

Story: analysis

Analysing Fiction/Novels/Prose

When analysing prose you should comment on these things:

- (a) **Characterisation:** the characters, how and what we know about them and how they are presented by the author. Look at:
 - what they say and do
 - how the author describes them
 - their relationships
 - how they develop
 - what they symbolise/their function
- (b) **Plot and structure:** what happens and how it is organised (either into parts or episodes). Does the novel/story progress in a linear fashion (beginning-middle-end) or does it use flashbacks?
- (c) **Setting and atmosphere:** the changing physical scene and how it reflects the story. If the setting reflects the characters' moods, this is called a mental landscape or pathetic fallacy (e.g. a storm reflecting a character's violence).
- (d) **Style and language:** the author's choice of words and literary devices such as imagery and how these reflect the mood.
- (e) **Symbolism:** concrete objects that symbolise ideas, themes or characters.
- (f) **Viewpoint/narrative style:** how the story is told. Either first person narration (I said, we did) where a character tells a story or third person narration (he said, they went). This is where an omniscient (all knowing) narrator tells the story.
- (g) **Social and historical background/context:** when the story was written and how the events happening at this time are reflected in the novel's plot or themes.
- (h) **Themes:** what the main ideas are in the novel. Themes are sustained and developed throughout – there can be many themes.