann and *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953) by Saul Bellow are some of the best novels that came in the later period. The great quasi-picaresque novel *Don Quixote* (1605) by Cervantes, was one of the most important novels that inspired many modern novelists.

iii. Sentimental Novels

The term *sentimental* is applied to the novels that were written during the second half of the 18th century. These kinds of novels were started being written after the pioneering novels by Richardson and Rousseau in their *Pamela* (1740) and *Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761) respectively. These novels exhibit a passionate attachment between male and female in terms of sentiments that are beyond physical. These novels were followed by *Sentimental Journey* (1768) by Laurence Sterne, where the author defined and demonstrated the form of the novel elaborately. There was a massive trend of the sentimental novels during the Romantic Movement of the 18th century. The characteristics of sentimental novels can be seen clearly in Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1760–67), though the novel was more of a parody than eulogy of the sentimental novel. The trend of the Sentimental novels went on during the Victorian Era as well under the influence of religious righteousness of the age and growing demand of such novels among the middle class. Later in the 19th and 20th centuries, the trend of sentimental novels was carry forwarded by the greatest authors such as neither Charles Dickens nor William Makepeace

Thackeray. These authors could not resist the temptation of writing sentimental novels during their tenure. The prolonged dialogues of the characters on their deathbed, an overt expression of feelings and a deliberately emotional appeal are some common characteristics of their novels.

Though many critics found sentimental novels to be illogical and melodramatic, it continued appealing even in the second half of the 20th century. Erich Segal's *Love Story* (1970), one such prominent example. The success of sentimental novels have proved that stock emotions are always easily to arouse through stock devices, however, both the objective and the method are generally very hard to attain even by some of the serious writers.

iv. Gothic Novel

The term Gothic was derived from the field of architecture, Augustan Age of 12th century. The atmosphere of a Gothic novel is usually dark, dungeon, in an old castle of Gothic Architecture type. A typical story of a Gothic novel consists of an innocent character, usually a girl, trapped in a haunted castle. *Castle of Otranto* (1765) by Horace Walpole is one of the earliest of English novels that can be termed as a Gothic Novel with elements of mystery, horror, and wonder. Later *Monk* (1796) by Matthew Gregory Lewis continued the tradition 18th century. *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley enhanced the Gothic novel by its bizarre God-defying experiments and its monster. In the United States, many authors, including Edgar Allan Poe advanced the Gothic narrative style luminously. The initial versions of science fiction by H.G. Wells in *Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896) among others took lead from the Gothic narrative and the Gothic atmosphere. Later in England, many prominent authors such as Iris Murdoch in the Gormenghast sequence starting from 1946 of Mervyn Peake have the Gothic elements in their work of arts. It is interesting to note that the Gothic fiction has sustained century after century due to its dramatic effect and instant entertainment that it provides.

v. Epistolary Novel

An epistolary novel is a novel that develops its narrative by exchange of letter between two or more characters in a fiction. Samuel Richardson was the pioneer of this form of writing in English. This form of writing became instant success in the 17th century due to host of reasons such as a mass of middle class who could read, the glorification of the art of letter writing, and above all the rise of the printing industry. Richardson composed the first epistolary novel *Pamela* (1740) and later followed it by *Clarissa* (1748). Both the novels got phenomenal success and the form of epistolary novel was imitated by a host of authors all over Europe. The epistolary novel, with its free outpouring of the heart, led the way to the romanticism in the coming century. During the 19th century, when the art of letter-writing was had not become an archaic form, the romantic author Wilkie Collins could tell the mystery tale of *The*

Moonstone (1868) which used an epistolary method i.e. the exchange of letters. However, with the growing technology where letter writing is no longer considered to be even necessary, it would be difficult for a modern wittier to attempt an epistolary novel in 20th century. Nevertheless, some of the novelists of 20th century did try writing novels with epistolary narrative technique with fair success. *Meeting by the River* (1967) by Christopher Isherwood and *P. S. I Love You* (2004) by Cecelia Ahern have been some genuine attempts by the authors with reasonable success. However, no other century than the 17th century and no other author than Richardson have enjoyed the amount of success and glory that they received.

vi. Detective, mystery, thriller

Detective story or a *mystery* or a *thriller* are the terms that are used interchangeably for the kind of writings that are having similar elements such as suspense, crime, probing, unfolding of the truth to name a few. The typical detective story excites the reader with enigmatic crimes, usually leading to a violent mystery, and puzzles his mind. It thrills the reader about the possible crime suspect and its ultimate unfolding of the truth. Thus, a detective story or a mystery can be used interchangeably as synonymous; however, a thriller story is slightly different in terms of its treatment. A typical thriller story has a series of adventurous events without the elements of mystery or overtly violent crimes in it. The detective tales of Ian Fleming are examples of such thrillers. However, the detective stories of Len Deighton may not fit into the category of thriller as they have stimulating elements of mystery and detection. As a genre, the detective novel began as a reputable subdivision of novel writing in the second half of 19th century. The novels such as *Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1841) by Edger Allen Poe, *Edwin Drood* (1870) by Charles Dickens that he could not complete, and *Moonstone* (1868) and *Woman in White* (1860) by Wilkie Collins are some of the praiseworthy works of this genre. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle took his form of writing to another level with his short stories of the detective Sherlock Holmes during the first half of the 20th century. Many of his predecessors developed novels with similar themes. Some critics started considering the form detective novels or short stories to be subsidiary or inferior kind despite the scholarly wisdom that these stories of possessed and the extraordinary brilliance with which they were written. Many literary scholar preferred writing mystery or detective stories either as marginal writing as G.K. Chesterton or wrote under a pseudonym as J.I.M. Stewart, who was working as a Reader in English literature at Oxford University, wrote detective stories with a pseudonym 'Michael Innes'. Many poet laureates and Oxford scholars, such as C. Day Lewis and Dorothy L. Sayers, initially wrote a few detective novels but gradually they gave up writing in this genre.

Nevertheless, there were many dedicated practitioners of this genre such as Agatha Christie, Ellery Queen, Erle Stanley Gardner, Raymond Chandler wrote extensively and quite successfully. Some authors of 20th

century such as Edgar Wallace and Mickey Spillane have been highly successful from commercial point of view. These authors have given much pleasure and excitement to the readers around the world. The courageous and intelligent spies or private investigators have become typical heroes of the modern times. The James Bond series of Ian Fleming and *Thirty-nine Steps* John Buchan have become a huge success in the second half of the 20th century. Later, the novels of John Le Carré such as *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1963) and *Smiley's People* (1980) have also been a huge success among the readers.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS – 2
JOIN A WITH B

A	**B**
1) Gothic Novel	a) *Clarissa*
2) Epistolary Novel	b) *Moll Flanders*
3) Historical Novel	c) *Edwin Drood*
4) Picaresque Novel	e) *Ivanhoe*
5) Mystery-Detective Novel	d) *Castel of Otranto*

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS – 3

State Whether The Following Statements Of 'True' Or 'False'

1) Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* is an example of historical novel.
2) The form of Gothic novel was originated in Spain.
3) In a 'Historical Novel' a novelist uses some real historical events and place to develop this story.
4) Erich Segal's *Love Story* is an earliest example of 'sentimental novel'.
5) The term 'Gothic' is derived from the field of 'architecture'.
6) Many Oxford scholars considered 'mystery and detective' stories inferior.
7) H.G. Wells' *Island of Doctor Moreau* has Gothic atmosphere as its setting.
8) Samuel Richardson pioneered Picaresque novel in English.
9) *P. S. I Love You* by Cecelia Ahern has some elements of epistolary novel.
10) Dickens and Thackeray did not write 'Sentimental Novels' during 19th Century.

2.4 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have studied:

- Various aspects of the novel;
- Various types of novels with their appropriate examples.

2.5 KEY WORDS

Character a person in a novel, play, or film

Complex a type of character in a novel, play or film that is not easy to analyze or understand

Conceive form or plan (a plot, idea etc.) in the mind

Conflict the opposition of persons or forces that gives rise to the dramatic action in a drama or fiction

Dynamic of a character who is positive in attitude and full of energy and new ideas

External belonging to or forming the outer surface or structure of something; of or pertaining to the physical struggle of a character in a drama or fiction

Genre a style or category of art, music, or literature

Gothic of or related to Goths; of or relating to a style of writing that describes strange or frightening events that take place mysterious places, especially in the palaces and forts built in the style of architecture prevalent in the Western Europe in the 12th–16th centuries

Goths members of a Germanic people that invaded the Roman Empire from the east between the 3rd and 5th centuries

Improbabilities the quality of being improbable; unlikelihood

Improbable not likely to be true or to happen

Internal of or situated inside; the mental struggle experienced in a character's mind in a drama or fiction

Medieval relating to the Middle Ages; the period of European history from 5th century to 1453

Misanthrope a person who hates humankind and avoids human society

Mystery something that is difficult or impossible to understand or explain; a novel, play, or film dealing with puzzling crimes, especially a murder

Narrative a spoken or written account of connected events; a story

Nostalgia a sentimental longing or wistful affection for a period in the past

Overt done or shown openly; plainly apparent

Picaresque	relating to an episodic style of fiction dealing with the adventures of a rough and dishonest but appealing hero
Pioneer	a person who is among the first to explore or originate a new line of thought or activity
Plot	the main events of a play, novel, film, or similar work, devised and presented by the writer as an interrelated sequence
Portrayal	a description of someone or something in a particular way; a representation
Pseudonym	a fictitious name, especially one used by an author
Reader	a university lecturer of the highest grade below professor
Rogue	a dishonest or unprincipled man or woman
Sentimental	of or prompted by feelings of tenderness, sadness, or nostalgia
Setting	the place and time at which a play, novel, or film is represented as happening
Stream of Consciousness	a person's thoughts and conscious reactions to events, perceived as a continuous flow. The term was introduced by William James in his *Principles of Psychology* (1890); a literary style in which a character's thoughts, feelings, and reactions are depicted in a continuous flow uninterrupted by objective description or conventional dialogue. James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and Marcel Proust are among its notable early exponents

2.6 BOOKS SUGGESTED

1. Lubbock, Percy. *The Craft of Fiction.* Michaela Bronstein Publication. 2014
2. Stevick, Philip ed. *The Theory of the Novel*. The Free Press, A Division of Macmillan Publication Co. INC. New York. 1967
3. Kermode, Frank. *The Sense of an Ending*. Oxford University Press. 2000
4. Lodge, David. *The Art of Fiction*. Secker & Warburg. UK. 1992
5. Cuddon, J. A. *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. Penguin Books. 2015

ANSWERS

Check Your Progress – 1 (Answer the following questions briefly)

1) What is a 'melodramatic plot'?

The plot that depends on coincidences or improbabilities is known as a 'melodramatic plot'. This kind of plot can be seen in many prominent works of fiction. *Howards End* (1910) of E.M. Forster has a melodramatic plot which is an example of classic British novel.

2) What are the two main kinds of character according to E. M. Foster?

According to E. M. Foster, there are two kinds of characters namely 'flat' and 'round'. Flat or a 'simple' character remains unchanged throughout the course of narrative. Whereas a 'round' character is one who changes during the course of a narrative from bad to good or from good to bad. Round character is also known as 'complex' or 'dynamic' character.

3) What is use of setting in a novel?

The setting of a fictional work is the general location, certain time zone in history and milieu in which narrative takes place. Setting enables author to provide background of the characters and their actions. It also helps the reader to correlate the characters and their background effective interpretation.

4) What is the difference between 'first-person' and 'third-person' narratives?

In the 'first-person narrative' the author uses a character to narrate the story. It is also known as 'fictional autobiography' and the character that expresses the views and ideas of the authors is called 'mouth-piece' of the author. In a third-person narrative, the narrator is an outsider and yet omnipresent in the story. The author narrates all the characters from outside the story and refers to them by their names, or by their personal pronoun such as 'he', 'she,' 'they' etc.

Check Your Progress – 2 (Join A with B)

A	**B**
1) Gothic Novel	d) *Castel of Otranto*
2) Epistolary Novel	a) *Clarissa*
3) Historical Novel	e) *Ivanhoe*
4) Picaresque Novel	b) *Moll Flanders*
5) Mystery-Detective Novel	c) *Edwin Drood*

Check Your Progress – 3

(State whether the following statements of 'True' or 'False')

1) Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* is an example of historical novel. **True**
2) The form of Gothic novel was originated in Spain. **False**
3) In a 'Historical Novel' a novelist uses some real historical events and place to develop this story. **True**

4) Erich Segal's *Love Story* is an earliest example of 'sentimental novel'. **False**
5) The term 'Gothic' is derived from the field of 'architecture'. **True**
6) Many Oxford scholars considered 'mystery and detective' stories inferior. **True**
7) H.G. Wells' *Island of Doctor Moreau* has Gothic atmosphere as its setting. **True**
8) Samuel Richardson pioneered Picaresque novel in English. **False**
9) *P. S. I Love You* by Cecelia Ahern has some elements of epistolary novel. **True**
10) Dickens and Thackeray did not write 'Sentimental Novels' during 19th Century. **False**