

THE SECRETS OF THE NOVEL

All over the world, people like to read different kind of novels, but none of them knows WHAT the term **Novel** means. The question “What is the **Novel**?” is still an open problem in scientific world. Till nowadays researchers cannot solve it completely. The main questions is, – why?

Probably because many literary terms and concepts do not have a single meaning and definition of the following term. These equivalents are ambiguous. In addition, they have changed from time to time and acquired new meanings. This testifies to the great variety and infinity of meanings of fiction. It is like a sea or an ocean that never stops and always surprises us with its unpredictable changes.

Something similar has happened and is happening with the term **Novel**. Actually, in science, not even one term is used, but several terms. There is the term **Romance** (fr. Roman). It has two meanings: 1) – an antique or medieval text; 2) old-style text.

Canadian explorer **Northrop Frye** interprets the term **Romance** as a kind of antique or medieval prose about the mysterious and extraordinary adventures of heroes. He believes that there are many legends and myths in romance, in which act both Gods and people and heroes are existing under the influence of mysterious forces. **Novel** is a term that refers to a contemporary world, which describes a literary genre of its nowadays existence, but that’s not all. In English literary criticism two similar terms are distinguished: **Story** is true an up-to-life events, as well as the term **Novel** is fictional and untrue events.

When did the first **Romance** appear in Europe? It appeared in the era of antiquity, although the exact word and term **Romance** did not exist yet.

And in the Middle Ages in Europe, any large-scale works written in Roman languages (French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, etc.), and not in Latin language, Roman languages called **Romance**. That is, the word **Romance** comes from the name of the Roman languages.

In the Middle Ages, knightly **Romances** about the various adventures of knights who performed feats in the name of their love for the Beautiful Lady or in the name of serving their king or even in name of the whole country.

During the Renaissance, chivalrous **Romances** were revised. Reality has changed, and it was impossible to live in the sphere of beautiful illusions and ideals, which were extremely far from the reality. Therefore, the Spanish writer Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra wrote a great work "Don Quixote" in the style of chivalrous **Romance**. It was already a transition from Romance to Novel and to Story. Don Quixote, who considers himself a knight, rides the roads of Spain, tries to fight evil and protect the poor and humiliated, but his chivalrous ideals are outdated. Therefore, Don Quixote, although wants a justice, which unfortunately causes only laughter at him in certain situations.

In a new life it was necessary to live and think in a new way, but how? The writer does not answer this question. His Don Quixote stays a big mystery for humanity. How to understand the complexity of life? How to find yourself in real circumstances? How to combine dream and reality together? Are you able to improve the life by your own efforts? These are the main questions that are contained in the novel by Miguel de Cervantes. The path of Don Quixote is a metaphor for the path of man and humanity, a metaphor for mistakes, illusions and delusions, but at the same time striving for the ideal.

The formation of **Novel** in Europe began very actively in 18th century. This was the era of the Enlightenment. Then there were many writers who began to study real life. They created characters, who traveled a lot, who got into various difficult circumstances, and only their mind, energy, connection with real life helped them to survive and win.

For instance, the character Robinson Crusoe in the novel "The Adventures of Robinson Crusoe", which was written by French writer Daniel Defoe or Gulliver from the novel "Gulliver's Travels" written by English writer Jonathan Swift.

In 18th century, travel, adventure, philosophical and social novels appeared in Europe. Another important moment occurred precisely in 18th century is that the novel includes the themes of people's private life, their love and their relationships. All of these has become very important and interesting. Since that time, the novel has developed very quickly and dynamically.

In 19th century, the novel in Europe became the leading genre in the literary process. It has become voluminous and deep in its content. It has a lot of storylines and different kinds of characters, also various spheres of life, all aspects of reality were presented.

French novelists (Honore de Balzac, Frederic Stendhal, Gustave Flaubert) played an important role in the development of 19th century novel, because they understood the novel as a scientific genre. French writers wanted to explore and analyze life and people through fiction.

English novelists (Charles Dickens, William Thackeray, Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë and others) studied the behavior and morality of people in real circumstances, discovered the themes of love, social inequality, and the struggle for human rights.

I would also like to note the great role of the Russian novel in world literature. Alexander Pushkin, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Leo Tolstoy and other Russian writers presented the complex world of the human soul. Therefore, their novels are called psychological or philosophical.

Now let's fix our attention on the characteristic features of the novel. How does this genre differ from other genres?

Since a fairly large number of novels had accumulated in Europe by 19th century, this genre began to be specially studied.

The first major research was done by the German philosopher and scientist Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, in his Lectures on Aesthetics, he identified the key features of the novel:

- 1) a broad image of life;
- 2) the conflict between the poetry of the heart and the prose of life;
- 3) relationships between people;
- 4) the duration and complexity of character development;
- 5) belonging to the epic/epos (and not to the lyrics or drama).

Since that moment, various definitions of the novel have appeared, in which different criteria are obvious, but until now, no one has succeeded in creating a definitive and definition of the **novel**.

Although in different dictionaries and encyclopedias there are definitions of the novel, there is no final definition and cannot be.

Because, firstly, each definition is rather conditional; and secondly, each concept is in constant development, because literature never stands still.

Hungarian scientist György Lukács (1885-1971) at the beginning of his career was fond of the ideas of Hegel. As a result, in 1916 he wrote *The Theory of the Novel*, which was published in 1920 in Berlin. His fate was difficult. He was even the Minister of Culture in Hungary in 1919 and 1956. After the fall of the Hungarian Republic, he was persecuted and arrested (including by the authorities of the former USSR). He became an emigrant and was not able to return to Hungary.

During the Soviet era, D. Lukács's works were prohibited. The main ideas of D. Lukács in his work "Theory of the Novel":

- the novel reflects the complex relationship between man and the world;
- time plays an important role in the novel, each person experiences time individually;
- a "problematic" character is placed in the center of the novel, he or she carries the spiritual problems of their generation, they come into conflict with the surrounding world;
- the subject of the novel is the story of an individuality and person's soul on the path of understanding him or her-self and the world.

D. Lukács constantly compared the novel with the epic/epos.

Another great researcher, Mikhail Bakhtin (1895 – 1975), followed the same path too. He knew perfectly well the work "Theory of the Novel" by D. Lukács, in the 1920s he began to translate it from German. M. Bakhtin and D. Lukács corresponded for some time and exchanged their ideas. Therefore, Mikhail Bakhtin relied on the legacy of D. Lukács, but at the same time created his own original concept, which was reflected in his works, in particular in the work "Epic and Novel".

The main ideas of Mikhail Bakhtin in the work “Epic and Novel”

| Epic/epos | Novel |
|--|--|
| Image of the past | Image of the present |
| Time and space are complete | Time and space have no end, their forms are in dynamics |
| The main character is a “man of the past”, he has no initiative, his or her destiny is complete. | The main character is close to reality, he or she exists in constant motion. |
| There is no present and future, there is only the past, which can no longer be changed | “The novel is characterized by an eternal rethinking, a reassessment of reality”, “The novel wants to influence the real present and future” |
| In an epic/epos the plot is always complete. | In a novel the plot is always open in time and space |
| A character is adequate to his or her time and destiny | The theme of the inadequacy of the characters to their fate or environment is the leading theme of the novel |
| Literary canon, genre design | The absence of a canon, the dynamism of the genre, its incompleteness |
| Striving to the past | Perspective of human and world development |
| Presence of one leading point of view on past events | The inner dialogue of the novel, the variety of points of view |

I would like to end my report with the quotation of Mikhail Bakhtin “The novel is the only emerging genre, therefore it reflects the formation of reality itself more deeply, substantially, sensitively and quickly ... The novel became

the leading hero of the literary development of the new time precisely because it expresses the tendencies of the formation of the nowadays, it is the only genre born of this world and in everything natural to it”.

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