

UNIT-I

THEORY OF FICTION

STRUCTURE

- Learning objectives
- Introduction
- Types of Fiction
- Elements of Fiction
- Forms of Fiction
- Uses of Fiction
- Fiction Theory
- Summary
- Key Words
- Review Questions

• LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This unit will give you an insight about the fiction and after reading this chapter you will be able to answer the following question :

- ❖ Define fiction
- ❖ Define types of fiction
- ❖ Explain the element of fiction
- ❖ Describe various forms of fiction
- ❖ Explain the theory of fiction

• INTRODUCTION

Fiction is a genre which comprises works of imaginative narration, especially in prose form. It is quite away from facts and history. This can be written in any medium with all the imaginary things like characters, vents, places etc. writer with his imagination create an independent fictional world. Though it refers to the prose section of literature, it also implies to live theatrical performances, TV programmes, dramas, comics, films etc. her, writer doesn't take any responsibility about any character, event, occurrence and incident that resembles to any of the real-world experience. Fiction includes wild thoughts which entertains no boundaries and fetch creative elements from non real or fantasy world. It doesn't claim to tell a

true story. Instead it allows us to experience the things that may never have happened in our real life. It generally inspires us, scares us and engages us in new ideas.

• TYPES OF FICTION

(i) Realistic fiction

Realistic fiction has two words fiction and realistic. 'fiction' indicates that the story is imagined, while the word 'realistic' means it is real means true. That's why realistic fiction is different from the other form of fiction because it is a genre of writing in which the characters, setting, and events are made up through imagination but could be real. These stories resemble real life because they reflect real experiences—things people like you and I go through.

The characters (people and animals) of realistic fiction could exist in the world as we know it. That means there are no superheroes, no talking pets, and no fairytale creatures. A realistic character might remind you people all around you. Even the story in realistic fiction usually take place in an ordinary believable setting that is not just possible at the time of writing but likely. Even the issues are very familiar to the reader so that they can easily relate the events to their life. The plot highlights social or personal events or issues that mirror our society.

'The Fault in Our Stars' by John Green is a nice example of realistic fiction. The story of Hazel, 17 years old cancer patient, portraits dealing with friendship, teen romance, loss, teen angst, holding onto humor in the face of pain, and living with limited time. It is set in modern time in familiar setting.

Sometimes, in realistic fiction, the plot, setting and character of the story are not real but later on the imagination of the writer comes true. The best example of such realistic fiction is the science fiction 'From the earth to Moon' by Jules Verne published in 1865. In this novel the writer told about the landing of a man on moon. At that time nobody could think about it but it came true in 1969 when astronaut Neil Armstrong landed on moon.

(ii) Non-realistic fiction

Non-realistic fiction is that in which the story's events could not happen in real life, because they are supernatural, or involve an alternate form of history of mankind other than that recorded, or need impossible technology. The character, story, plot, events etc all are created in imaginary world that too unrealistic to be true. Such fiction may include talking animals and birds, flying fishes, devils and demons etc. such fiction is written for pure entertainment. 'Alice in Wonderland' is the best example of non-realistic fiction.

(iii) Semi-fiction

Semi-fiction has a great deal of non-fiction touch. It includes either a fictional depiction of a 'true story or a fictionalized account of an event, or a reconstructed biography. It is created when intellect and emotion meet. Semi-fiction is the book which is based on part-realism and part-imagination. The fiction is said to be based on the real-life story or inspired by an event etc. but to attract the readers imaginary elements are also used by the author. Wordsworth told one and a half-century ago, there must be a colouring of certain imagination so that the product can be served to the readers to be consumed. Many authors claim that their novels are based on their real lives. Such fiction work keeps the readers in a dilemma and indulge in question. It means more than enjoying the fiction, reader moves to find the true story.

(iv) Non-fiction

As the name suggest the fiction which is not actually the imaginary only is called non-fiction. It is the branch of literature comprising works of narrative prose dealing with facts and reality, including biography, history, and the essay. It is opposite to fiction and distinguished from poetry and drama. As far as elements of Non-fiction are concerned they involves real things, real people, real events, real places and real writing. No-fictions are fact based writings. non-fictions are informative. Autobiography, history books and journals are examples of non-fictions. Non-fiction can be called as a prosaic piece of literature, which talks about various topics, which are relevant for everyone. non-fiction is straightforward. Simplicity, directness and clarity are most important in non-fiction works.

• ELEMENTS OF FICTION

The elements in fictions are the essential tools to start and elevate the story gracefully. Mastery over these tools are necessary. There are many elements in fiction which are used by the writers to develop a story and its theme though it is impossible to quantify any of these elements as fiction is the part of literature not science. It is generally seen that there is a conflict among the groups of fiction writers about the elements in fiction but the generalized idea suggests that-

- Fiction has three major elements like-plot, character and setting.
- Other than these major elements fiction also has theme, conflict and style as other elements.
- Dialogue is also taken as an element as it helps writer to add spice to his fiction work
- According to J. Evanovich 'effective writing requires an understanding of the fundamental elements of story-telling, such as point of view, dialogues and setting.

Though still this debate is continued we can say that the major elements of fiction are Plot, Character, Conflict, Setting, Symbol, and Point of View. Let us discuss all these points in detail.

(i) PLOT:

Plot is also known as 'storyline'. It is an important as well as fundamental part of fiction as it drag us to read the story. It revolves around the characters. We can say that it is like blueprints. Generally, it is the plot, its connections, and its structure which decide the shape of a story. It includes the order in which your characters face things hence it renders and orders the events and action of the story. Though at a micro level it has an stimulation (action) and response (reaction), it has a beginning, middle and an ending at macro level. Plot also has a sequence of rise and fall in of action through scenes and sequels.

The Plot is important because it makes of the what happens to the characters in story. Plot helps to keep the action moving forward. It takes the reader on an emotional journey with the characters.

A character without a plot would stand still, as nothing would happen to them and thus change or grow throughout the story. Generally, 'plot' as a concept is split into six parts :

- Exposition
- Foreshadowing
- Rising action
- Climax
- Falling action
- Resolution
- **Exposition:** it is also known as introduction which establishes characters, setting and conflicts. It refers to a fiction story's initial setup where setting is established, characters are introduced, and conflicts are initiated. Hence without exposition initiation of the story is not possible.
- **Foreshadowing:** it is a part of the plot in which writer gives a clue to the readers about the upcoming incidents in the story. This technique is used by the author to provide sufficient hints about the plot development in the story.
- **Rising action:** which reveals the conflict. Till here, characters are established. The rising action follows the exposition and leads to climax. It is helpful to build the suspense and takes the events till climax. Actually, the rising of action occurs just before the climax; it is not the middle of the story.

- **Climax** : Climax is the midpoint between the rising action and falling action. It is also known as the turning point. This should be the greatest moment of tension in a story; everything is critical, with emotion. The interest of the audience is at the peak. This is the moment when things matter the most. The climax may include-
 - The danger for main character
 - Threat to the main character
 - Unfolding of an unknown truth
 - Introduction of undercover character etc.
- **Falling action:** After climax the falling action appears which shows the effects of the climax. In the falling action the things start to wind down. All that tension is actively being resolved.
- **Resolution:** Finally, at the end of the climax we have **resolution**. It means everything has been solved, and all the events of the plot have strongly led. It feels final. It may be happy or sad or It does require a satisfying one, even if you mean to continue in a sequel.

(ii) CHARACTER:

Characters are the main things in a story. If without plot characters are still then with out characters there is no story at all. A character is the participant in a story and takes the action forward. Character may be a person or animal or any entity that is given a character in a story. Characters may have different flavours like Brave, cowardly, bored, obnoxious etc. Characters are the foundation for the entire work. If characters are flat, readers will have trouble empathizing. But if characters feel real and relatable, then readers will not leave the story without finishing it. Characters may be of following types-

- Protagonist
- Antagonist
- Static
- Dynamic
- Foil
- Supporting
- Minor
- Point of view
- **Protagonist:** It is the main character in the story which drives the action. Hence the protagonist is responsible for achieving the objective of the story. It is the main character which leads the story

and the plot is constructing around him. It is not necessary that the protagonist has all the heroic qualities.

- **Antagonist:** it is the character that stands in apposition to the protagonist and usually become the root conflict of the story. He always stands against the protagonist and drives the story towards the climax.
- **Static:** it is the character who does not significantly change during the course of the story. He usually remains unimpressive and supports the course of action inactively.
- **Dynamic:** It is a character who has a variation in his character and undergoes character development during the course of a story. A drastic change can be felt by the readers in such characters.
- **Foil:** It is a foil is a character who contrasts with another character, usually the protagonist, to highlight qualities of the other character. Hence foil is a character that illuminates the personality of the main character.
- **Supporting:** It is the main character that plays a part in the plot which is important but not major. It helps the story to move forward and takes the responsibility to support the main character in the story.
- **Minor:** The minor character which has a short role in the story at a particular point. Its presence in a particular part may affect the story but not as a whole. It is also known as cameo part.
- **Point of view:** It is the character which narrates the main story or from whose perspective the audience experiences the story. This character represents the point of view with which the audience will empathies. That's why it is also called the main character or the narrative.

(iii) CONFLICT

Remember; no conflicts no story. Conflict is one of the main elements in fiction which involves a struggle between two opposing forces, usually a protagonist and an antagonist. It is related to the emotional element and it comes automatically in a story. It may be internal or external. conflicts are essential elements of a storyline. It is essential for a writer to introduce and develop them to achieve the story's goal. Resolution of the conflict entertains the readers. Conflicts are of many types-

- Internal (man to himself)
- External (person to person)
- Person to society
- Person to nature

- Person to supernatural
- Person to technology
- Internal (man to himself)

An internal or psychological conflict arises as soon as a character experiences two opposite emotions or desires – usually virtue and vice, or good and evil – inside him. This disagreement causes the character to suffer mental agony, and it develops a unique tension in a storyline. **The protagonist fights against himself in some way. This may be self-sabotage, fighting an illness or addiction, or even struggling with their competing desires for good and bad. Although the struggle is internal but the protagonist may be influenced by external forces.** Examples: *Catcher in the Rye*, *Crime and Punishment*, Titular character in *‘Beowulf’*, *‘a beautiful mind’*

- External (person to person)

External conflict is a struggle that takes place between the main character and some outside force. Therefore, it is outside the body of the protagonist. Usually, it occurs when the protagonist struggles against the antagonist, a character that opposes the protagonist in the main body of the story. Other types of external conflict could also arise due to some other factors such as the forces of nature, and society in which the protagonist lives. **protagonist fights against another person or people. This doesn't have to be hand-to-hand combat; interpersonal conflict comes in many forms. the conflict between hero and villain is the famous conflict in fictions which contributes to the flow of story and the development of both the characters.**

Example: *The Hunger Games*, conflict between Judah and Messala in *‘Ben-Hur’*.

- Person to society

This external conflict occurs when the main character stands up to support his beliefs and **struggles against the social forces. protagonist(s) fights against injustice in their society. This is common in dystopian fiction. It is different from ‘person to person’ conflicts because protagonist confronts an entire system or way of life.**

Examples: *The Scarlet Letter*, *The Handmaid's Tale* etc.

- Person to nature

In this type of external conflict, the protagonist struggles against the forces of nature, or an external environment. **Think of a survival story. The protagonist must fight the elements of nature to survive. This doesn't have to dictate the genre, though; any time your character is battling the elements to survive, this falls under ‘person against nature’ conflict.**

Examples: *Island of the Blue Dolphins*, *The Old Man and the Sea*, *The Little House on the Prairie*, *The Calculating Stars*. One more example is that in the short story *To Build a Fire*, Jack London tells a story of an **anonymous narrator and his dog, traveling through the wilderness of Yukon Trail**.

- Person to supernatural

The protagonist fights an antagonist that isn't entirely known forces. These unknown forces may include aliens, ghosts, demons, etc. This is popular in horror and fantasy genres.

Examples: *The War of the Worlds*, *Alien*, *Kingdom of Souls*, *Dawn Among the Stars*

- Person to God/fate

The protagonist has an inevitable destiny. Freedom seems impossible and serves as a major theme. Here 'fate' is often named as an explicit antagonist.

Examples: *Lord of the Rings*, *The Odyssey*

- Person to technology

In some way, the antagonist is not but technology/machinery. This may also include themes of technology 'replacing' humans. Basically, protagonist fights against technology-gone-bad. While this is more common in science fiction, it doesn't have to be.

Examples: *The Matrix*, *Battlestar Galactica*, *2001: A Space Odyssey*

VI. SYMBOLISM:

Actually, Symbol is a thing that represents or stands for something else, especially a material object representing something abstract it can appear as overt descriptions or as hidden clues. Even descriptions that help set mood or tone can also function as symbols.

Symbolism is the use of symbols to represent ideas or qualities. It is used to create an impact to an action by attaching an additional information to it. Symbolism helps writer to reach to their audience mind indirectly rather than outright. It is used when something else is used to represent something else. It may be the use of an object, person, situation or words etc to represent something else like an idea.

It is an important element in fiction because some time it is difficult to speak directly about things or situation etc. For example, in Harper Lee's Pulitzer Prize-winning 1960 book *'To Kill a Mockingbird'*, the bird symbolizes innocence and beauty. Lee chose the mockingbird because it's without guile. A mockingbird's only purpose in life is to sing—it doesn't want to harm anyone. Because of this, killing a Mockingbird is considered an act of senseless cruelty.

Symbolism are of following types

- **Metaphor**

A metaphor is an implicit comparison of one thing to another without using the sign words like 'like, as, equals ...'. For example,- Camel is the ship of desert. Here, camel is compared to the ship.

- **Personification**

Personification is used to attribute a human characteristic—or emotion—to an animal, object, or concept. An example can be found in T.S. Eliot's work 'Prelude,' where he says, 'The winter evening settles down.'

- **Simile**

A simile also explicitly denotes a comparison by using the word 'like' or 'as'. Two examples of similes are, 'My love is like a red rose,' and, 'This cloth is as soft as silk.'

- **Allegory**

allegory is a narrative in which a character, place or event...is used to deliver a broader message about the real world. It is very similar to a metaphor but the difference between two is that when an allegory is employed, the comparison reflects the entire work. For example-'The Pilgrim's Progress' by John Bunyan uses characters to present a universal picture of Christian life.

V. SETTING:

One of the fundamental elements of fiction is setting. it is the time and place in which the story takes place. The definition of setting can also include social statuses, weather, historical period, and details about immediate surroundings. It is also seen that in many narratives the setting can act almost as a nonhuman character, affecting the characters in many different large and small ways.

Settings can be real or fictional, or a combination of both real and fictional elements. Some settings are very specific (Wulfhall in Wiltshire England in 1500), while others are descriptive (a boat out on the ocean).

VII. THEME:

A **theme** is a central topic, subject, or message within a narrative. It gives the general view of the story. In a story, it is the major idea that surrounds the story. All stories have at least one theme. It gives the reader the insight into how the story characters live to pursue something, the results of conflicts and how all these choices come to pass in their lives. Some common themes in literature are 'love,' 'war,' 'revenge,' 'betrayal,' 'patriotism,' 'grace,' 'isolation,' 'motherhood,' 'forgiveness,' 'wartime loss,' 'treachery,' 'rich versus poor,' 'appearance versus reality,' and 'help from other-worldly powers.' In a story, there can be major and minor themes. George Orwell's dystopian novel "Animal Farm" has several

themes, including how absolute power can corrupt and that knowledge is power.

VIII STYLE:

In literature, writing style is the manner of expressing thoughts with language characteristic of an individual, period, school, or nation. style is the way in which an author writes and/or tells a story. Every author choose a style of his own choice and it's what sets one author apart from another and creates the "voice" that audiences hear when they read. Writer's style includes various elements like tone, word choice, grammar, language, descriptive technique, and so on. Style is also what determines the mood of a piece of literature, so its importance is huge across all genres.

• FORMS OF FICTION

The following are some major forms of fiction:

- Flash fiction: A work of fewer than 2,000 words. (1,000 by some definitions) (around 5pages)
- Short story: A work of at least 2,000 words but under 7,500 words. (5–25 pages)
- Novelette: A work of at least 7,500 words but under 17,500 words. (25–60 pages)
- Novella: A work of at least 17,500 words but under 50,000 words. (60–170 pages)
- Novel: A work of 50,000 words or more. (about 170+ pages)
- Epic: A work of 200,000 words or more. (about 680+ pages)

Other than these forms we can also encounter with another way of using fiction and that is through internet/online form.

• USES OF FICTION

Though the fiction is used, most of the time, for entertainment but it has various other uses also like

- It allow us to peep deep inside ourselves and test our own character against hardened anathemas like killing, adultery, incest, pornography, theft, etc.
- Fiction has a power that no other form of communication does. The power to read someone else's mind fully and completely.
- It creates an interlinked bridge between the mind of the reader and the writer, and the minds of reader and character.
- It helps us to see the world through a character's eyes.

- Good fiction runs deep into the realms of psychology and philosophy. It explores and uncovers paradigm.
- Fiction puts the evolution in a different way and hence, deepens the understanding of evolution keeps record of this evolution.
- Other than this fiction is also used for the instructional purposes like the text books using fiction to instruct the students.
- Even fictions are used in advertisements and propagandas.
- Fiction inspires the minds to think about the remote things which are not true now but may happen in future.
- Non-fiction also serves the purpose of informing the reader about the past incidents and stories.

• FICTION THEORY

To understand the fiction theory, we should know about the possible world's theory. Actually, Possible worlds theory, in literary studies, uses concepts from possible-world logic and applies these logics to worlds that are created by fictional texts, fictional universe. Possible-world theory provides a useful vocabulary and conceptual framework to describe such worlds. The Fiction Theory is a subject in literature that uses possible world theory to literature.

Maximum scholars and critics who conduct theses follow the Saul Kripke's application of modal logic (Modal logic is a collection of formal systems originally developed and still widely used to represent statements about necessity and possibility. For instance, the modal formula can be read as "if P is necessary, then it is also possible") to semantics (the study of meaning).

Theorists of fiction study the relationships between textual worlds and the world outside the text. They understand that the relationships between the imaginary worlds of fiction and the actual world (in which we live) are complicated but fiction can be dismissed by thinking that they are merely the stories which are not real.

In order to understand fiction theory, one must pose questions about fundamental terms such as text, narrative, literature, fiction, etc. All these terms should be explored in their true faces and there should be a distinction between a literature and other forms of writing like newspaper.

Roman Jakobson, a Russian formalist and linguist, applied linguistics to analyses of literary texts. In his well-known communication model, Jakobson breaks apart a communicative act between an addressor and addressee into a message, code, context, and contact, with each part having its own function. According to Jakobson's model, art is created when the message itself (which carries the poetic function) is stressed.

The French scholar Roland Barthes designed a system of five major codes that function as tools to analyze narrative texts that brought the subtle ways a text becomes a literary narrative.

Jakobson's model and Barthes's codes offer critics a way to begin to explore the nature of a literary text through application of semiotics to narrative.

• SUMMARY

Fiction is any form of narrative which deals with events that are not factual, but rather, imaginary and invented by its author(s). Although fiction often describes a major branch of literary work, it is also applied to theatrical, cinematic, documental, and musical work. In contrast to this non-fiction, which deals exclusively in actual event (e.g. biographies, histories). The important elements of fiction are plot, character, theme conflict etc. Fiction can have many categories like realistic fiction non-fiction. It is also found in various forms like short story, novels, epic etc. Fiction can be used for entertainment and for other purposes like bindings imagination, inspiring reader etc.

Fiction Theory is a discipline that applies possible world theory to literature. Fiction theory scholars and critics have articulated various theories rooted in Saul Kripke's application of modal logic to semantics. Drawing on concepts found in possible world theory, theorists of fiction. Study the relationship between textual words and the world outside the text. The overarching idea in fiction theory is that the relationships between the imaginary world of fiction and the actual world in which we live are complicated, and that one ought not dismiss fiction as imply stories that are not "true". Theorists of fiction pose challenging questions about, and offer constructive ways of exploring, the often complex relations between the world of fiction and the "real" world in which we live.

• KEY WORDS

Fiction : Fiction is any form of narrative which deals, in part or in whole, with events that are not factual, but rather, imaginary and invented by its author(s).

Foreshadowing : Foreshadowing is a technique used by authors to provide clues for the reader to be able to predict what might occur later in the story.

Exposition : Exposition refers to a fiction story's initial setup, where, variably, setting is established, characters are introduced, and conflict is initiated.

Rising action : The Rising action, in the narrative of a work of fiction, follows the exposition and leads up to the climax. The rising action's purpose is usually to build suspense all the way up the climatic finish.

Falling action : The rising action should not be confused with the middle of the story, but is the action right before the climax. The material beyond the climax is known as the falling action.

• REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Write an essay on fiction in literature.
2. Describe the elements of fiction.
3. Explain different types of fiction in detail.
4. Discuss various types of conflicts in fiction.
5. Examine the significance of fiction theory.
6. Define non-fiction.
7. What is meant by semi-fiction ?
8. What are the fundamental elements of fiction ?
9. List out the types of prose fiction.
10. What is the use of fiction ?

• FURTHER READINGS

1. A Greek-English Lexicon – Henry George Liddel
2. An Essay (1975 : Hill and Wang). – Barthes, Roland
3. Reading for the Plot : Design and Intention in Narrative.
– Brooks, Peter
4. Literary Theory : A Very Short Introduction – Culler, Jonaths
5. Fiction and Possible Worlds. – Dolezel, Lubom

