UNIT 13: INTERPRETING THE NOVEL

UNIT STRUCTURE

13.1 Learning Objectives
13.2 Introduction
13.3 What is a Novel?
13.4 Characteristics of the Novel
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13.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- get an idea of the novel as a genre
- enlist the features of the novel
- describe the importance of setting, space and time in a novel
- indentity the major types of novel
- discuss important concepts as points of view and use of perspectives in a novel.

13.2 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we are going to look at various aspects of the novel as a literary form. As you are aware there are various literary forms that have enriched the traditions of literature in different languages of the world. One of the ways in which we can understand the nature of literature is by studying the different literary genres. The novel is an important literary genre. Here

we shall consider the various characteristics of the novel. There are certain special features which distinguish it from other literary types. It is also important to take note of the major types of the novel in order to see its variety and different modes of practice. We shall also be focussing on the significance of concepts like setting, space and time in the novel. In some cases, the novelist may invent a wholly new region within which to place the characters, or he/she may re-imagine a historically recognisable space for the setting. The usage of time is one of the most important elements of a story. Some stories may span years, decades and even centuries while some may be confined to a few hours. The unit shall also emphasize on points of view and use of perspectives in a novel.

13.3 WHAT IS A NOVEL?

At a very basic level, a novel is a literary type of certain length that presents a 'story' in fictionalized terms. It can be distinguished from other literary forms by its immense flexibility. There have been numerous experiments with the form and it is difficult to say which phase is more important as its relevance has been changing from time to time. In literature we find different literary types which are extremely rigorous and form-oriented. But the novel is not so. As Chris Baldick points out, "the novel as a literary genre is itself exceptional: it disregards the constraints that govern other literary forms, and acknowledges no obligatory structure, style, or subject-matter. Thriving on this openness and flexibility, the novel has become the most important literary genre of the modern age, superseding the epic, the romance, and other narrative forms. Novels can be distinguished from short stories and novellas by their greater length, which permits fuller, subtler development of characters and themes." (Chris Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, Second edition, Oxford: OUP, 2001 p.73) Certain conditions are present in all novels: plot, character and action. The plot is important because it provides a sense of chronology. Ian Watt has observed that unlike the plots of plays, epics or poems novels usually do not rely on traditional sources. This may not be

applicable to all novels (the historical and the mythological novels are exceptions) but often fictional narratives have a degree of inventiveness that isn't quite the dominant feature in the other literary genres. Moreover, we find that novels have complicated plot structures because it is possible for the novelist to develop and elaborate the themes in ways that other genres do not allow. The mode of narrative is an important aspect of the genre of the novel. We find many novels that experiment with the narrative mode, which is related to the style of storytelling. So, along with the issue of what the story is about, we have the issue of how the story is told occupying the genre of the novel. All of this is afforded by the length of the novel. No modern literary genre can be as lengthy as the novel.

13.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NOVEL

Today, one of the ways in which we define a novel is that it is a prose narrative. This is its first characteristic. A novel, however, may not adopt or rely on such frames to develop its subject. This brings us to the second characteristic of the novel: it is a modern development. The third characteristic of the novel is that it has a plot or a structure. Even those novels which seem to lack an apparent structure actually have one. Without a plot, the subject of the novel cannot be organised properly. The plot makes it possible for the novelist to arrange different points of the novel in a coherent way. The plot is that which holds the various elements of the novel together. We must remember that all fictional prose narratives which tell stories are not novels. For example, in the essays of the nineteenth century writer, Charles Lamb, we find him presenting fictional situations in narrative form. In Lamb's essays we have fictional episodes but they do not become a novel. This brings us to the fourth characteristic of the novel: it must be of a certain length. This feature is important because only when the story spans some length can the theme be expanded and developed. There is no definite rule about how long a novel should be. But if it is too short, then the different conditions of the story cannot be developed properly. Without characters we cannot have a novel. This is the fifth characteristic of the novel: it must

have characters and action. The action in a novel may be of different kinds. Sometimes we see a lot of developments in the plot. In some other cases, especially in the modernist novel the action is often internal and cannot be described in terms of external change or transformation. The novel tries to deal with and present some form of reality in a credible way. This is its sixth characteristic. Of course, we find that all novels cannot be placed with the category of realism. But in one way or the other the representation of reality (ideas about the real may be different and even contradictory) is one of the important issues in a novel. There are various kinds of realistic representations in fiction: magic realism and social realism are two such examples. We also find novels that experiment with the question of reality in ways that make it the central issue in the novel. The novel of ideas is one such type where the ideas are more important than the situation of the characters. Some postmodern novels examine the issues of reality that are quite opposed to the way it is presented in the classic realist novels. In Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), the reality cannot be taken for granted. The narrative of Saleem Sinai in the novel raises questions about the nature of the subject quite vehemently.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS



Q1. How is plot important in a novel?

Q2. Give two examples of realistic representation in fiction.

Q3. What is the novel of ideas? Give an example.

13.5 MAJOR TYPES OF NOVEL

There are different ways of categorizing the novel. Two of the most common ways of doing so are in terms of the historical and the technical aspects of the form. These categories do not mean that the placement of a novel in one excludes it from being placed in another. For example, the eighteenth century novel like Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* can be both a picaresque and a satirical novel. We find such overlapping in all forms of

fiction. The awareness of these categories, however, enables us to consider various aspects of the form and explore its characteristics.

(a) **The Picaresque Novel**: The word picaresque is derived from the Spanish word *picaro*, a word that means a rogue or a scoundrel. These narratives are episodic in nature and present the adventures of the central character (called a picaroon) who may be either male or female. This picaroon is shown to move across a wide variety of social scales as they engage in different escapades. The plot of a picaresque novel is very loose and the different episodes are bound together only by the presence of the central character. The anonymous Spanish narrative *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554) is one of the earliest examples of the type. Other notable specimens of this genre include Alain-Rene Lesage's *Gil Blas* (1715-35), *Moll Flanders* (1722) and *Tom Jones* (1749). Various other novels have picaresque elements even though they are not completely placed in the genre. Cervantes' *Don Quijote* (1604) and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) are two such examples.

(b) **The Epistolary Novel**: The narrative of the epistolary novel is presented through the medium of letters (epistles). In this type of novel the plot moves forward through the process of exchange of letters between the characters. In addition to it sometimes extracts from the diaries or journals are also inserted into the narrative. This type of novel was primarily the product of the eighteenth century and Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1840) and *Clarissa* (1847-48) and Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Heloise* (1761), and Laclos's *Les Liaisons dangereuses* (1782) are the most famous example of the type. In 1979 the American novelist John Barth published *Letters*, which was written in the epistolary mode.

(c) **The Historical Novel**: The historical novel takes as its setting events and developments that have a clear historical framework. The historical novel can include both actual and fictionalized characters. The novelist tries to present actual situations, manners, landscape and settings in such a way that they reflect the circumstances of the given time in

both a representative and a credible manner. The protagonist of the historical novel is placed in a situation of conflict where the questions of loyalty are engaged in a political or a social context. Walter Scott was one of the pioneers of the genre in England. The novels of the American writer James Fenimore Cooper are also examples of this type. The historical novel genre has flourished in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. Many **pulp fiction** writers have tried their hand at the genre in our time.

(d) **The Regional Novel**: The regional novel takes as its setting a particular space or location, which may be either fictionalized or actual, and places the characters in that region. Often, the regional novel takes as its setting a rural place or territory. The novels of Thomas Hardy – placed in a fictional place called 'Wessex' – and those of William Faulkner – in 'Yoknapatawpha County' – are the most famous Western examples of this type. R. K. Narayan's novels that take Malgudi as its setting also belong to this genre.

(e) **The Satirical Novel**: The satirical novel, which may be in either prose or verse, is defined by the critical sense with which it examines the subject and one of its primary objectives is exposure of follies. The novels of Jonathan Swift and Henry Fielding can be placed in this genre. We may also distinguish between subtypes within this genre such as the political and social satirical novel. The political satirical novel takes for its subject the critique of political establishment by exposing the inadequacies in the system. Many novels written during the early decades of the twentieth century in Russia and Germany tried to show the regimentation of the political establishment. Writings in this genre have flourished in contemporary literature, with different novelists from the Caribbean, Latin America and the Third World literature making use of this form to critically expose certain problems in the political system. The novels of the English writer George Orwell, especially *Animal Farm* and *1984* are well-known for their attack on the political establishment. Social satirical novels are directed towards the exposure of social evils and problems. The novels of the Russian

writer Nikolai Gogol and some texts of the English novelist W. M. Thackeray (notably *Vanity Fair*) can be placed in this category.

(f) **The Existential Novel**: Many novels written in the twentieth century have veered away from the conventional themes of family, society, love and marriage and they display a preoccupation with the questions of human existence. There is a questioning of accepted values and an exposure of the different cultural institutions that supposedly 'veil' the basic existential situation of life. This kind of novel flourished in France with writers like Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre posing issues of human survival within a novelistic frame. The writings of Franz Kafka are also part of this genre.

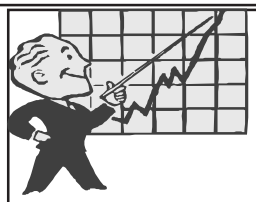
(g) **The Self-Reflexive Novel**: In contemporary literature, there has been an attempt to consider issues relating to the form of the novel itself as part of the novel's subject. This type of novel, which examines the novel's form and character as its theme is known as the self-reflexive novel. John Fowles' publication of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* in 1969 was an important landmark for this genre in terms of literary production in English. In fact, the eighteenth century novel by Laurence Sterne *Tristram Shandy* displays some characteristics of this genre. The novels by American writers such as Donald Barthelme and John Barth are considered to be examples of this literary type. Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* also contains self-reflexive elements.

LET US KNOW



Pulp Fiction: Pulp fiction is a pejorative term for certain kinds of fiction. Pulp fiction books are often badly written and intended to shock people. These books are usually trash or nearly rubbish, and often include soft porn, the kitsch, poor Westerns, the lower forms of crime fiction and third-rate sentimental romances.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS



Q4. What are two most common ways of categorizing the novel?

Q5. How does the plot move in an epistolary novel? Name one such novel.

Q6. What is the concern of an existential novel?

Q7. Name one political satirical novel.

13.6 SETTING SPACE AND TIME

(a) Location: Location in the novel may not operate in the same way. In the early history of the novel, for example, especially when the picaresque novel was in vogue, the plot moved with the protagonist. There is hardly any sense of definite place in the novels such as *Don Quixote* by Cervantes or in Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones*. By the nineteenth century, however, when the novel form consolidated, narratives are set in specific locations which grant them their special character. The London of Dickens or the countryside of the novels of George Eliot provides significant insights into the way the characters respond to the worlds around them. Often a neighbourhood development or incident propels the story forward. In the Miss Marple adventures of Agatha Christie's detective novels, the location plays an important part. We can also judge a character from the location in which he/she is placed. In the novels of D. H. Lawrence, the residents of the mining town districts are often looked down upon by the urban population. This is a deliberate choice on part of Lawrence as he draws attention to the plight of his characters by doing so.

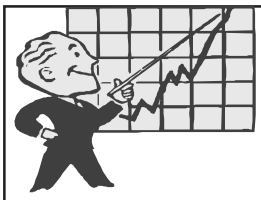
(b) Setting and the Sense of Place: Location and setting are not always the same. Location is actually the idea of geographical space, while the setting may be more specific such as street or a room or even the seaside. In the novel titled *Kiss of the Spiderwoman* by the Argentinean writer Manuel Puig the narrative is set inside a prison where the convicts talk about different issues. The prison becomes the setting

and provides them the sense of place. The exact geographical location is not specified. Many thrillers belonging to the pulp fiction genre employ indoor settings where the drama and the intrigue take place and often the context is imaginary or non-existent.

(c) Different Aspects of Time: The management of time is of crucial importance in the novel. It does not really matter whether the story has a linear narrative or a fragmented one. But the reader must be able to make sense of the time-plane where you place your story. One of the ways in which time functions in a novel relates to the orientation of the characters. This could be achieved through a reference to various conventional time-devices such as memory, flash-backs and flash-forwards and recollection. In Umberto Eco's *The Mysterious Flame of Queen Loana* the protagonist moves through the past to the present only on the basis of the memory of the books he has read. Memory serves as the agency through which he makes sense of time in the novel. If we leave out memory in the novel then the various episodes that he refers to have no connection with one another.

(d) The Temporal and the Spatial Planes: As you will be aware by now, the planes of time (temporal) and space (spatial) control the movement of the story. They may act and function in conjunction and operate in the same plane or there may be an altogether different scheme of things in the way they are managed. In Italo Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller* two parallel narratives move forward: the first addresses the reader and the other is the telling of story that constitutes the actual novel. Both the narratives operate in two extremely different planes and seem to be completely disconnected; but as we read on, we realise that they converge towards the end of the novel and both the narratives find meaning in the way they come together. Many postmodern novels play around with the spatial and the temporal planes in order to complicate the sense of reality. This is not quite the case with the novels written in classic realist tradition. In the novels of Jane Austen or George Eliot we find the space and time

operating in the same plane. For a reader accustomed to conventional narratives, the playfulness of the postmodern text (where time/space confusion is more common) may be the source of surprise, but it is after a matter of structuring that shows careful deliberation on the part of the author.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q8. What is the setting of the novel *Kiss of the Spiderwoman*?

Q9. Give an example of how memory helps make sense of time in a novel.

13.7 POINTS OF VIEW AND USE OF PERSPECTIVES

A novelist may choose a first-person narrator or an objective, omniscient narrator or even an unreliable narrator as discussed below :

(a) The First-person Narrator: The first-person narrator is the speaking subject that presents first-hand information on the basis of what he/she observes, sees, hears or experiences. The nature of the first-person narrator may be very different from author to author. One of the conventional ways in which this is done is by winning the trust of the reader. The conventional first-person narrator is reliable and trustworthy. He/she creates a sense of authenticity by describing episodes to which he/she has been witness or about which he/she had definite information. The first-person narrator can provide the insider's view as he/she is directly involved with the subject that is narrated. There are, however, certain disadvantages with this mode of narration. For example, the first-person narrator cannot describe everything pertaining to the subject of the novel, for he/she must be present at the scene for the information to be relayed to the reader.

(b) The Omniscient Narrator: The omniscient narrator is the objective narrator who is usually placed outside the scene of action. Whatever happens does not affect him and he takes an objective view of things.

He is in complete control of the narrative process and can modulate and determine the pace of the narrative according to the demands of the story. Such a narrator is useful in a wide canvas or a broad narrative framework. The omniscient narrator can also provide a sense of critical distance in terms of how the subject is viewed or represented. Usually this kind of narrator does not display any bias towards any character and presents the story quite objectively. The narrative voice in this case can be the source of scrutiny or satire depending on how the novelists orient it.

(c) Using different Perspectives: One of the interesting ways in which narrative point of view is modulated in a novel is through the use of different perspectives. A point of view indicates the position from which a object is scrutinized or observed. Quite often, the narrator may present things through different perspectives or points of view. For example, the same incident may be reported by different characters from alternative perspectives. This happens quite often in detective fiction where a murder, for instance, is presented in such ways that do not privilege any particular perspective. It is the eventual unknotting that resolves the matter. Different perspectives may also be employed to create the conflicts and crises in different episodes in the novel.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS



Q10. What are the disadvantages of a first-person narrator?

Q11. In which type of fiction are different perspectives generally used?

Q12. Who is an omniscient narrator?

13.8 LET US SUM UP



We have looked at the various aspects of the novel in this unit. We have seen that it is a modern development which is considerably different from other literary genres. There are certain

characteristics that are common to most novels which we have discussed here. There are various types of novel which have been elaborately described in this unit. Apart from these, the unit also deals with other important aspects like setting, space and time as well as points of view and use of perspectives.



13.9 FURTHER READING

1. Burroway, Janet. (1992) *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft*. New York: Harper Collins.
2. Dibell, Ansen. (1988). *Plot*. Cincinnati, Ohio: Writer's Digest Books.
3. Hale, Dorothy. (2006). The *Novel: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory*, 1900-2000, Oxford: Blackwell.
4. Mukherjee, Meenakshi Ed. (2002) *Early Novels in India*, New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.
5. Mullan, John. (2006) *How Novels Work*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
6. Walder, Denis. (1995). *The Realist Novel*, London and New York: Routledge.

13.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q1. Without a plot, the subject of the novel cannot be organised properly. The plot makes it possible for the novelist to arrange different points of the novel in a coherent way. The plot is that which holds the various elements of the novel together.

Ans to Q2. Magic realism and social realism.

Ans to Q3. The novel of ideas is one such type where the ideas are more important than the situation of the characters. Some postmodern novels examine the issues of reality that are quite opposed to the way it is presented in the classic realist novels as in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981).

Ans to Q4. Two of the most common ways are in terms of the historical and the technical aspects of the form.

Ans to Q5. In epistolary novels, the plot moves forward through the process of exchange of letters between the characters. Example, Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1840).

Ans to Q6. They display a preoccupation with the questions of human existence.

Ans to Q7. George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and *1984.*

Ans to Q8. The setting of the novel *Kiss of the Spiderwoman* is the prison.

Ans to Q9. Refer to Section 13.6

Ans to Q10. The first-person narrator cannot describe everything pertaining to the subject of the novel, for he/she must be present at the scene for the information to be relayed to the reader.

Ans to Q11. Detective fiction.

Ans to Q12. The omniscient narrator is the objective narrator who is usually placed outside the scene of action. Whatever happens does not affect him and he takes an objective view of things. He is in complete control of the narrative process and can modulate and determine the pace of the narrative according to the demands of the story.



13.11 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q1. What is a novel? Discuss the significance of this genre in literature.

Q2. What are the major characteristics of the novel? Provide a critical reading of these features.

Q3. Into how many categories can the novel be divided? Give a detailed account of the major types of novel.

Q4. Why is the issue of 'reality' so important to the novel?

Q5. How is time important in a novel?

Q6. Explain the various types of narrator/ point of view.

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UNIT 14: INTERPRETING SHORT STORY

UNIT STRUCTURE

14.1 Learning Objectives

14.2 Introduction

14.3 What is Short Story?

14.4 Basic Characteristics of a Short Story

14.5 Elements of a Short Story

- 14.5.1 Plot
- 14.5.2 Character
- 14.5.3 Setting
- 14.5.4 Point of View

14.6 Let us Sum up

14.7 Further Reading

14.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

14.9 Model Questions

14.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the short story as a literary form
- describe the basic characteristics of a short story
- explain the various elements of a short story such as plot, character, etc.

14.2 INTRODUCTION

Everyone loves a story. You must have listened to your grandmother's stories on cold wintry nights and felt happy or sad on hearing it. A story sometimes takes you to a world other than the one you are living in and you are left fascinated by it. A short story is perhaps easier to read and less time- consuming than a novel which takes a long time to finish reading. But

a short story also is perhaps harder to write than a novel as it has to create its effect in a limited number of words. Like miniature paintings, they are tightly wound and every detail counts.

This unit introduces you to the short story as a literary form and also elaborates on the different characteristics which a good short story needs to have. You may also have noticed that stories differ in their atmosphere; for example you may have love stories, ghost stories, detective stories etc., each of which creates the mood characteristic to it. You may also notice that the characters in a short story do not develop in the course of the narrative, because there is little scope for it. Let us now have a look at the evolution of the short story and what goes to make a good short story.

14.3 WHAT IS SHORT STORY?

The short story is a form of narrative fiction. Like the novel, the short story evolved from various sources of narrative from all over the world; hence it is difficult to determine where exactly it originated.

Let us now see what **H. G. Wells** has to say about a short story: "A short story is or should be a simple thing; aims at producing one single vivid effect; it has to seize the attention at the outset, and never relaxing, gathers it together more and more until the climax is reached. The limits of the human capacity to attend closely, therefore, set a limit to it; it must explode and finish before interruption occurs or, fatigue sets in." A short story has to make an impression upon the mind of the reader within a short period of time, say an hour or two. In fact someone once said that a short story is something which can be "read in an hour and remembered for a lifetime." The aim of all good literature, as you might know, is to delight its readers and expand their understanding of men and manners. The short story is not different in this aspect. Today it is a very popular form of study and its popularity owes itself to various causes. In this age of rush and restlessness, a lot of factors draw a reader to the sweet pleasure of reading a short story. A long novel like Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind*, Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* cannot



H. G. Wells: British novelist, author of novels such as *The Time Machine, The War of the Worlds, etc.*

provide immediate pleasure to the modern reader and so hardly suits his time and temper (this is the age of instant coffee, instant messaging, instant food after all!). Here, a short story amply serves the purpose of the modern man in providing pleasure. However, this is not to say that a short story is a rival or a substitute for a novel. Each has its own place and importance in the history of literary genres. It would also be gravely wrong to brand a short story as a brief novel. The short story also cannot compete with the novel in the sense that it cannot exhibit life in all its variety and complexity for it requires a broader canvas.

As a matter of fact, the short story is very difficult to classify as it is one of the most elusive forms, and it is also very difficult to define it within a particular limit. There are 'long' short stories and 'very short' short stories. Somerset Maugham commented in his preface to his *Complete Short Stories* that "the shortest item runs to about 1600 words and the longest to about 20,000 words." In fact most short stories fall somewhere between these two extremes.



LET US KNOW

You will be interested to know that the short story has many 'relatives' in different parts of the world. The French have a variation of the short story called *conte* and *nouvelle*, the Spanish call it *novela*, the Italians, *novella*, the Germans, *Nouvelle* and *Kurzgeschichte* and the Russians term it *skaz*.

14.4 BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF SHORT STORY

We have already learnt that a short story is not easy to define precisely. Poe has described the short story as a prose narrative, "requiring from half an hour to one or two hours for its perusal." William Henry Hudson says that a short story is something which "can be easily read at a single sitting." Whereas the novel is an extended piece of narrative fiction, the short story is limited in length and scope. But this is not to say that brevity is the only characteristic of a short story.

A short story is basically a narrative which deals with certain incidents and which involves certain characters around which the story revolves. It should create a single impression and effect upon the reader's mind. Generally a short story deals with incidents covering a short period of time. But in stories like Washington Irving's "Rip Van Winkle," Maupassant's "La Parure," even "The Bet" by Anton Chekhov, the narrative covers a long period of time. However, the concentration of interest and the singleness of impression must be maintained in order to classify the short story as a really good one.

In keeping with the oral story telling tradition, a short story tells a story. So, story telling forms an important aspect of a short story. A story should have a plot which is constituted of events and actions and which achieves certain artistic and emotional effects. And if the plot is stirring, then the story without doubt will be beautiful. A good plot is also commonly said to have unity of action. This means that the parts of the story must be so well connected that any restructuring will upset the story as a whole.

But let us not forget that a good plot in a short story depends upon the characters who act out the incidents. Plot and character are interdependent concepts. Henry James, the novelist, once commented: "What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character?" However, a short story cannot have a huge cast of characters as in a novel and also the characters' traits cannot be delineated in a detailed manner. As a result, the short story begins close to or at the height of the action, and develops only one character at length. Also, there are some epiphanic moments which the character experiences, i.e. a moment of illumination in which something hidden or not understood becomes suddenly very clear. But you must understand that the greatest short story writers have beautifully portrayed characters that are truly remarkable and unforgettable. Some characters like Rahamat in Rabindranath Tagore's "Kabuliwallah," Old Behrman in O. Henry's "The Last Leaf", the giant in Oscar Wilde's "The Selfish Giant" are to be cherished forever.

The plot, characters and the atmosphere must work **in tandem** for a short story to be effective. The short story also must have a beginning, a middle and an end, i.e., it should have a proper structural design. The world's best known short stories adhere to this dictum and delight us with their descriptions of men and manners.

In tandem- together



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1. What is Somerset Maugham's view on the length of a short story?

Q2. Why is it that a short story develops only one character at length?

14.5 ELEMENTS OF A SHORT STORY

It is very essential to know the basic elements of a short story. This section shall acquaint you with the various constituents of short story.

14.5.1 Plot

It is a generally accepted fact that stories are read by almost everyone in this world; if not, people at least listen to a story. So, what is the first thing you look for in a short story? Obviously, we look for the plot, i.e. the way in which the events in the story relate to one another, and how they relate to the story as a whole. We also look for conflicts which may occur in the story, and we are eager to know the way in which these conflicts are developed and resolved. Sometimes we may notice that the story is told in flashback or sometimes it may look forward to events in a possible future culmination.

Whatever the case may be, plots are necessary for a story to achieve a desired effect, whether it is tragic, comic, satiric, melodramatic, etc. Plot is shaped by the way in which the events of the story are connected causally, by the way in which the characters interact with each other and also by the juxtaposition of the events. Conflicts in a story may be of various types and

readers' interest in the story is heightened by the author's ability to present these conflicts in a nuanced manner. The conflict is generally a clash between the protagonist and the antagonist. The antagonist may be a person or a situation; in some stories, the conflict may occur in the characters' minds. This mainly happens in the stream of consciousness type of fiction, e.g. the stories of William Faulkner and James Joyce. The plot moves from an exposition through a series of developments to a climax, then finally, it leads to a **denouement**. The exposition sets the tone for the story, by introducing a character, or setting a scene, or perhaps even through a hint of the events to be expected. Ismat Chughtai's "Housewife" begins thus: "The day Mirza's new maid ambled into his house, there was a sensation in the neighbourhood." We are left expecting what will happen next.



Denouement: it may be the event or events following the climax of a plot or the unraveling of a plot's complications at the end of a story or play.

Deus ex machina: ('God out of the machine')

As the plot progresses, the events build up to a climax, which is the point of greatest tension in the story, the scene which proves to be a decisive element. The denoument or resolution draws the actions to a close, and ties up all the loose ends. In some stories however, there is no resolution provided, and is left open ended. This leads the readers to decide how the conflicts could have ended. Sometimes, the resolution is achieved with the help of **deus ex machine** or 'god from a machine' in which a hard- pressed author thinks up implausible or extraneous events to resolve the plot.

In Greek drama, a god was lowered onto the stage by a mechane so that he can untangle the plot or get the hero out of difficulties. This phrase is applied to an unanticipated intervener who resolves a difficult situation in a story or in any literary genre.

Generally, the events in a story are presented in a logical and chronological manner. But modern short stories often subvert the order of events; the story may begin in the middle, or even at the end, and then move back to the beginning to reconstruct the incidents. Faulkner's " A Rose for Emily" is a good example. As already mentioned, stories may be told in flashback, which may provide vital information to the readers that will help one to understand the story better. Some stories also involve foreshadowing, i.e. the introduction of events, situations or characters early

on in the story which hint at things to come. This encourages and entices readers to get more involved in the story. Experimental stories always arouse interest in the readers as they try to decipher or interpret the meaning in their own ways.



ACTIVITY 14.1

1. Think of a plot, say some event of your own life, and make it the subject of a story.

14.5.2 Character

After plot, let us now look at how the characters play a pivotal role in the story. What is meant by a 'character'? A character is a fictional representation of a person; readers interpret them as possessing certain attitudes, characteristics, moral, intellectual and emotional qualities, mainly with reference to what they say and do. Characterization is the way in which the writers develop their characters and reveal their traits to the readers. Sometimes even the names of some characters mirror their particular traits. Characters can be developed either by *telling* the readers about them, as in the case of stories with third- person narrators, or, first person narrators can tell their readers about themselves or other characters. For example, Mr. Watson in Arthur Conan Doyle's stories reveals aspects about himself, the fact that he is a doctor with a good practice, and also about the idiosyncrasies and brilliant powers of detection of his famous friend, Sherlock Holmes. In other cases, we can also guess Mr. Watson's personality from his actions, even though he tells us nothing about it.

You must have heard about the famous English writer, E. M. Forster, who wrote *A Passage to India*. His book *Aspects of the Novel* (1927) classified characters as being flat and round. A flat character is one which does not develop much during the course of the story, what you can call a 'stereotypical' character. Sherlock Holmes is a flat character as he is already developed and does not need to bring about much variation in his personality. On the other hand, a round character is a well developed one, who is closely

involved in and responsive to the action. Real life and real people are not that perfect. So it cannot be expected that readers will believe in 'too- perfect' characters. Flaws in a character add to its believability. The young banker in Chekhov's "The Bet" is a rounded character for the fact that there is a growth of the mind and outlook of the character. Some flat characters are stock characters in the sense that they are very easily identifiable types; they behave in a predictable manner; so it is not difficult for the reader to recognize them. Round characters, on the other hand, behave very unpredictably, reacting to situations in their own exclusive way. So they are sometimes very difficult to understand. But we need to understand the motivation behind the character's action, so that it is easy for us to believe them. Rosemary Fell in Katherine Mansfield's "A Cup of Tea", behaves quite unpredictably with the poor girl, Miss Smith because, despite her good intentions, her jealousy is aroused when her husband praises Miss Smith. The tension which develops as readers wait to see how Rosemary will react is what makes the story so interesting.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q3. Describe the importance of plot in a short story.

Q4. What is the difference between character and characterisation?

14.5.3 Setting

The setting of a story helps the writer in creating the texture of his imagined world with its character, locale and environment. It establishes the story's historical, geographical and physical location. In some stories, the setting is almost a character, perhaps influencing the characters' behaviour, as in the stories by Ruskin Bond, where his place of residence Mussorie is a pervasive 'presence'. A conflict between the events of the story and its setting can also add to the interest in the story. For example, if modern inventions are thrust into an old- fashioned village, where residents

are still carrying on with age- old methods of living, it is interesting to see how they react to it. This enriches a story.

A particular historical setting can create the appropriate mood for the readers to appreciate the story. If we know that a particular story is set during, say, the French Revolution, we can understand the characters' behaviour, their mannerisms and dress code etc. Sometimes the atmosphere of some stories might almost seem to be anachronistic in today's context, but if the author is able to handle the plot skillfully, the story will be a success. In addition to knowing *when* a work takes place, it is equally important to know *where* something happens. Gothic stories are set in dungeons, castles with hidden passages and creaking doors which create an atmosphere of supernatural terror and fear. Stories may be set in cities or villages, in advanced countries like the United States or in underdeveloped countries like Kenya. This makes the readers understand why the characters behave in ways which are unfamiliar to us. Sometimes even regional differences within a country may account for differences in plot development and characters' motivation. Also, the size of a city or town is sometimes important. If the town has a small population, the characters' behaviour will be subject to intense scrutiny, like in Ruskin Bond's stories, whereas in a large city, the characters can lose themselves in the crowd.

It is also seen that sometimes stories are set in a fantasy world, say in science fiction stories by H. G. Wells, or in "The Selfish Giant" by Oscar Wilde. Harriet Beecher Stowe in "Miss Katy- Did and Miss Cricket" sets the story in the insect world of nature. Such settings enable the writers to experiment with situations and characters without caring much for readers' expectations.

The *time of the day* can also influence a story's mood and development. In detective stories, the time of a murder, for instance, can help unravel the mystery of the murder and the murderer. In Mansfield's "Her First Ball", a ballroom serves as the setting for a young girl's initiation into the rules and realities of adult society. Weather can also be indicative of a situation in the plot. A storm may indicate danger descending upon the character's life; a sunny day may indicate a prelude to a happy event, etc. The various physical attributes of the setting combine to create a story's

atmosphere. A story's atmosphere also influences a character's state of mind, leading them to react in different ways in different settings. So, what do you think are the functions of atmosphere in a story? First of all, the atmosphere binds the story together and sets the time- frame. It also provides the background to the story and makes for economy and authenticity.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q5. Where are Gothic stories set?

14.5.4 Point of View

As you know, all stories are narrated by a person or persons. Point of view signifies the way a story is told- the vantage point from which the events are presented. Point of view is extremely important, particularly in detective stories, because the perspective of the narrator affects the plot. Stories are mostly told either in the first- person or the third - person. The second - person narration is a rarely used mode. It should be kept in mind however that even when the writer uses the first - person 'I', the narrator of the story may be completely different from the writer, as writers create narrators to tell their story.

The narrator is sometimes a character who uses the first- person 'I' to tell a story. For example, we have Leo Tolstoy's story "After the Dance", in which he narrates a conversation between himself and some of his friends. You should keep in mind that along with narration of a story, there is also narration in a story. A character may relate his tale, which in turn may consist of other tales. In William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily", the narrator speaks as we instead of I, thus speaking on behalf of all the residents of the town. The first-person narrator is thus, to a greater or lesser degree, a participant in the story or is the protagonist of the story. "Memories of an Indian Childhood" and "A Candle for St. Jude" by Qurratulain Hyder, in the first-person, are believed to be inspired to a large extent by her own personal experiences. First- person narrators are able to present the events

convincingly, and hence readers tend to believe them easily. However, there is a certain limitation in first- person narration, as the narrators cannot relate the story of their own death, or they cannot enter into the minds of the other characters. They may also sometimes distort facts either by mistake, or by being confused. Hence they become unreliable. Discerning readers are able to decipher the irony in the disparity between the narrator's interpretation of the events and their own. If you, as readers, are able to discover the discrepancies between the narrator's view of events and your own, you will get an insight into the story, and also learn something about the writer's purpose in writing the story.

Let us now look at third - person narration, which is by far the most common form of narration in stories. In this kind of narration, the narrator is someone who is outside the story, and refers to the characters either by name, or, by "he", "she" or "they". Thus, "The Rocking Horse Winner" by D. H. Lawrence begins: "There was a woman who was beautiful, who started with all the advantages, yet she had no luck. She married for love, and the love turned to dust. She had bonny children, yet she felt they had been thrust upon her, and she could not love them….." Third- person narrators are *omniscient*, in the sense that they can move at will from one character's mind to the other. They are a privileged lot as they have access to the characters' thoughts, motives and states of consciousness. Third- person narrators can present a more inclusive overview of the happenings in the story than first- person narrators can. Sometimes, the third- person narrators are *intrusive*, who along with reporting the events, also comments on them and sometimes offers personal views on human life. Others are *unintrusive*, i.e. they tell the story from an entirely objective point of view, without commenting on the events, and also allowing the readers to interpret them without any interference. Instances of objective narrators can be found in Hemingway's short stories e.g. "A Clean, Well- Lighted Place", and "The Killers."

The second person narration is that in which the story is told as an address by the narrator to someone he calls as "you". This is not a very common form of narration. The second person may either be a fictional character, or the reader, or even the narrator himself. The story unfolds by

shifting between telling the narratee what he/she is doing at present, what he/she has done in the past, or may do in the future.

You must remember that it is not necessary for authors to maintain a single point of view throughout the entire story. Although one point of view is dominant, writers sometimes introduce other points of view to achieve a level of complexity.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q6. Which narrators are called intrusive narrators?

Q7. What is point of view? Distinguish between first person and second person point of view?



14.6 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit, you have learnt that the short story is one of the most popular forms of literature today. You have seen how the short story differs from the novel and also learnt about the beginnings of the genre to the present day. The characteristics of the short story have also been discussed to enhance your knowledge about this popular literary type. The important elements which are essential in a short story have been dwelt upon, and four of them, plot, character, setting and point of view have been discussed in a detailed manner. We have therefore seen that the short story has evolved as a specific form of literary art like any other form of art, having its own characteristics and its own laws. The genre has been instrumental in providing its readers pleasure and wisdom and all that a good art must offer.



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14.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q1. Somerset Maugham commented in his preface to his *Complete Short Stories* that "the shortest item runs to about 1600 words and the longest to about 20,000 words."

Ans to Q2. It is because a short story cannot have a huge cast of characters as in a novel and also the characters' traits cannot be delineated in a detailed manner.

Ans to Q3. Refer to Section 14.5.1

Ans to Q4. A character is a fictional representation of a person whereas characterization is the way in which the writers develop their characters and reveal their traits to the readers.

Ans to Q5. Gothic stories are set in dungeons, castles with hidden passages and creaking doors which create an atmosphere of supernatural terror and fear.

Ans to Q6. Who along with reporting the events, also comments on them and sometimes offers personal views on human life.

Ans to Q7. Refer to section 14.5.4



14.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q1. The short story can be "read in an hour and remembered for a lifetime". Comment on this statement.

Q2. What are the important characteristics of a short story? Discuss.

Q3. How is the beginning, middle and end important in the plot of a story?

Q4. What are flat and round characters? Give examples.

Q5. "The writer creates a place." How, do you think, setting influence a story?

Q6. Write short notes on:

a. Elements of short story

b. Point of view in short story

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UNIT 15: INTERPRETING TRAVEL WRITING

UNIT STRUCTURE

15.1 Learning Objectives
15.2 Introduction
15.3 Travel Writing as a Literary Form
15.4 Two Distinct Types of Travel Writing
15.5 Travel Writers and Travel Writing
15.6 Some Assamese Travel Writers
15.7 Examples of Travel Writing
15.8 Let us Sum up
15.9 Further Reading
15.10 Answers to Check Your Progress
15.11 Model Questions

15.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- explain travel writing as a literary form
- classify travel writing
- get an idea about some of the travel writers
- describe the various aspects of travel writing

15.2 INTRODUCTION

Ever since the beginning of civilization, travelling has always been a human desire. In the earlier times men use to travel for a variety of reasons– for the purpose of satisfying his curiosity, for adventure, for pleasure, for political reasons as well as in search of food and jobs. Some of these travellers who possessed alert and methodical minds often recorded their experiences and observations in the form of writing which eventually led to the development of the genre known today as “travel writing”. It is seen that

the world's ancient and medieval travel literature is quite rich. In India too, we are acquainted with the travel books and accounts of Chinese travellers like Fahien and Huein Tsang, and French travellers like Tavernier and Bernier. These travels books serve as the documents of religious, political, cultural history of India of that time. You must have surely heard about Marco Polo, Ibn Batuta and others who are also great travel writers. During the colonial period, travel writing got a boost when scores of books were written on India by British and European travellers. Though many of these fitted into the image of India as an exotic oriental land, yet quite a few of them presented detailed insights into the land and its people. In modern times, interesting travel books have been written by authors like V. S. Naipaul, Paul Theroux, Graham Greene, Vikram Seth and others. Our country is also rich in wide range of travel literature written in the regional languages. The travel books serve a variety of purposes because they not only provide valuable information of a place but also give us an insight into the history and culture of people. So, in this unit an idea would be given about travel writing as a literary genre and the learners will be acquainted with the history of travel writing. Some examples of travel writing have also been provided in the unit.

15.3 TRAVEL WRITING AS A LITERARY FORM

Over the years, travel writing has emerged as an important genre of contemporary writing. Travel writing has always played an important role in the current socio-political life of the world community. As a literary form, it expresses the self-definition of the author who tries to place his cultural experience parallel to the experiences of other cultures to create world openness and assist the process of socialization.

As a literary form, travel writing has a threefold characteristic which may be divided into the aesthetic, the political, and the scientific. It depicts the culture at its source, which includes admiration of works of art, comparison of society at home and abroad and observation of the nature of many processes taking place in the society. By combining all these three

forms of educative processes, travel writing can effectively draw the reader's attention to the economic potential of a place or its political prospects and history. In doing this, it emulates its goal of integrating diverse forms of observation into a complex whole. Travel writing can serve as a raw material out of which one may draw conclusions about indigenous peoples, trajectories of development, evolution and preservation of traditions, courses of events, etc. Travel writing is in many ways, a means of on-the-spot recording. All observations of men and events should be described with truth and clarity within a credible frame of relationships. In travel writing, both art and science are skillfully combined in bringing about a synthesis of the visual and literary imagination.

Aesthetics and precision are the two dominant categories for the experience of Travel writing. A historical look on Travel writing discovers strains of literality that can enrich our own conception of cultural encounters. It might even encourage reflection on whether we have left behind the older methods or might better think of ourselves as historical tourists following the paths laid down by previous generations of Travel writing.

Modern anthropologists, historians, geographers, philologists have never stopped relying heavily on the travellers' memoirs as sources of information about people whose culture have been damaged or destroyed.

Here it would be necessary to point that travel narrative is much harder than it looks. The beauty of travel writing lies in its simplicity. It needs to be kept in mind that travel writing is not the same thing as writing guidebooks. Finally, it can be said that travel writing has evolved as a literary form and it has now become an integral part of popular contemporary writing.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1. What are the three fold characters of travel writing?

15.4 TWO DISTINCT TYPES OF TRAVEL WRITING

We can say that there are two distinct kinds of travel writing that exists today. One kind of travel writing speaks of travel as a personal experience and is termed sometimes as travelogue or itinerary and the

other one which provides information to travellers falls under the category of travel guides.

Travel writing can be specialized as well as a creative craft. Specialized travel writing is more specific and it generally concentrates on one particular area of interest. For example, a person may write only on business travels or on places of cultural/historical interest. Nowadays this comes into the category of specialized travel writing. Again, creative travel writing is a class by itself. This kind of writing is mainly a piece of imaginative prose which is a record of lively experience. Travel writing must be based on actual experience. Creative travel writing is a class by itself. In such writing the author gives full expression to his or her creativity and spontaneity in re-creating the experience of travel. In doing this, the author's sensibility, sharp objective power, eye for detail and capacity to knit together a story in an engrossing style– all come into play. In such writing, the author's individuality and his particular style of expression have a major role to play.



LET US KNOW

Naipaul's travel books, *The Middle Passage*, *An Area of Darkness*, *India: A Wounded Civilization*, *Among the Believers*, *India: A Million Mutinies Now* and *A Turn in the South* have been discussed widely and are popular among the readers.

15.5 TRAVEL WRITING AND TRAVEL WRITERS

Travel writing is a broad category of writing concerned with various aspects of travel. Travel writing is often associated with tourism and happens to include works of a rather ephemeral nature such as guide books. But that is only one aspect of travel writing. Over the ages, different types of travellers such as missionaries, explorers, scientists, pilgrims and immigrants have all enriched travel writing by incorporating their experiences and observations. That sort of travel writing which possesses a creative

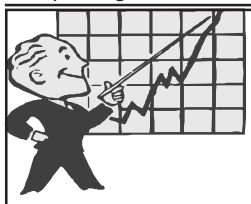
content is generally valued as literature and referred to as travel literature. Apart from its creative content, such writing also quite often reveals the individual's interpretation of men and events surrounding a particular geographical location.

It should be noted that the urge to travel and see and experience new lands and people has always been a human desire right from the beginning of civilization. Since the earliest of times people have been traveling for variety of reasons. These range from the urge to satisfy one's curiosity or sense of adventure or the simple pleasure of traveling to moving from place to place in search of food or jobs or because of political compulsions. Some travellers who possessed a sense of alertness and a methodical mind often recorded their traveling experiences and facts as they appeared to them and these ultimately formed the corpus of what today we refer to as travel writing. Some of the more famous travel writers of modern times include Vikram Seth who has, in his *From Heaven Lake*, written an exciting and highly interesting account of his hitch-hiking trip through China's Sinkiang province to Tibet and then finally to Nepal. Similarly, American writers like Paul Theroux and William Least Heat-Moon, the Welsh writer Jan Morris and English author Eric Newby have all made their livings through writing travelogues. Morris, however, is more famous as a historian while Theroux is a popular novelist. The *Great Railway Bazaar* by Paul Theroux is a well known and popular piece of writing. V. S. Naipaul's *India: A Wounded Civilization* and *Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey* are well known travelogues where the author's trips to India and Iran become occasions for deep and extended observations on the nations and their people and civilizations, their past glories and present predicaments. Ved Mehta is another well known travel writer .



LET US KNOW

National Geographic Emerging Explorer and PEN award winning journalist Kira Salak first reached acclaim by travelling to the world's remotest locations and writing about them for National Geographic publications and travel books.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q2. Say true or false:

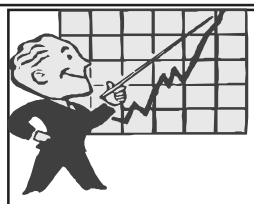
a) Ved Mehta has written *India: A Wounded Civilization.*

b) Travelling has always been a human desire right from the civilization.

Q3. What does travel literature refer to?

15.6 SOME ASSAMESE TRAVEL WRITERS

Assamese literature is quite rich in travel writing. Perhaps you will be interested to know as to who may be the pioneers of modern travel writing in Assamese. We can start with the name of Jnanadabhiram Barua who wrote travel memoirs titled as "Bilator Chithi" (Letters from the Foreign Country) in the journal but published in 1948 in book form. Dr. Birinchi Kumar Barua's travelogue *Switzerland Bhraman* (1948) (Journey to Switzerland) may be a trend-setter in this line. Hem Barua, a reputed poet, critic, educationist and illustrious parliamentarian, became quite popular and well known through his travelogues like *Sagar Dekhisa* (*Have you seen the sea?)*, *Ranga Karabir Phul* (The Red Flower Karabi), '*Mekong Nai Dekhilo (I have seen the river Mekong*), *Israel*, etc. These books are the result of his travels to various countries at different times. Written in a literary style, these travelogues are frequently accompanied by relevant poetic quotations in lightness of touch and personal appeal which make for their lively reading. Amalendu Guha's *Soviet Deshat Abhumuki* (A peep into the land of Soviet) contains descriptions about Tashkand and his experiences there. Similarly, Sayed Abdul Malik's *Majat Mathu Himalayas* (Himalaya only in Between) and Naba Kanta Barua's *Deshe Deshe Mor Desha* (My country in different countries), Gautam Barua's *Nana Desh, Nana Rang* are well known travel writings which have earned merit, popularity and interest. Of late, many books on travel writing have been available in Assamese literature. But mostly, many of them are travel diaries with narration and descriptions providing information of different places of visit.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q4. Name a few writers who have contributed to travel writing in Assamese literature.

Q5. What is specialized travel writing?

Q6. Explain creative travel writing.

Q7. What are the two distinct types of travel writing?

15.7 EXAMPLES OF TRAVEL WRITING

The following are some of the excerpts from renowned travel writers. The learners are however, advised to go through other such travel writings to have a better grasp of the style and language used in this kind of writing.

Excerpts from V.S. Naipaul's An *Area of Darkness*

(Source: *An Area of Darkness* by V. S. Naipaul, published in 1964)

On the train to Cairo the man across the aisle hawked twice, with an expert tongue rolled the phlegm into a ball, plucked the ball out of his mouth with thumb and forefinger, considered it, and then rubbed it away between his palms. (AAD 14).

Nowhere do I see the India I know: those poor fields, those three legged dogs, those sweating red coated railway porters carrying heavy tin trunks on their heads (AAD 71).

Ten months later I was to revisit Bombay and to wonder at my hysteria. It was cooler, and in the crowded courtyards of Colaba there were Christmas decorations, illuminated stars hanging out of windows against the black sky. It was my eye that had changed. I had seen Indian villages : the narrow , broken lanes with green slime in the gutters , the choked back to back mud houses , the jumble of filth and food and animals and people , the baby in the dust , swollen –bellied , black with flies , but wearing its good luck amulet . I had seen the starved child defecating at the roadside while mangy dog waited to eat the excrement. (AAD 48).

A child was squatting in the mud of the street; the hairless pink –skinned dog waited for the excrement. The child the big bellied, rose; the dog ate (AAD 215).

The camp was a chaos of tents and guy –ropes and cooking stones and pilgrims defecating behind every bush. The woods were already littered with uncovered excrement; hanks and twists of excrement crowned every accessible boulder of the lidder river, beside which we had camped (AAD 167).

Excerpts from Verrier Elwin's essay "A Pilgrimage to Tawang"

(Source: Verrier Elwin's autobiography *The Tribal World of Verrier Elwin* published in 1964 by Oxford University Press)

Tawang, with its great monastery is a beautiful upland valley in a corner between Bhutan and Tibet, came into world-news as the first place of importance visited by the Dalai Lama, when sought political asylum in India four years ago. It came again, more tragically, into the headlines when it was captured by the Chinese and yet again as the scene of rejoicing when it was reoccupied by its Lamas and the Indian administrators a few weeks later.

Tawang is a long way off, and when I went there the journey had to be made on foot or pony: now a wonderful mountain road makes it accessible. Lila and I went there in May 1956 and, since we covered the exact route taken by the Dalai Lama and his party when they travelled down to the plains. I will describe our experiences, for he saw the same places and met the same people that we did, though in a reverse order.



15.8 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you have learnt about travel writing as a literary genre and also about travel writers and travel writing. We have also provided you an idea about some of the renowned travel writers. You are now familiar with travel writing as a broad category of writing concerned with various aspects of travel. The travel books serve various purposes. They not only provide information about the place but also give an insight into the history as well

as the culture of the people. The Americans Paul Theroux and William Least Heat-Moon, Welsh author Jan Morris and Englishman Eric Newby all made their livings writing travelogues. You have learnt how Assamese literature is also rich in travel writing.



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15.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q1. Travel writing has a threefold characteristic which may be divided into the aesthetic, the political and the scientific.

Ans to Q2. a) False b) True

Ans to Q3. That sort of travel writing which possesses a creative content is generally valued as literature and referred to as travel literature. Apart from its creative content, such writing also quite often reveals the individual's interpretation of men and events surrounding a particular geographical location.

Ans to Q4. Jnanadabhiram Barua, Birinchi Kumar Barua, Hem Barua, Amalendu Guha, Sayed Abdul Malik, etc.

Ans to Q5. Specialized travel writing is more specific and it generally concentrates on one particular area of interest. For example, a person may write only on business travels or on places of cultural/historical interest.

Ans to Q6. Creative travel writing is a class by itself. In such writing the author gives full expression to his or her creativity and

spontaneity in re-creating the experience of travel. In doing this, the author's sensibility, sharp objective power, eye for detail and capacity to knit together a story in an engrossing style– all come into play. In such writing, the author's individuality and his particular style of expression have a major role to play.

Ans to Q7. One kind of travel writing speaks of travel as a personal experience and is termed sometimes as travelogue or itinerary and the other one which provides information to travellers falls under the category of travel guides.



15.11 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q1. Describe travel writing as literary genre.

Q2. Elaborate with examples the various aspects of travel writing.

Q3. Write a short note on "travel writers of Assam".

Q4. Broadly describe the two distinct types of travel writing.

Q5. Point out the significance of travel writing in the current socio-political life of the world community.

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