

# NOVEL

## Definition

The novel is an extended prose narrative. Novels are fictional narratives representing a way of life or an experience. They range from slight recollections of a small part of life or an experience to the most complete and detailed accounts imaginable; and they vary from the lightest to the most serious experiences and events faced by man.

## Analyzing the Novel

When one analyzes a novel, he “breaks up” the total work into separate elements so that he may discover the craftsmanship and artistry of its author. In this way he comes to a deeper appreciation of the novel.

1. **Theme**: The basic idea or general truth the author is trying to present; the statement he makes about a topic. If the novel, for example, is about love (topic), what does the author say about it (statement): Love is cruel, Love is kind, Love is the source of all sorrows.
2. **Philosophy**: The beliefs expressed by the author through his characters and commentary. Does any specific character speak for the author?
3. **Characters**: The persons who act and are acted upon in the novel. The characters serve to carry the author’s theme. In considering characters, the reader must note (1) each character’s own actions, (2) the dialogue between the character under analysis and others, (3) what the author says directly about a character, and (4) what others say about the character under analysis.
4. **Structure**: The way the author selects and arranges the details of his story.
5. **Time**: The arbitrary division of existence in a novel. The most common varieties of time in literature are (1) chronological, in which all things follow in their natural sequence; (2) flashback, in which the author leaves the present time through recollection of a character, dream of a character, or director narration to tell of an incident that happened at an earlier time; and (3) overlapping, in which the author progresses to a certain point with one character or group, then switches to another character or group and brings them to the same point.
6. **Style**: The author's technique of writing. Consideration should be given to his sentence length... his punctuation or lack of it; his diction (word choice) and vocabulary; his use of symbols, metaphor and simile constructions, and other forms of figurative language; and his uses of idiom, slang, and vernacular speech.
7. **Point of View**: The way in which the author views the story; who tells it. The most widely used points of view are (1) all knowing--omniscient, in which the author knows and portrays the thoughts and action of all the characters--he is always aware of what will happen at every point of the story; (2) first person, in which the story is told from the limited knowledge of the

narrator--all thoughts and actions are seen through his eyes; (3) partial omniscient, in which the author limits his awareness of thoughts and actions to one character; and (4) objective, in which the author sees and records without expressing an opinion or comment.

8. **Plot**: The situation or story itself; what is happening between the characters.
9. **Conflict**: The struggle that grows out of the interplay between two opposed forces, for example, the hero and the villain. Often the conflict is internal; two elements in the character of one man struggle for mastery—a sense of responsibility, a wish for independence. External conflict occurs when a character struggles against another character or against an element outside himself, such as nature, society...Frequently, of course, an author combines both types of conflict in a novel.
10. **Settings**: The location of the story; the physical, spiritual, supernatural, or extraterrestrial background. Setting is determined by the physical (either real or imaginary) site, the time period, and the general environment of the story (lower class, high society, religious, etc.).
11. **Tone**: The author's attitude toward the subject and audience as implied in the novel. Is he mocking? cynical? humorous? angry? sad?
12. **Symbols**: The devices that stand for themselves and, at the same time, for something deeper and more meaningful. Does the author use a central symbol in his work? a series of symbols? What does he intend them to mean?
13. **Title**: What is the significance of the title? How is it related to the novel? Does it have meaning in terms of the novel's theme or setting?