WEEK ONE

Before books were common, stories were told out loud to groups of people. People would perform, recite, or sing stories. This changed how stories were made and what they were for.

A. The Epic (Old Times: around 800 BCE – 500 CE)

The epic is a very old type of story. It came from people telling stories and myths out loud.

- **What it looks like:** It is a long story-poem. The language is formal and sounds like music. This made it easier for people to remember and felt important.

- **History:** These poems were about heroes and important times in the past. People would listen to them at festivals and in the homes of kings. They were not just for fun. They taught people about their history, what they believed in, and their religion.

- **What it does:**
  - The epic is about the future of a whole country or group of people. This is shown through a hero who is stronger or better than normal people.
  - The story is about big events like battles, long trips, and gods helping or hurting people. What happens to a character is often already decided.
  - The storyteller speaks for everyone. They often ask a special spirit (a Muse) for help to tell the story well. We don't know what the characters are thinking or feeling inside. We only see what they do and say.

B. The Romance (Middle Ages: around 1100 – 1500 CE)

In the Middle Ages, stories began to change. They were less about a whole country and more about one knight's adventures and moral tests.

- **What it looks like:** At first, these stories were poems that were told out loud. Later, they were written down as regular stories (prose). The world in these stories was not realistic; it was very perfect and fancy.

- **History:** Romances show the life of rich people in the Middle Ages. They were for fun, but they also showed how knights should act. They focused on being honorable, loyal, and loving in a noble way.

- **What it does:**
  - The story is about one hero who goes on a trip to show he is a good person. He has to pass many tests, and there is often magic.
  - The places in the story are not real places. They are symbolic, like magic forests, scary castles, and women who need to be saved. The characters and monsters often stand for good things (like courage) or bad things (like wanting too much or being sneaky).

- We know a knight is good by what he does. His honor is not a feeling inside him. He proves it by following the rules for knights. How he feels is less important than his actions.

The Novel and a New Focus on Inner Thoughts

The novel became popular in the 1600s and 1700s. It was a new and different way to tell stories. It grew because more people could read, there were printing presses, and people were more interested in individual people.

A. A New Kind of Story for a New Kind of Reader

The novel was the first big type of story written for one person to read quietly by themselves. This made storytelling different.

- Novels used simple, everyday language. They were written like letters, diaries, or newspapers. This made the story feel real and close to the reader's own life.
- When you read a novel, you are alone with the book. This lets you feel a close connection to the story and understand the characters in a deep way. This was not possible when stories were told to big groups.
- The main characters are normal people. They are not kings or knights. They are servants, business owners, or teachers. The novel is about how these normal people find their place in the world.

B. Realism and Inner Life

- **Realism:** Novels try to seem like real life.
  - They use a lot of real details. Characters have full names, live on real streets, wear normal clothes, and worry about money. This helps the reader believe the story is true.
  - Things happen for logical reasons, just like in the real world. They don't happen because of magic or because a god made them happen.
- **Inner Life (Interiority):** This is the most important new thing about the novel. It focuses a lot on what characters are thinking and feeling.
  - The novel lets the reader know everything a character is thinking and feeling. We know their memories, their worries, and their mixed-up thoughts. The most important things in a novel can be what happens inside a character's mind, like when they understand something new or change their mind about something.

- Characters in novels are not perfect like heroes in epics and romances. They are complicated and have problems. They change over time. Who they are is not set from the start; they become who they are during the story.

Telling the Difference Between Story and Discourse

To understand a story well, we need to know the difference between the events and how the events are told. A group of Russian thinkers called this the difference between "story" and "discourse."

- **Story:** This is what happens in the narrative. It is the list of events in the order they happened. You can think of it as a timeline.
  - **Example:** A poor young man loves a rich married woman. He gets a lot of money to try to get her to love him. She leaves her husband for a short time but then goes back. The man is killed, and she doesn't go to his funeral. (This is the story of *The Great Gatsby*).
- **Discourse:** This is *how* the story is told in the book. It is the way the author arranges the events to create a certain effect. It is everything the author does with the story. This includes:
  - **Order of Events:** Does the book start at the beginning of the story, or in the middle? Does it use flashbacks to show what happened in the past?
  - **Pacing:** How much time does the author spend on an event? A book can spend many pages on just a few minutes of a character's thoughts. Or, it can describe ten years in one sentence.
  - **Narrative Voice:** Who is telling the story? What point of view are they using?

Who Tells the Story and How We See Characters

The discourse is controlled by a narrator. The narrator's point of view changes how we understand the characters.

A. The Narrator: Who is Speaking?

First, we need to know that the real author (the person who wrote the book) is different from the narrator (the voice that tells the story in the book).

- **First-Person Narration:** The narrator is a character in the story. They use "I" or "we" to tell you what happened from their own point of view.
  - **Effect:** This makes the story feel personal and real. But, this narrator only knows what they have seen and experienced. They might not be telling the whole truth, either on purpose or by accident. We only get their side of the story.

- **Third-Person Narration:** The narrator is not in the story. They talk about the characters as "he," "she," or "they."
    - **Third-Person Omniscient (Knows Everything):** The narrator knows everything about the story's world. They know the past, the future, and what all the characters are thinking. This makes the narrator seem very powerful and trustworthy.
    - **Third-Person Limited (Knows Some Things):** The narrator only knows the thoughts and feelings of one character (or sometimes a few). This brings the reader closer to that one character's experience.

B. Characterization: How Are Characters Made?

Characters are not real people. The author creates them using two main methods: telling and showing.

- **Direct Characterization (Telling):** The narrator just tells you what a character is like.
    - **Example:** Mr. Smith was a kind but angry man.
    - **Function:** This is a fast and easy way to describe a character, but it can feel a little boring. Older stories, before novels, used this a lot.
- **Indirect Characterization (Showing):** The narrator shows you the character's personality through their actions, words, looks, private thoughts, and how other characters act around them. The reader has to figure out what the character is like from these clues.
    - **Example:** Instead of saying Mr. Smith was kind, the narrator shows him giving his last coin to a poor person. Instead of saying he was angry, the narrator shows him yelling at a driver who cut in front of him.
    - **Function:** This is the main way novels show character. It feels more real and interesting. It makes the reader think more to understand the character.