

ASPECTS OF A NOVEL

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Today we are here to discuss to know and to analyse how to read a novel. Reading of a novel is an activity which as readers of literature which as readers of story. All of us who have some degree of education are quite familiar with and yet despite that familiarity despite having read quite a few novels for entertainment for knowledge purpose or simply for the sake of passing time despite being well versed with so many texts when we get acquainted with the novel as a literary text. As a text for purposes of academic analysis, for academic understanding and for attempting our examinations and understanding of the novel acquires an enigmatic tone. Why so despite being a story the novel because of its mass it makes an amorphous work where the paths are difficult to understand to assimilate to correlate etc. That is why a systematic exposure to how to read a novel for academic purposes acquires criticality. Till the 17th century it was poetry that was the chief form of literary expression, before that it had been grammar, much before that it had been epic but after the 17th century once the novel came into limelight it very quickly replaced all other forms of literature as the dominant form of literary expression.

The 18 & the 19th century saw the popularity of the novel taking over the popularity of all other literary forms in a unprecedented way, this popularity has continued to grow through the 20th and the 21st century. Naturally a novel is a prime reading close to our heart. And yet as I told you for academic purposes its understanding a student needs to have a clear understanding of how to deliver alongside enjoying a novel. A novel consist of several aspects amongst them a story, the characters, the plots, the educational side are some of the main features. As reader for the novel we have to have a clear understanding of these various aspects. What I am attempting here is not really an esoteric talk an esoteric critics on the aspects of the novel, what I want to discuss here is to provide students clear guidelines. Traversing alongwith they can understand, enjoy attempt a novel for their academic purposes. Primarily a novel is a story. It is a story that is a narrative of events. A narrative of events that moves along a sequence of time. And when we read a novel we have to retain in our mind this crucial aspect that it maintains a sequence of time. A story make our that is a story of a novel make our a few days action even less in time. Or it may cover a whole lifetime, even it may go beyond a lifetime and covers several generations. We have novel written by D.H. Lawrence where several generations of the family I refer to *The Rainbow*, I refer to *Woman in Love* and works like that where several generations are depicted in a sequence of time. Or as I told you it may cover even a single day's events. One very good example of a novel with a vast bulk and yet being wrapped up within a span of a single day is James Joyce's *Ulysses* where the protagonist of the novel is shown passing through a quick sequence of events. Most of them mental events within a single span of day and the novelist is careful to observe all the upheavals all the link ups that are going on in the mind of protagonist during this day. For us as students it is a crucial significance to understand what how much span of time the story covers and how those events unravel. Then as I told you a story may contain events which mundane, it may contain events that are sudden, unraveling mysteries that are violent, that are unexpected and hence interesting.

As students we have to be aware what type of events are unfolding. It is the turn of events is unexpected. The novelist may want to use it as a device for giving us a peep into the kinds of times that the characters of the novel are living in. It is the story moves along expected lines when may be

the novelist is not really concerned about a sense of discovery, giving a sense of discovery to the reader. But it is rather concerned in depicting a finer aspect of the psychology of the characters about whom the story is constructed. So as students of the novel we would do well to look into what kind of story the novel is. If the story moves from one generation to another generation when obviously a significance think to look for is the changes in perceptions, the changes in value system, the changes in mutual expectations of various characters. Another significant aspect of the novel is the characters themselves, obviously a novel normally is a story about human beings. It seeks to influence its readers through depiction of a set of human beings. So looking at the kinds of characters where the novelist has created is in itself a significant aspect. A novel may be a social story taking up several characters simultaneously for an elaborate depictions. A social story has to be totalitarian in nature. It will reveal to the readers the kind of milieu in which may be the novelist has grown up or may be his characters have grown up. Normally narratives are structured around one or two main characters whom we know as the protagonists of the novel. These protagonists in the development of the story may be surrounded by different categories of people. What is of vital significance is that the protagonist or the protagonists will have specific kind of relations with these subordinate characters these relations may be overtly talked about or they may be covertly presented if they are covertly presented that doesn't mean that the novelist wants to give any less significance to such relations. One good example of antagonistic relation is that of *Jane Eyre*. When the novel opens, when Jane is ten years of age we find her placed in a situation where her life is surrounded rather overshadowed by set of characters with whom she is clearly in an antagonistic relations but for whom there is no way for her extricate herself. While the novelist Charlotte Brontë most of her initial narrative time upon this antagonistic depiction yet Jane has one person in very house, the governess of the house who have a shuttle support for Jane though the kind of sustenance that Jane draws from her is never elaborated upon. Yet it is as significant as her relationship with the antagonistic characters is characters depending upon their role in the work of fiction will be major or of minor significant. Very often characters of major significance are introduced early in the story so when we as students start reading a novel initially we should be very careful about the sought of depictions that are being done about a character or a set of characters. If the novelist is spending a lot of time with a particular character or couple of characters obviously they are going to be whither through the length of the story. On the other hand if a set of characters or a character is introduced to us somewhere in the middle of paragraph and then after few lines a paragraph or two the novelist moves to something else, chances of that the character of that the character will be of minor nature. Anyhow for major characters in a story, what is a significance is the development of this character or this person. The protagonist of the novel may be a person who remains static in his outlook to life in his reactions in his or her motives and things like that. Or we may trace a growth not just physical but mental as well. A growth where that depicts to us how the value system of the protagonist developed. How it undergoes certain changes at various points of time and how finally that character turns out to be different from what he or she had been in the beginning. One very good example here is that of Peep in *Decencies* great expectations where the outlook of character, the protagonist undergoes a sea change. This is one of the most significant aspect about which a novel is written. Another important thing about a character is his or her relations with his time. Is a character a conformist, is he or she is reactionary, is the character extrovert or introvert, thus the character depend more upon his physical problems or thus he covet his mental qualities. All of them are things that are to be taken note of. Besides characterization another significant aspect of reading a novel is knowing about the plot. The plot is the skeleton along which the story moves while there may be certain things which are common between story and a plot yet a plot is to be differentiated from the story. While a story is a narrative of events in a sequence of time, a plot is a narrative of events with causality to make the point more explicit let me refer to E M Forster he makes an interesting observation in his book *Aspects of the Novel* where he says by way of an example that the king died and the queen died is a story whereas the king died and the queen died because of it, is a plot. There is a relation of now in the second

example these is a clear relation of causality between the two events. Novels are structured around this important aspect of causality. A novelist may discover innumerable possibilities for that causality. The queen dies because of the shock that she got as a result of the unexpected death of the king, because of the untimely death, because of the violent treacherous death or may be the queen died as a result of the death of the kind because when she realised that she was nothing more than an ordinary person who had been until here sustained by extraneous forces and this discovery of her rather normal status, this mental journey of knowing yourself may ultimately lead to a state where the queen realises her worthlessness and it is this worthlessness that takes away from her will to live. Thus, plot is that way amongst the most significant things that we as students of the novel should be aware of should be very closely tracing a plot normally will have a beginning, a middle and then it may or may not have an end, when I say may not have an end, I mean to say there may be no development as such from the middle of the story which may be not worthy. The opening of a plot in a novel is such that it naturally leads to a middle. That widens the scope of the opening, that increases the complexity of the story. And because of the increasing complexity, because of the widening of issues naturally the interest of the reader becomes deep and deeper. It is this interest that sustains the readability of the work of fiction. In fact novelist in the 19th century, novelist like Dickens, they developed a particular style of writing stories, they used to be part of their strategies that the chapters of there novels would an in such a way containing such unexpected developments that the curiosity of the readers naturally be roused and the reader would feel hooked on to the next chapter of course it has its own why they wrote that way has its own reasons they has their compulsion that novels very often were published in the form of serials, in newspapers which appears weekly, news magazines which appears fortnightly and so on. So leaving the story at a point which would be a strong **impeller** for the reader to look forward to the next issue of the work. Anyways for us as readers be careful of these developments the ways, the events unfold, the way, the events are related to one another contains its own significance. Of course a novel is not merely a conglomeration of characters of a story of a plot etc. A novel has a wider purpose which is what guides the novelist to write the work. For us it is of significance to try to discover that purpose. Although it is not at all necessary for us that we stick to the purpose of the novelist only we are free as readers to derive our own mean a meaning which may be entirely independent of the purpose of the novelist. The kind of story is that people like Daniel Defoe wrote a story containing the live events of the character like Mortlanders or a character like Pamela by Samuel Richardson. We in today's age are likely to differ from the opinion of the novelist about his or her characters. While the novelist may have patronizing attitude towards his or her characters we may in fact not at all patronizing and thus, reject the purpose of the novelist. But anyway knowing the purpose is certainly going to help us by way of adherence the opinion of its creator or by way of differing from that cardinal purpose. Being aware of that purpose will naturally transport us to the time in which the story was written and being able to relate to the times being able to appreciate the milieu in which the novelist wrote is certainly going to help our understanding of the novel.