The Novel: Some Elements

## Elements in nearly all novels:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **CHARACTER** | direct description or commentary by the narrator, including ironic comment language: in speech and thought, in both content and form of expression action: especially as it confirms or contradicts what characters say change: growth or deterioration † |
| Coincidence | Coincidence, which surprises us in real life with symmetries we don’t expect to find there, is all too obviously a structural device in fiction, and an excessive reliance on it can jeopardize the verisimilitude of a narrative. † |
| Ending | last-minute twist is generally more typical of the short story than of the novel † |
| Intertextuality | some ways a text can refer to another: parody, pastiche, echo, allusion, direct quotation, structural parallelism † |
| **IRONY** | consists of saying the opposite of what you mean, or inviting an interpretation different from the surface meaning of your words.  † |
| Narrative Structure | you can’t see it, but it determines the edifice’s shape and character † the arrangement of the parts of the material |
| **PLOT** | Plot has been defined as “a completed process of change.”  † A story is “a narrative of events in their time-sequence. A *plot* is also a narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality.” --Forster |
| **POINT OF VIEW** | the vantage point from which an author tells a story. The two broad categories are (1) the third-person narrator who tells the story and does not participate in the action and (2) the first-person narrator who is a major or minor participant. |
| Repetition | can be lexical or grammatical; incantatory rhythms and repetitions † |
| **SETTING** | the background of a story in [1] place, including city/country/region, indoors or out, weather and [2] time, including century, year, historical and social conditions, season, day/night, and the like |
| Showing and Telling | Fictional discourse constantly alternates between *showing* us what happened and *telling* us what happened. [Scene and Narration]  † |
| **STYLE** | the individual way a writer works, especially to achieve a specific effect. The elements of style include diction, syntax, imagery, figurative language, and larger questions of structure, modes of discourse, and the like. |
| **SYMBOL** | anything that “stand for” something else is a symbol, but the process operates in many different ways.  † |
| **THEME** | a central idea. Like *thesis,* it implies a subject and a predicate of some kind, as opposed to a *topic*, which can be simply a label |
| **TONE** | the author’s attitude toward the material in a work or toward the reader. Tone is revealed by style. |

## Elements in many novels

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Comedy | Two primary sources: situation and style. Both depend crucially upon timing † |
| Duration | as measured by comparing the time events would have taken up in reality with the time taken to read about them. This factor affects narrative tempo † |
| Epiphany | literally, a showing. Any descriptive passage in which external reality is charged with a kind of transcendental significance for the perceiver † |
| Epistolary Novel | advantages: can have more than one correspondent and thus show the same event from different points of view † |
| Exotic | foreign, but not necessarily glamorous or alluring † |
| Implication | especially sexual in Victorian lit † |
| Interior Monologue | very difficult technique to use… apt to impose a painfully slow pace on the narrative † |
| Intrusive Author | around the turn of the century fell into disfavour † |
| Magic Realism | marvellous and impossible events occur in what otherwise purports to be a realistic narrative † |
| Metaficiton | fiction about fiction  novels and stories that call attention to their own compositional procedures.  † |
| Names | In a novel names are never neutral.  † |
| Sense of Past | “historical novels (19th century) dealt with historical personages and events; but also evoked the past in terms of culture, ideology, manners and morals † |
| Stream of Consciousness | 1] one technique is interior monologue 2] second technique is free indirect style. It renders thought as reported speech but keeps the kind of vocabulary that is appropriate to the character, and deletes some of the tags † |
| Allegory | does not merely suggest, but insists on being decoded in terms of another meaning; at every point a one-to-one correspondence to the implied meaning † |
| Time-Shift | narrative avoids presenting life [in order] and allows us to make connections of causality and irony between widely separated events † |
| Title | The title is part of the text--the first part of it, in fact † |
| Unreliable Narrator | invariably invented characters who are part of the stories they tell † |

† adapted from David Lodge, *The Art of Fiction,* London: Penguin, 1992. Print. [An invaluable source with the strongest recommendation.]