ENGLISH LITERATURE
SUBJECT CODE – 30
Fiction, Short Story [Part-A]

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The word fiction has been derived from Latin word “fictus” that means, “to form”.

Merriam Webster defines it as, “literature in the form of prose, especially novels, that describes imaginary events and people.

“Fiction” is defined as any imaginative re-creation of life in prose narrative form. All fiction is a falsehood of sorts because it relates events that never actually happened to people (characters) who never existed, and not in the manner portrayed in the stories. However, fiction writers aim at creating “legitimate untruths,” since they seek to demonstrate meaningful insights into the human condition. Therefore, fiction is “untrue” in the absolute sense, but true in the universal sense. Novel is a prominent form of Fiction.

The novel is only one of many possible prose narrative forms. It shares with other narratives, like the epic and the romance, two basic characteristics: a story and a story-teller. The Seed of the Novel lay in the medieval romance, a fantastic tale of love and adventure which is deprived from the songs, ballads and epic poems.

The epic tells a traditional story and is an amalgam of myth, history, and fiction. Its heroes are gods and goddesses and extraordinary men and women. The romance also tells stories of larger-than-life characters. It emphasizes adventure and often involves a quest for an ideal or the pursuit of an enemy. The Novel was a product of an intellectual milieu shaped by the great seventeenth-century.

Fiction has been the most widely read genres in M.A. syllabus in every University and therefore, number of questions are asked from several types of novels. It is not possible to read each novel in detailed manner but students can understand the theme, plot, subplots, characters and climax from this book. This Unit has been designed in such a manner that students should become aware about every author, their writing style, their themes and the age in which they wrote. Literature is the mirror of the society and an author always reflects his age in his works. With this vision, I hope this file will be helpful for the students to understand the writers and their works in detailed manner. Practice questions are given to do a quick analysis and revision.
FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE RISE OF NOVEL IN THE 18TH CENTURY

Following are the reasons for the rise of the novel in 18th century England.

- **Rise of Middle Class**
  The literature of the 17th century flourished under the patronage of the upper classes. The 18th century in England social history is characterised by the rise of the middle class.
  
  Because of tremendous growth in trade and commerce, the England merchant class was becoming wealthy and this newly rich class wanted to excel in the field of literature also.
  
  This class was neglected by the high-born writers and their tastes and aspirations were expressed by the novelists of the time. The Novel was, in fact, the product of middle class. With the rise of middle class, hence, the rise of the novel was quite natural.

- **Growth of Newspapers and Magazines**
  In the 18th century, the appearance of newspapers and magazines attracted a large number of readers from the middle class. These new readers had little interest in the romances and the tragedies which had interested the upper class.
  
  Thus need for new type of literature rose that would express the new ideas of the 18th century and this new type of literature was none but novel.

- **Rise of Realism**
  - The 18th-century literature was characterised by the spirit of realism and romantic features like enthusiasm, passion, imaginations etc. declined in this period.
  
  - Reason, intellect, correctness, satirical spirit etc. were the main characteristics of 18th-century literature. The English novel had all these characteristics.

- **Role of Women**
  In the 18th century, women of upper classes and the middle classes could partake in a few activities of men. Although they could not engage themselves in administration, politics, hunting, drinking etc. hence, in their leisure time, they used to read novels.

- **Decline of Drama**
  The decline of drama also contributed to the rise of the novel in the 18th century. In the 18th century, drama lost its fame that it had in the Elizabethan Age.
  
  It did not remain an influential literary form. Hence some other had to take its place and its place was filled by the English novel after 1740 A.D. Thus the decline of drama led to the rise of the English novel.
Everyone knows the story of Robinson Crusoe, a fictional account of a man's struggle to survive amidst the hostile and lonely surroundings of a desert island. Few realize that the publication in 1719 of this book by Daniel Defoe paved the way for the modern English novel. Defoe's perceptive and accurate observations and his sober, straightforward style led to accusations that he was "forging a story and imposing it on the world for truth" – and so, in a sense, he was. Defoe was an accomplished journalist in an age when the profession was new and skilled news-paper men was rare. Although he was past thirty when he began to write, he developed into a prolific writer. In 1704, he established the Review, an early London newspaper which he ran almost singlehandedly for nine years. After producing gazettes and political pamphlets by the score, Defoe turned from journalism to the writing of novels and fictitious history such as Robinson Crusoe and A Journal of the Plague Year.

Defoe's The Shortest Way with Dissenters reduced to absurdity the rabid intolerance prevalent in his time. Although an ardent dissenter himself, he pretended to advocate an off-with-their-heads policy toward all those who dared to dissent with the tenets of the Church of England. The pillory sentence, which was meant to degrade him publicly, turned to triumph when, instead of the expected jeering, a group of his friends sang a satiric song Defoe had composed for the occasion and pelted him with flowers rather than rocks and rotten eggs.

In 1703, he was arrested for writing an indiscreet political pamphlet ‘The Shortest Way with Dissenters’. When he was released from prison, he was declared a bankrupt. One of the earliest and liveliest pamphlet, The Poor Man’s Plea (1698) illustrates his fondness for walking on controversial issues. King William III was Defoe’s one real hero.

The True Englishman was a satirical poem published in 1701 by Daniel Defoe defending the king of England William. He also wrote another pamphlet named History of the Union.

In the spring of 1715, he published an autobiographical narrative, An Appeal to Honor and Justice; indicated as a vindication of political conduct.

Robinson Crusoe- It is based on the adventures of Alexander Selkirk, a Scottish sailor who had lived alone on the island of Juan Fernandez for over four years until he was rescued by captain Woodes Rogers in 1709. (influenced by Steele’s periodical The Englishman). He made use of Richard Hakluyt’s Voyages, William Dampier’s New Voyage round the world.
Moll Flanders- The novel tells the life story of a woman who was known to her comrades as Moll Flanders though this was not her real name. The story is told by Moll Flanders herself in her own person. The theme of the novel may be summed up in the following words: “From Sin to Repentance”. The novel tells the interesting story of a woman who has inherited a propensity to evil, and in whose life that propensity finds ample scope.

Other works are:
- Captain Singleton (1720)
- Roxana (1724)
- Moll Flanders and Colonel Jack (1722)
- Captain George Carlton (1728)

OLIVER GOLDSMITH (1728–1774)

Like Steele and Swift, Goldsmith was born in Ireland, and, like Swift and Johnson, he knew the humiliating compulsions of poverty. His family was much like the primrose family of his novel, The Vicar of Wakefield-"generous, credulous, simple, and inoffensive," easy marks for the unscrupulous. Goldsmith's progress through school and college was punctuated by erratic behaviour, but he was finally granted a degree from Dublin's Trinity College. He did some writings for The Monthly review (1757) and published his first book, The Memoirs of a Protestant condemned to the Galleys, etc. (1758), translated from the French.

To Goldsmith belongs the distinction of producing essays, a poem, a novel, and a comedy that are still read and enjoyed. His first real success was the collection of essays entitled The Citizen of the World. This was followed by the novel, The Vicar of Wakefield, which tells a story of English country life. In 1770 The Deserted Village was published. A nostalgic portrayal of life in an Irish village probably similar to the one in which the poet himself grew up, this poem expressed the growing interest in the middle and late eighteenth century in rural settings and humble lives, and in both subject matter and sentiment pointed forward to the Romantic movement. She Stoops to Conquer or the Mistake of the Night, Goldsmith's rollicking and robust comedy, restored liveliness and wit to English drama.

Samuel Johnson remarked: "Let not his frailties be remembered; he was a very great man." And it was Johnson who wrote the inscription for the memorial to Goldsmith in Westminster Abbey: "He touched nothing that he did not adorn".
The Citizen of the World

The eighteenth century was a period that attempted to view itself—its customs, conventions, life, and world—with clear-sighted vision and perfect perspective unblurred by emotion. In The Citizen of the World Goldsmith undertook to view his world with such perspective. For this purpose he used the device of an imaginary Chinese philosopher, Lien Chi Altangi, who, during a visit to England, wrote letters to another Oriental sage in which he described the English people and their ways. The idea of using a wordly-wise Oriental as his spokesman probably was suggested to Goldsmith by the wave of enthusiasm for Far Eastern culture which was sweeping Europe at the time.

This series of essays consists of over 123 letters which originally were published in a newspaper in 1760-61. Enlivened by Goldsmith’s individuality and charm, the letters follow the tradition of Addison’s and Steele’s Spectator in their light touch and their use of gentle satire. Greatly admired, they won the praise even of Dr. Johnson, the literary dictator of the age, who asked: "Is there a man, sir, now, who can pen an essay with such ease and elegance as Goldsmith?"

FOUR WHEELS OF THE NOVEL

The group of first four novelists of the Augustan Age - Richardson, Smollett, Fielding and Sterne, are called the four wheels of novel. The beginning of novel writing is made with an enthralling and mysterious figure, Daniel Defoe who gave us travelogue novel Robinson Crusoe. The next development in the novel, and possibly the most important in its whole history in England, came by the ancient, Samuel Richardson, who is famous for Epistolary Novel “Pamela” in which plot develops and comes to an end through the medium of letters. Richardson suffered from the appearance of contemporary, who disliked his work, and who took an early opportunity of satirizing it, named Henry Fielding, who published Andrew Joseph to ridicule Richardson’s Pamela; he contrived this satire by revering the situation in Richardson’s novel. The next wheel, Tobias Smollett, was Fielding’s contemporary, though he is not of equal stature.

If he brought to the novel nothing that was new in form, he was able to introduce a new background, in accounts of sea in the livid days of the old Navy in Roderick Random, which portrays the life of rogue hero until his marriage with the loyal, beautiful and incredible Narcissa. Of the eighteenth century novelists, the strangest, and the most variously judged, is Laurence Sterne, who is known for Life and Opinion of Tristram Shandy in which the reader has to wait until the third book before the hero is born, and even then his future life remains undefined. After the work of these four masters, the stream of fiction broadens continually, until it reaches the flood with which no single intelligence contended.
SAMUEL RICHARDSON

Few novelists have been able to be praised so extravagantly in their own day and Richardson is one of them. During the eighteenth century he was probably more famous and more influential than any other novelist in Europe. His three novels, Pamela. Or Virtue Rewarded (1740-1741), Clarissa. Or, the history of a Young lady (1747-1748), and The History of Sir Charles Grandison were translated into all European languages; they were read by people in every rank of the society.

Pamela is the story of a young, beautiful, and intelligent maidservant who staves off seduction so skillfully that she is able to convince her wicked master that he ought to reform and marry her. This novel inspired several parodies, including Shamela, and the opening chapters of Joseph Andrews. The inspiration for his first novel came from the series of the “familiar letters” which fellow printers had encouraged him to write on the concerns of everyday life; these were published separately as Letters...to and for particular Friends (1741).

Clarrisa – It was published in 1747-1748, a year or more before Tom Jones, is the first English novel to have been conceived and planned from the beginning as a unified piece of what Henry James delighted to call “Fictive art”. It tells the tragic story of a heroine whose quest for virtue is continually thwarted by her family, and is regarded as the longest novel in the English language.

In 1733 he had begun printing for the House of commons and in 1742 he secured the lucrative post of printer of its journals, his circle of friends includes many admiring young women known as his ‘Songbirds’ or ‘honorary daughter’, as well as many members of the Blue Stocking Circle.

The first two volumes of Clarrisa appeared in 1747 and a further Five volumes in 1748 and was an undoubted success. But there were complaints about its length and its sexual content and it was not reprinted as often as Pamela.

HENRY FIELDING

The English novel, firmly established by Richardson, was further developed by Fielding and Smollet, who, depicted different aspects of the same kind of life. Henry fielding came of a good family and was educated at Eton and Leyden University. He began as a playwright with Love in Several masques(1728), a comedy in the Restoration manner, but soon found a real talent for Burlesque. His comedies are not among his great work, One of them, however, the Historical
Register of the Years 1736, was a satire on the government, sharp enough to provoke the Licensing Act of 1737, restricting the liberty of the theatre. He soon gave up the drama. His first published novel, *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews, and of his friend Mr. Abraham Adams*. As Pamela was tempted by her master, so her brother, Joseph Andrews, is tempted by his mistress. And then, as happened in Pickwick, the book came alive and insisted on going its own way. *Lady Booby* the mistress practically disappears; Joseph slips into the second place, and the chief character in the story is the poor clergyman, *Parson Adams*, an immortal creation. The reference to *Cervantes* on the title page is a clear indication that Fielding found the easy narrative form of *Don Quixote* as natural to him as Richardson had found the descriptive and analytic epistle.

- **A Journey From this World to the Next** is one of the Fielding’s happiest satirical inventions.

- **The Life of Mr Jonathan Wild the Great**- Fielding published three volumes of Miscellanies, works old and new, of which by far the most important is The Life of Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great. Here, the narrating the life of a notorious criminal of the day, fielding satirized human greatness, or rather human greatness confused with power over others.

- **The History of Tom Jones, A foundling** appeared early in 1749. Fielding had called Joseph Andrews a comic epic poem in prose; the title is better deserved by Tom Jones.

- The Last work is **Amelia (1751)**. This Fielding is soberer than Fielding of Tom Jones, a Fielding touched with tears.

- He edited four periodicals: **the Champion** (1731-41) and (using the pen-name Sir Alexander Drawcansir) **The Convent Garden Journal** (1752); **True Patriot** (1745-46) and **Jacobite’s Journal** (1747-48).

**TOBIAS SMOLLETT**

He was seven years younger than Fielding and came to London, at the age of eighteen, to make his fortune, not by the practice of his profession, but by the production of a tragedy, **The Regicide**. He published his first novel The Adventures of Roderick Random, Smollett acknowledge **Le Sage’s Gil Blas** as the literary parent of Roderick random. Two years later appeared **The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle (1751)**, is the most vigorous and
vivacious of his works and the most successful in comic characterization. Hawser Trunnion, Lieutenant Hatchway and Tom Pipes are genuine creation.

- His next novel was The Adventures of Ferdinand Count fathom, which owes something to Jonathan Wild, but lacks clear perception which Fielding had of the difference between greatness and goodness..
- Like Fielding, Smollett was driven abroad in search of health, and his experiences produced the Travels through France and Italy (1766), an entertaining book, is in epistolary form.
- The History and Adventures of An Atom is a brutal satire on British public affairs.

**LAURENCE STERNE**

He was born at Clonmel, Tipperary, the son of Ensign Roger Sterne. In 1759, to support his dean in a church squabble, Sterne wrote A Political Romance (later called The History of a Good warm Watch Coat), a Swiftian satire of dignitaries of the spiritual courts.

- He was educated at Cambridge, took holy orders and was made perpetual curate of Coxwold in Yorkshire in 1760. The publication of Tristram Shandy was begun in 1760s. His odd humor appears in the very title of his book, The Life and opinions of Tristram Shandy, gentleman.
- A Sentimental journey through France and Italy is a less influential book, although it was better received by English critics of the day. The book has many stylistic parallels with Tristram Shandy, and indeed, the narrator is one of the minor characters from the earliest novel.
- Several volumes of Letters were published after his death, as was Journal to Eliza, a more sentimental than humorous love letter to a woman Sterne was courting during the final years of his life.

**Other writers**

**HENRY MACKANZIE**

He was recognized as the literary leader of Edinburgh society after the publication of The Man of feeling. The story is totally episodic. It is completely without humour, and owes nothing in form or in spirit to Fielding or Smollett. Mackenzie was, as Scott called him. “The northern Addison”. In his next book, The man of the World (1773). He achieved both a plot
and a villain. His last and best book, Julia de Roubigne (1777) owes much to Clarissa, and one of the few tragedies to be found in the early stages of the English novel.

HENRY BROOKE

He is an Irishman, whose best known work is The Fool of quality (1776). Brooke was a man of many activities. It is a remarkable work.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Which was Defoe's last novel?
   (a) Robinson Crusoe  (b) Moll Flanders  (c) Colonel Jack  (d) Roxana

2. The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous is the subtitle of
   (a) Robinson Crusoe  (b) Moll Flanders  (c) Colonel Jack  (d) Roxana

3. The subtitle of Roxana is
   (a) The Unfortunate Princess  (b) The Unfortunate Girl  (c) The Fortunate Maid  (d) The Fortunate Mistress

4. All of Defoe's works are _______ in form
   (a) epistolatory  (b) sentimental  (c) picaresque  (d) comic

5. Which of the following writers was nicknamed as "Serious" and "Gravity" by his schoolfellows?
   (a) Henry Fielding  (b) Daniel Defoe  (c) Samuel Richardson  (d) Laurence Sterne

6. Richardson’s Pamela marries
   (a) Monsieur Calbrand  (b) Mr Jewkes  (c) Mr B  (d) Mr Andrews

7. Which novel of Richardson was labelled by him as "a dramatic narrative"?
   (a) Pamela  (b) Sir Charles Grandison  (c) Clarissa  (d) None of these

8. Which of the following was a physician apart from being a novelist?
   (a) Henry Fielding  (b) Tobias Smollett  (c) Laurence Sterne  (d) Samuel Richardson

9. Whom did Laurence Sterne satirize as "the learned Smelfungus" who "set out with the spleen and jaundice, and every object he passed by was discoloured and distorted" in his novel A Sentimental Journey?
   (a) Daniel Defoe  (b) Samuel Richardson  (c) Tobias Smollett  (d) Henry Fielding

10. Who is the Vicar of Wakefield in Goldsmith's novel of the same name?
    (a) Thornhill  (b) Burchell  (c) Primrose  (d) Jenkinson

11. Which of the following poems is not by Goldsmith?
    (a) The Hermit  (b) The Unfortunate Traveller  (c) Elegy on the Death of a Mad Dog  (d) When Lovely Woman Stoops to Folly
12. The Ossianic poems are associated with
   (a) Samuel Johnson   (b) Henry Mackenzie
   (c) James Macpherson (d) Oliver Goldsmith

13. Which of the following was an indefatigable letter-writer?
   (a) James Macpherson   (b) Henry Mackenzie
   (c) Fanny Burney       (d) Horace Walpole

14. Who wrote Camilla (1796)?
   (a) Sarah Fielding     (b) Fanny Burney
   (c) Anne Radcliffe     (d) Henry Brooke

15. Who wrote The Fool of Quality (1766)?
   (a) Henry Brooke       (b) Thomas Day
   (c) Elizabeth Inchbald (d) William Go-dwin

16. What is the subtitle of Camilla?
   (a) Memoirs of an Heiress (b) The Picture of Youth
   (c) The Fortunate Maid   (d) The Young and the Rich

17. In which of the following works would we find the fable of the coat?
   (a) A Tale of a Tub     (b) A Tale of Mystery
   (c) The Tale of Gamelyn (d) A Tale of Two Cities

18. Who wrote Dialogues of the Dead?
   (a) Jonathan Swift     (b) Daniel Defoe
   (c) Matthew Prior      (d) Tobias Smollett

19. Who parodied Dryden’s The Hind and the Panther?
   (a) Thomas Shadwell    (b) Matthew Prior
   (c) Laurence Sterne    (d) Jonathan Swift

20. Alma (1718) was written by
   (a) Oliver Goldsmith   (b) Thomas Gray
   (c) Thomas Shadwell    (d) Matthew Prior

ANSWERS

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