

UNIT – 1**THE FORM OF NOVEL :
A BRIEF HISTORY****STRUCTURE****1.0 Objectives****1.1 Introduction****1.2 The Form of Novel: A Brief History****1.2.1 Origin of the Term and Form****1.2.2 The Earliest Forerunners of the
English Novel in the world****1.2.3 A Brief history of novel writing in
English****1.3 Let Us Sum Up****1.4 Key Words****1.5 Books Suggested****Answers**

1.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we shall

- Study the English novel as a literary form and
- Discuss the history and development of the English novel in various centuries.

On completing this unit, you should be able to

- Distinguish a novel from other literary forms and
- Know the history and development of the form of English novel.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The art of storytelling is as old an activity as the human civilization is. As soon as human beings started using language for their communication, they started telling and retelling events that took place in their lives or in the lives of others around them. Cave paintings, for instance, were the earliest versions of retellings of past events. Once the human beings started using more structured languages, they started creating and sharing stories in an oral form. Folk songs and folk ballads were the earliest forms of such oral stories. Most of the early forms of stories were in verse, in rhythmic language, so as that they can be remembered and passed on to the next generation easily. On the other hand, there were many prose versions of stories of some great men of women that represented their great deeds. These stories can be seen almost all the culture and civilizations.

Novel is a relatively new and complex form of storytelling. In Unit – 1, we shall study the form of novel. The unit will also deal with the history and development of novel.

1.2 THE FORM OF NOVEL: A BRIEF HISTORY

1.2.1 Origin of the Term and Form

The term ‘novel’ is broadly defined as a long written story usually about imaginary characters and events. Thus, in the present time, the term ‘novel’ can be applied to many kinds of prose writings with this broad definition that denotes a long work of narrative fiction, usually in prose. A novel is longer in terms of length and scope than a short story or a novelette (a middle length story, shorter than novel and longer than short story).

In most of the European languages such as French, Dutch, Romanian, Russian, Dutch, Swedish and Norwegian, novel is referred as *roman*. The term roman is derived from the Latin word *romance* which meant a prose tale based on legends or characters of some remote time and place with elements of heroism, adventure and mystery. In the medieval times, in 2nd and 3rd century AD Greek writers wrote *romances*. A typical *romance* used to deal with the story a separation and union of lovers after a series of hardship and adventure.

On the other hand, the origin of the term ‘novel’ in English language is derived from an Italian term *novella*, which literally meant ‘new’, or ‘a short story of something new’. The word ‘novella’ is derived from a Latin word, which originally meant ‘new’. In its original form in Italy around 14th century, *novella* used to be ‘a short tale in prose’ and there was a trend of collecting such stories in one volume. Some of these stories used to be serious in nature whereas some other used to be scandalous. *Decameron* of Giovanni Boccaccio was one of the most famous collections of such tales. In present times, however, the term *novella* or *novelle* (in German form) is a middle length form of prose fiction.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS – 1

Join A with B:

- | A | B |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Roman</i> is derived from | a) a collection of short stories. |
| 2. <i>Novelle</i> is a characters and events. | b) a long written story of imaginary |
| 3. Boccaccio’s <i>Decameron</i> was | c) German term for novel. |
| 4. <i>Novella</i> in Italian used to mean | d) a Latin term <i>romance</i> . |
| 5. A Novel is | e) a short tale in prose. |

1.2.2 The Earliest Forerunners of the English Novel in the world

It is interesting to note that the earliest works of long narrative fictional in prose, that can be called the forerunners of novels, include the works in Latin such as the *Satyricon* by Petronius 50 AD and *The Golden Ass* by Apuleius 150 AD; the works in Greek and Rome include the

works such as *Daphnis and Chloe* by Longus late 2nd century AD; the works of ancient India in Sanskrit such as *Daśakumāracarita* by Daṇḍin and *Kadambari* by Banabhatta are dated back to 6th and 7th centuries respectively. In 11th century Japan, Murasaki Shikibu wrote *The Tale of Genji* and in the 12th century, Ibn Tufail wrote *Hayy ibn Yaqdhan* in Arabic.

There are many peculiar features in the western novels that are similar to the epic poetry. However, until 18th century, many ancient Asian epics were not known to Europe. These epics include Indian epics such as *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* of 2nd and 4th century BC respectively. Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh* appeared in 13th century BC whereas *Beowulf* of the Anglo-Saxon appeared in around 750 – 1000 AD. Other non-European epics that influenced the development of long prose narrative were the Torah, the Koran and the Bible.

The Romances of 11th to 14th century Europe have provided many elements such as a long narrative tales and heroic characters. Originally romances were written in verse form in Old French, Anglo-Norman and Occitan languages and later, in English, Italian and German. However, later on romance literature started being written in prose during the early 13th century onwards. Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* that came in early 1470s was one such example. Thomas Lodge's *Rosalynde* and Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* are 16th century Pastoral Romances that followed the Greek models.

Further, picaresque narrative of the 16th century Spain is also an important predecessor of the English novel. The term 'picaresque' is derived from the term Spanish work 'Picaro' which means 'rogue'. A typical picaresque story deals with the adventures of a carefree rogue who lives by his wits and shows little change of character throughout the long narrative. Picaresque narratives are more realistic in manner, episodic in structure, and often satiric in aim. *The Unfortunate Traveler* of Thomas Nashe that came in in the year 1594 was the first and celebrated English example of picaresque narrative. There can be seen many works of fiction that represent the picaresque characteristics in many later novels such as *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. Thus, the development of the novel as a form owes much to the prose works of the picaresque narrative. The great quasi-picaresque narrative tale *Don Quixote* (1605) by Miguel de Cervantes is one of the most important forerunners of the modern novel. It narrates the tale of an engaging madman who aspires to live by the ideals of chivalric romance in his day to day life. *Don Quixote* is actually a parody of the mediaeval romances and tries to explore the relation of archaic ideals of knight errantry and reality of human life.

Thus, compared to the forerunners of novels in non-European works, the European long narrative tales appeared quite late. However, it was after 18th century that the form of novel writing developed in a substantial way, which we will see in the next section.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS – 2

Answer The Following Questions In Brief

1) Which literary forms were the forerunners of the modern novel?

2) Which works of arts were the non-European forerunners of the modern novel?

3) Which works of arts were the European forerunners of the modern novels?

1.2.3 A Brief history of novel writing in English

As discussed in the previous section, there were many European and non-European works of art that can be termed as the predecessor of the English novel. Romance, for instance was one of the important forerunners of the English novel. One of the earliest English works that comes very close to novel writing is *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) by Daniel Defoe. It has elements of the romance such as its exotic setting and story of survival in isolation. *Robinson Crusoe* did not have most of the elements found in modern English novels such as wit, a fast narration that develops around a group of fictitious characters and a brief, conciseness plot. However, a length novel, *Love in Excess* (1719/20) by Eliza Haywood and *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* (1741) by Samuel Richardson did not have any elements of romance in them. Many literary historians believe that the English novel begins with Richardson's *Pamela*, and not with Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. Richardson's *Pamela* is also known as an epistolary novel. An epistolary novel uses exchange of letters among various characters as a narrative technique to develop its story.

It is interesting to note here that up to 16th century history and fiction were not considered to be separate forms. Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* (1471) and Sir John Mandeville's *Voyages*, written in the 14th century were sold as true histories and were accepted as facts. It was

later that both these words were termed as the works of fiction. According to Ian Watt, in 18th century there can be seen the rise of the 'realism' as against 'romantic history' or 'historical romances' and novels were the vehicle of this new realism in England. And it was this characteristic of realism that differentiated the novel form from the earlier prose narrative.

It during the 18th century only that we can see two emerging trends in novel writing: the novel of incident and novel of character. The novel of incident is the one where all the incidents have unity of action and the plot is well organized. Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and *Moll Fland* (1722) are the earliest example of novels of incident, apart from being picaresque novels. Whereas in the novel of character, the sentiments of the protagonist are in focus rather than the action or events. Thus, we can say that the novel of incident focuses more on that 'what' the protagonist does in his or her life, whereas in the novel of character focuses on 'how' the protagonist does whatever he or she does. Thus, the novel of character focuses on the motives and the psychology of the protagonist and therefore it is also referred as 'psychological novel'.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, in his preface to *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851) proposed yet the diction between two basic types of prose fiction viz. 'the realistic novel' (which is the novel proper) and 'the prose romance'. The realistic novel, according to him is characterized as the fictional attempt to give the effect of *realism*. The characters of such novels belong to ordinary social class. They lead their lives in developed modern societies. They interact with many other people around them and undergo credible, everyday experiences of life. The 18th century authors such as Defoe and Fielding were the pioneers in introducing 'the realistic novels'. Later in 19th century many renowned authors developed this form of novels, including Jane Austen, George Eliot, Anthony Trollope, William Dean Howells, and Henry James in England and America. The novels of Jane Austen, Edith Wharton, and John P. Marquand focused on the social class and customs, conversation and ways of thinking. It is therefore that they are also called 'novels of manners'.

'The prose romance', on the other hand, follows the elements of the *chivalric romance* of the middle Ages and the *Gothic novel* of the second half of 19th century. The characters of these novels can be clearly divided into two parties: heroes or villains. The protagonists of such novels are usually solitary and their personality is far greater than everyday human beings. They are usually on the quest for an ideal or in the pursuit of an enemy. The background of such novels is often some historical past or far of land. The plot of the prose romance promotes adventure. and the nonrealistic and occasionally melodramatic events are claimed by some critics to project in symbolic form the primal desires, hopes, and terrors in the depths of the human mind, and to be therefore analogous to the materials of dream, myth, ritual, and folklore. *Rob Roy* (1817) by Walter Scott, *The Three Musketeers* (1844-45) by Alexandre Dumas, and *Wuthering Heights* (1847) by Emily Bronte, are some of the earliest examples of prose romance. Later many master-novelists from America such as Edgar Allan Poe, James Fenimore Cooper, Nathaniel

Hawthorne, and Herman Melville continued the tradition of 'prose romance'.

Later in Germany, Bildungsroman and Erziehungsroman were developed that stood for "novel of formation" or "novel of education". These novels dealt with the subjects of the development of the protagonist's mind and character. These novels usually invoke the sense of social responsibility among the readers through the struggle and ultimate culmination of a protagonist into maturity which leads to the recognition of his identity and importance in the society. The pioneer of this form of novel writing was K. P. Moritz and Goethe in their masterpiece novels *Anton Reiser* (1785-90) and *Wilhelm Meisters Apprenticeship* (1795-96) respectively. Later on, many 19th and 20th century authors wrote the novels in this fashion that includes *Jane Eyre* (1847) by Charlotte Bronte, *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) by George Eliot, *Great Expectations* (1861) by Charles Dickens, *Of Human Bondage* (1915) by Somerset Maugham, and *The Magic Mountain* (1924) by Thomas Mann.

'The social novel' was the extension of the formation and education. The social novel laid emphasis the social and economic conditions that played decisive role in persuading the characters and influencing the events. They also represented a hidden or overt proposition endorsing political and social reform. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) by Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The Jungle* (1906) by Upton Sinclair, *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) by John Steinbeck, and *Burgers Daughter* (1979) Nadine Gordimer are some of the prominent examples of social novels.

Some authors used real historical events from past in their novels in order to make their narrative interesting and life-like. Such novels are called 'the historical novel' pioneered by Sir Walter Scott in the first half of the 19th century. The authors of historical novel not only use historical figures and events as their locale but also make the historical figures and events essential for the central characters and narrative. Some of the prominent authors of prominent historical novels make use of the protagonists and actions in order to represent their point of view about the historical process. *Ivanhoe* (1819) by Sir Walter Scott is a classic example of a historical novel. The novel is set in the period the Saxons of Norman era of Richard I. *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) of Charles Dickens deals with the historical event of the French Revolution with setting of Paris and London. Similarly, *Romola* (1863) by George Eliot and *War and Peace* (1869) by Leo Tolstoy encompass the setting of Florence during the Renaissance and invasion of Napoleon in Russia respectively. The Civil War and Reconstruction of Georgia are used as background in *Gone with the Wind* (1936) by Margaret Mitchell.

During the second half of 19th century, the form of novel writing surpassed all other literary forms in popularity. A number of experimentation was undertaken by a wide range of committed authors in the field of novel writing. The greatest masters of modern English literature such as Flaubert, Henry James, Proust, Mann, Joyce, and

Virginia Woolf dedicated their whole vocation to the development of art of novel writing. New methods and narrative techniques were experimented such as organization of the *point of view* to curtail or eradicate the role of the author-narrator. Or to apply the other extreme, by over emphasizing the role of the author as the inventor and controller of the narrative. The narrative technique of *Stream of Consciousness* is yet another device invented by the 19th century novelists in general and James Joys and Virginia Woolf in particular. Greater emphasis is laid on the inner conflict, in the mind of the characters rather than on the external conflicts in the narrative technique of *stream of consciousness*.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS – 3

State Whether The Following Statements Are ‘True’ Of ‘False’

- 1) Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* was an epistolary novel.
- 2) Thomas Malory’s *Le Morte d’Arthur* (1471) was sold as a true history in 16th century.
- 3) The protagonist in a picaresque novel is chivalrous, brave and heroic.
- 4) Nathaniel Hawthorne differentiated ‘novel of incident’ and ‘novel of character’.
- 5) *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte is an example of a ‘prose romance’.
- 6) Bildungsroman is a French term for ‘reformatory novel’.
- 7) *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe is a social novel.
- 8) Walter Scott is the father of ‘historical novel’.
- 9) Dickens’ *A Tale of Two Cities* uses the French Revolution as its setting.
- 10) Stream of Consciousness deals with the external conflicts of the characters.

1.3 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you have learnt

- about the English novel as a literary form compared to other literary forms of storytelling and
- the history and develop of the English novel in various centuries.

1.4 KEY WORDS

Chivalry: the system of values (such as loyalty and honor) that knights in the Middle Age were expected to follow

Chivalric: of or related to the knights and their chivalry

Epistolary: of or related to a letter; written in the form of a series of letters

Errantry: the quality, condition, or fact of wandering especially a roving in search of chivalrous adventure.

Forerunner: someone or something that comes before another

Melodrama: a situation or series of events in real or in drama in which people or character have very strong exaggerated emotions

- Middle Age:** the period of European history from about AD 500 to about 1500
- Novel:** a long written story usually about imaginary characters and events
- Picaresque:** of or related to rogues and rascals; telling a story of the adventures of a playful and dishonest character
- Predecessor** : someone or something that comes before something else
- Prose** : writing that is not poetry
- Protagonist** : the main character in a novel, play, film etc.
- Realism** : a style of art or literature that shows or describes people and things as they are in real life
- Renaissance:** the period of European history between the 14th and 17th centuries when there was a new interest in science and in ancient art and literature especially in Italy
- Romance** : a medieval tale based on legend, chivalric love and adventure; a prose narrative treating imaginary characters involved in events remote in time and space
- Verse** : writing in which words are arranged in a rhythmic pattern; a part of a poem or song

1.5 BOOKS SUGGESTED

1. Foster, E. M. *Aspects of the Novel*. Mariner Books. UK. 1956
2. Watt, Ian. *The Rise of the Novel*. University of California Press. USA 2001
3. Booth, Wayne C. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. University of Chicago Press. USA 1983
4. Abrams, M. H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Thomson Asia Pte Ltd. Singapore. 2011 10th Edition.

ANSWERS

Check Your Progress – 1

Join A with B:

- | A | B |
|---|---|
| 1. <i>Roman</i> is derived from | d) a Latin term <i>romance</i> . |
| 2. <i>Novelle</i> is a | c) German term for novel. |
| 3. Boccaccio's <i>Decameron</i> was | a) a collection of short stories. |
| 4. <i>Novella</i> in Italian used to mean | e) a short tale in prose. |
| 5. A Novel is | b) a long written story of imaginary characters and events. |

Check Your Progress – 2

Answer the following questions in brief:

1) Which literary forms were the forerunners of the English novel?

The literary form that can be considered the forerunners of the English novel were the Greco Roman and the mediaeval romances, the epic forms written in Asian countries, the form of short narratives written in Italy as novelette and Picaresque narratives written in Spain.

2) Which works of arts were the non-European forerunners of the English novel?

The Indian epics such as *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* of 2nd and 4th century BC; the works of ancient India in Sanskrit such as *Daśakumāracarita* by Daṇḍin and *Kadambari* by Banabhatta dated back to 6th and 7th centuries; Murasaki Shikibu's *The Tale of Genji* and in the 12th century Ibn Tufail's *Hayy ibn Yaqdhān* in Arabic respectively were the non-European forerunners of the English novel.

3) Which works of arts were the European forerunners of the English novels?

Beowulf of the Anglo-Saxon Period around 750 – 1000 AD, Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* in early 1470s, Thomas Lodge's *Rosalynde* and Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* in 16th and the picaresque narrative of the 16th century Spain are some of the important forerunners of the English novel.

Check Your Progress – 3

State whether the following statements are 'True' or 'False':

- 1) Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* was an epistolary novel. – **False**
- 2) Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* was sold as a true history in 16th century. **True**
- 3) The protagonist in picaresque novels is chivalrous, brave and heroic. **False**
- 4) Nathaniel Hawthorne differentiated 'novel of incident' and 'novel of character'. **False**
- 5) *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte is an example of a 'prose romance'. **True**
- 6) Bildungsroman is a French term for 'reformatory novel'. **False**
- 7) *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe is a social novel. **True**
- 8) Walter Scott is the father of 'historical novel'. **True**
- 9) Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* uses the French Revolution as its setting. **True**
- 10) Stream of Consciousness deals with the external conflicts of the characters. **False**