

The Short Story and the Novel

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The Short Story: A fictional work depicting one character's inner conflict or conflict with others, usually having one thematic focus. Short stories generally produce a single, focused emotional and intellectual response in the reader. Novels, by contrast, usually depict conflicts among many characters developed through a variety of episodes, stimulating a complexity of responses in the reader. The short story form ranges from "short shorts," which run in length from a sentence to four pages, to novellas that can easily be 100 pages long and exhibit characteristics of both the short story and the novel..

Novel: A long work of written fiction. Most novels involve many characters and tell a complex story by placing the characters in a number of different situations.

Because novels are long—generally 200 pages or more—novelists can tell more richly detailed tales than can authors of briefer literary forms such as the short story. Many readers consider the novel the most flexible type of literature, and thus the one with the most possibilities. For example, writers can produce novels that have the tension of a drama, the scope of an epic poem, the type of commentary found in an essay, and the imagery and rhythm of a lyric poem. Over the centuries writers have continually experimented with the novel form, and it has constantly evolved in new directions.

The word *novel* came into use during the Renaissance (14th century to 17th century). Like the short story, the novel tells a story, but unlike the short story, it presents more than an episode. In a novel, the writer has the freedom to develop plot, characters, and theme slowly. The novelist can also surround the main plot with subplots that flesh out the tale. Unlike short stories, most novels have numerous shifts in time, place, and focus of interest.

Like epic poetry, the novel may celebrate grand designs or great events, but unlike epic poetry it also may pay attention to details of everyday life, such as people's daily tasks and social obligations. For example, the epic the *Iliad* by ancient Greek poet Homer depicts the Trojan War in grand terms but does not comment on the experience of the common soldiers. By contrast, in his novel *Madame Bovary* (1857), French writer Gustave Flaubert shows the main character shopping and worrying about household expenses.

Like a playwright, a novelist tells a story, but a novelist has more freedom than a playwright to portray events outside the framework of the immediate story, such as historical events that happen at the same time as the story. The playwright is more limited in this way because description in dramas is generally conveyed through dialogue between characters. In a play, rarely does a narrator speak directly to the audience, as the narrator of a novel can. Novelists can also make smoother changes in time and place than can playwrights, who must write their works so that they can be performed on stage.

Elements of the Novel:

1. **Plot:** The plot of a novel is the narrative and thematic development of the story—that is, what happens and what these events mean. Plot is a series of events that depend on one another, not a sequence of unrelated episodes.
2. **Characters:** The characters of a book are the fictional figures who move through the plot. They are invented by the author and are made of words rather than of flesh and blood.
3. **Conflict:** The plot of a novel unfolds as the novel's characters deal with conflict. The conflict may be of various types: physical, ethical or emotional. The conflict may be between two characters, an individual or a small group of characters and the rest of society, between social groups, or within a character's own mind
4. **Setting:** The time and place of the novel's action.
5. **Theme:** the main idea in the novel. It can also be defined as the underlying meaning of the story.
6. **Point of View:** The point of view of a literary work is the perspective from which a story is told. The three major types of point of view in novels are *omniscient* (all-knowing narrator outside the story itself), *first-person* (observations of a character who narrates the story), and *third-person-limited* (outside narration focusing on one character's observations).
7. **Symbolism:** the use of objects or ideas as symbols that represent other, more abstract concepts. With symbols, authors can write

scenes that deepen the reader's understanding of the theme of the novel. This occurs because the symbols have an unspoken meaning beyond their immediate presence in the story. Symbolism thus allows the author to address controversial matters, such as political or religious issues, without openly discussing these subjects. Many novels have two layers of meaning. The first is in the literal plot, the second in a symbolic layer in which images and objects represent abstract ideas and feelings. Using symbols allows authors to express themselves indirectly on delicate or controversial matters

8. **Style:** A novelist's is the novelist's choice of words and phrases, and how the novelist arranges these words and phrases in sentences and paragraphs. Style can determine the pace at which the story is told and how directly the author relates the story to the reader. Style can be broken down into three types: simple, complex, and mid-style.
9. **Imagery and Irony:** Novelists use many other specific techniques in their works. Two of the most important are imagery, the collection of descriptive details that appeal to the senses and emotions of the reader by creating a sense of real experience, and irony, the reader's recognition that what is expected from a statement, situation, or action is different from what actually happens.

Types of the Novel:

- Social novel
- Novel of manners
- Psychological novel
- Educational novel
- Philosophical novel
- Popular novel
- Detective novel
- Spy novel
- Science-fiction novel

- Fantasy novel
- Horror novel
- Romance novel
- Historical novel
- Epistolary novel