



# LANGUAGE ARTS

STUDENT BOOK

▶ **10th Grade | Unit 9**

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# LANGUAGE ARTS 1009

## The Novel

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**Author:**

Bernard J. Quint, M.Th., Ph.D.

**Editor-in-Chief:**

Richard W. Wheeler, M.A.Ed.

**Editor:**

Mary Ellen Quint, Ph.D.

**Consulting Editor:**

Larry Howard, Ed.D

**Editor:**

Alan Christopherson, M.S.

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# The Novel

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## Introduction

The novel has played a varied role in our literary history since the eighteenth century. Novelists have used this form to various ends—political, social, religious, and so forth.

In this LIFE PAC® you will study some aspects of the novel that will help you to understand better the role of both novel and novelist. You will read the Christian novel *In His Steps* by Charles M. Sheldon. This novel should be purchased or will be provided by your teacher. You will also learn the elements of a book review in preparation for your writing a book review of *In His Steps*.

## Objectives

**Read these objectives.** The objectives tell you what you will be able to do when you have successfully completed this LIFE PAC . When you have completed this LIFE PAC, you should be able to:

1. Explain the place of the novel as a literary form.
2. Explain the relationship between drama and the novel.
3. Identify the characteristics and the limitations of the novelist.
4. Explain setting, mood, and atmosphere in *In His Steps*.
5. Define a critical book review.
6. Explain evaluation as a critical approach.

# 1. SOME ASPECTS OF THE NOVEL

The place of both novel and novelist in the field of literature has varied. Some critics would consider them inferior to the poem and the poet and the other forms of literary endeavor.

In this section you will consider some aspects of the novel and its place in literature. You will also consider some of the characteristics and limitations of the novelist.

Throughout this section you will be asked to read the novel *In His Steps*, which you will purchase or

obtain from your teacher. This paced reading of the novel is essential to your understanding of Section 2 where you will study specific aspects of *In His Steps*, aspects that can be understood more clearly if you have completed a first reading of the novel before Section 2 is begun. Taking notes on *In His Steps* as you read it will benefit your work in Section 2 and Section 3. A few pages for notes can be found at the back of this book.

## Section Objectives

**Review these objectives.** When you have completed this section, you should be able to:

1. Explain the place of the novel as a literary form.
2. Explain the relationship between drama and the novel.
3. Identify the characteristics and the limitations of the novelist.

## Vocabulary

**Study these words to enhance your learning success in this section.**

**analogy**

**poetic license**

**autobiography**

**satirical**

**episode**

**utilitarianism**

**medieval romance**

**Note:** All vocabulary words in this LIFEPAAC appear in **boldface** print the first time they are used. If you are unsure of the meaning when you are reading, study the definitions given in the glossary.

## THE NOVEL AS AN ARTISTIC FORM

Longus, Heliodorus, and Petronius can be singled out as men who wrote works that looked forward to the novel as it is known today. The **medieval romances** furnish further evidence of the threads that were coming together to form the present-day novel. The ancient and medieval writers who contributed to the form are only the background to the novel that arose in the eighteenth century in England. The novelists, the novels, the form, and the prose styles that concern the modern student are those of the eighteenth century.

The recognition of the art form of the novel did not come about immediately. A hundred years ago reading novels was looked upon as a waste of time. The eighteenth century was caught up in a rationalistic attitude. The search for truth was considered the most important function in life. Reading fiction, reading the novel, was considered a form of indulgence that catered to myths that were, to say the least, considered to be dangerous.

In recent years another criticism has been leveled at the novel and the novelist. A novelist simply cannot be a creative artist. Anyone who creates, according to some critics, must do so out of nothing. Characters in a novel, however, are born out of some part of the novelist's experience. Since characters come from something, that is experience, they are not a true creation. Such criticism, if extended, makes a mockery of things that many writers hold to be necessary and important to writing. Writers find, for example, that wisdom and virtue arise out of experience rather than springing from nothing. Wisdom and virtue are important creations not only of writing but of life.

Other critics find that the novel does not measure up as art because it tells a story. The novelist puts characters into focus by using details, little tales about them, and everyday facts. A serious argument may be made that the very

things the critics put down are the necessary material of the novel. The story, the details, and the facts are part and parcel of human nature, and man's reason and man's imagination consider them all to make the novel. Man's reason and imagination make the art.

Jane Austen let one of her characters speak for her. In the novel *Sanditon* a very pompous and stuffy gentleman speaks out against the novel. The passage is, of course, **satirical**: "I am no indiscriminate Novel-Reader. The mere trash of the common Circulating-Library, I hold in the highest contempt. You will never hear me advocating those puerile Emanations which detail nothing but discordant Principles incapable of Amalgamation, or those vapid tissues of ordinary Occurrences from which no useful Deductions can be drawn. In vain may we put them into a library Alembic; we distil nothing which can add to Science." The overblown language, the overstatement, the pseudointellectual quality, the look down the nose all proclaim the character who said it a dunce.

Still others think that a good novel is not enough. They want it to present an aspect that they would require of no other form of writing as art. If poetry is good, or drama is good, they are considered art. This same consideration is not so with the novel. In *Northanger Abbey*, Jane Austen again speaks out: "There seems almost a general wish of decrying the capacity and undervaluing the labour of the novelist, and of slighting the performances which have only genius, wit, and taste to recommend them. 'And what are you reading,...?' 'Oh, it is only a novel, ...' It is only *Cecilia*, or *Camilla*, or *Belinda*, or in short, only some work in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humour are conveyed to the world in the best chosen language." More need not be said on the novel as an artistic form.

**Answer true or false.**

- 1.1 \_\_\_\_\_ The novel has at times been considered an inferior art form.
- 1.2 \_\_\_\_\_ The novel as we know it began in the eighteenth century.
- 1.3 \_\_\_\_\_ Jane Austen used her novel characters to speak about the novel form.
- 1.4 \_\_\_\_\_ Jane Austen did not like novels.
- 1.5 \_\_\_\_\_ The novel traces its origins to ancient writers and forms.

**Begin reading** *In His Steps*, chapters one and two.

Take notes on the characters, the surroundings in which they find themselves, and on any other features of this novel that you think important. These notes should be taken throughout the novel and will be useful in Section 2 and Section 3 of this chapter.



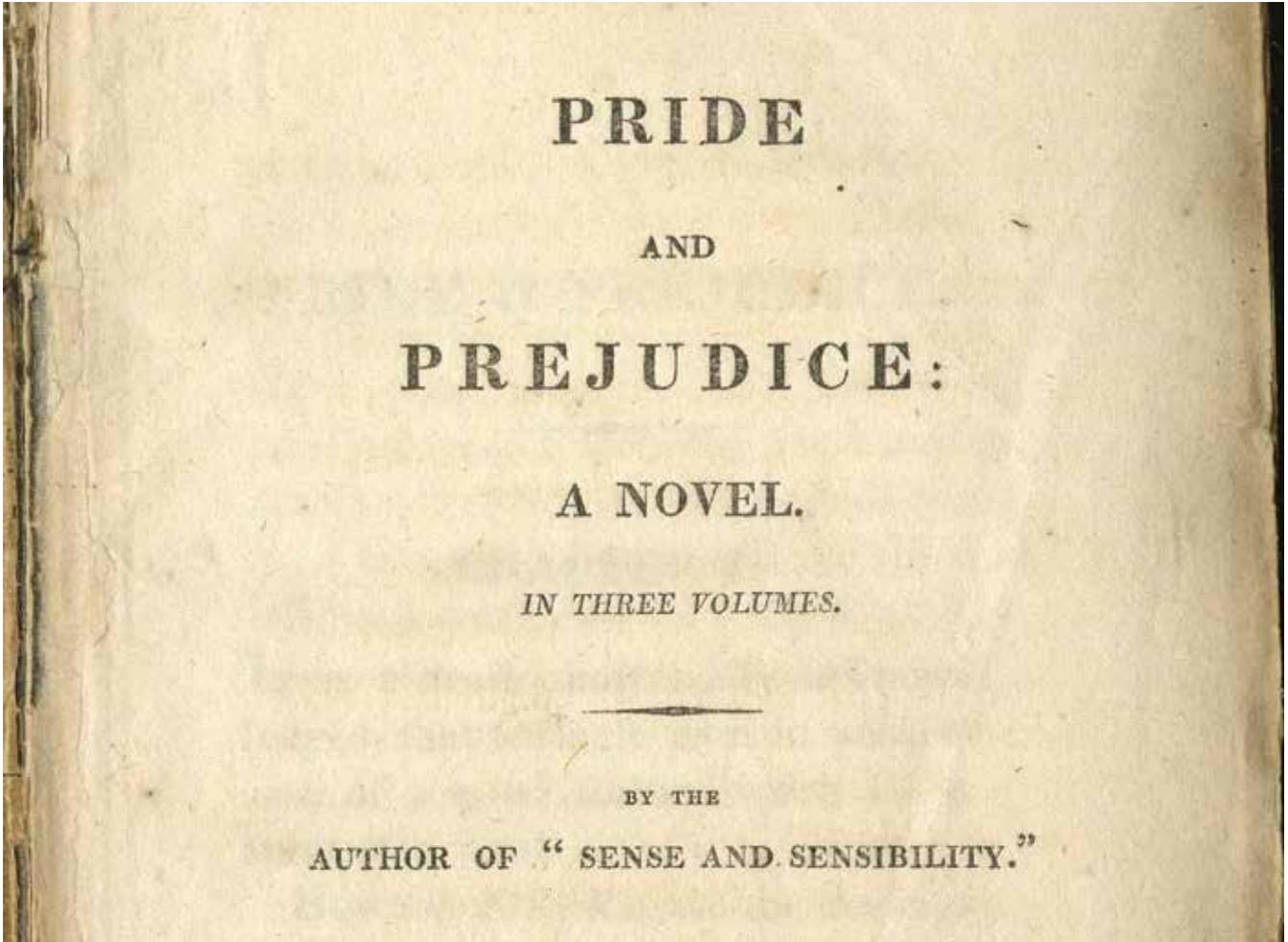
## DRAMA AND THE NOVEL

The novel is really a latecomer on the literary scene. The threads that came together in the course of history to form the novel are not the history of the novel. Nor is the novel the primary ingredient in English literary history. The most vital and vibrant literary history preceding the novel is that of English drama. Both the great and the not-so-great writers wrote extensively for the English theater until the late seventeenth century. The year 1700 signaled the end of that vital tradition. The theaters had been banned and closed, and the tradition of English drama never fully recovered. The last great play of this era was William Congreve's *The Way of the World*.

Forty years later, in 1740, Samuel Richardson wrote *Pamela*, the first genuine English novel. He filled a vacuum that had been created by the split between drama and poetry. Prior to the late seventeenth century and early eighteenth century, dramatists were the major practicing poets. In drama the dramatist-poet represented character in action as a dramatic plot unfolded. When the two forms, poetry and drama, split, poetry no longer bothered with the representation of character in action. The

novel, then, focusing on character in action took over the functions of the drama. Poets who formerly had lent their creative talent and energy to drama, devoted their energies to poetry as such. Other writers spent their creative energy on the novel. The result is that few great plays have been written in English since Congreve's last great effort, but many very good novels have been written.

Early novelists could not and did not immediately arrive on the scene with all the techniques of the novel that exist today. Poetic technique and tradition formed their background. Henry Fielding should not surprise anyone when he writes novels that are built of individual **episodes** following the example of the epic poem. His novel, *Joseph Andrews*, is such a novel, but a comic novel in which he used **poetic license** to form introductions to episodes and to handle the unity of his plot quite freely. Tobias Smollett in *The Adventures of Roderick Random* and Charles Dickens in *Nicholas Nickleby* did not write plots according to today's understanding of unity of action. Rather they held their plots together with the hero who was constructed as a unified character.



The unity of action that was so important to drama was not so important to the novel. Both Jane Austen and Emily Brontë emphasized character. Characters should be written in such a way that they were inseparable from the plot. Henry James, who started as a dramatist and understood the rules of drama well, finally established that the novel could accomplish everything that the drama could. Henry James also demonstrated another very important point. Although the novel could do what the drama could, in the novel *The Ambassadors*, he showed the reader that the novel could do other things that the drama could not do.

Once the novel came to prominence as a literary form, it followed the history of every form that preceded it. The novel, like drama, epic poetry, or the sonnet tradition, took on a set

of characteristics, or marks, that set the way in which it was written. The insistence on the formal marks becomes a danger because writers then write according to a set of marks rather than creating a new work. One novel begins to look like another; one novel becomes the type of all other novels. The form, then, will attract writers who do not create but who can fill out the form, writers who probably should not have written a novel. The temptation to fill out the form also draws those who should not have written anything.

When so much is written in the form, the problem arises of how to separate what is worthwhile from what is worthless. Criticism is necessary in the attempt to separate what is good, or possibly great, from what is not so good, or possibly downright bad.



**Read** *In His Steps*, chapters three through six.  
Continue taking notes.



## THE NOVELIST AND HIS NOVEL

The novelist attempts to draw characters in action. A good novelist, then, cannot work well without a plot. The business of the novelist seems to be to do his job within the limits of a plot. The novelist as an artist is not at pains to communicate to his reader how he, as the author, feels, thinks, or believes. He is conscious, first of all, of making a good work. For these reasons, authors have spilled ink to tell how they make, how they create, a work of fiction, a novel.

If the novelist were aware at every moment of exactly what was happening in the process of creation, then, each one of them should be able to describe the process in detail. The opposite seems to be the case, that is, the process is something of a mystery. Many authors have tried to describe the process of writing a novel but have ended thwarted because they found what was fascinating was also beyond what was immediately knowable. They have left the reading public accounts of what happened when they wrote, what their aims were in writing, what methods they employed, and what inspired them. They could not give a direct account of the process itself, however, but only of all the things that surround the process.

Because of the difficulty of getting at the process, many readers falsely believe that writers fall into a state of inspiration or a state of mystic detachment where all things fall into place and where these writers do not really know what they are doing. A novelist knows the

techniques of language and composition, which are his primary tools. Those tools are directed by an artist who has a precise state of mind for a work he undertakes.

Poets have written (and many others as well) about poetic “inspiration.” Fiction, a latter day artistic creation, has had less study and research, but a considerable amount of fiction has been done. When the English novel arrived on the scene in the eighteenth century, those who wrote fiction quite naturally began to write about the attitudes and frame of mind they had toward fiction and its creation.

By the nineteenth century the literary scene was crowded with writers of fiction who felt compelled to tell the world about their state of mind in relation to fiction in two growing literary forms, the confession and the **autobiography**. A reader should not be surprised that, on having read a work, he might be able to find a treatment of the author’s state of mind about the work. Thus, Thomas Carlyle will tell you the trials and tribulations of the mind that he underwent when he wrote the *French Revolution*. Although writers have left modern readers pages upon pages purportedly on inspiration, the telling most often concerns the struggle with the idea and the hard work necessary to give it form in a novel. In their own way such confessions are stories of how the raw material of life takes form under talent, hard work, and an idea.

**Complete the following statements.**

- 1.17 A novelist attempts to draw characters \_\_\_\_\_ .
- 1.18 A good novelist cannot work well without a \_\_\_\_\_ .
- 1.19 The novelist is conscious, first of all, of making a good \_\_\_\_\_ .
- 1.20 The novelist cannot always explain the process of \_\_\_\_\_ .  
\_\_\_\_\_ .

**Answer this question.**

- 1.21 When a novelist attempts to explain the process of writing or creating a novel, what does he often describe instead?

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**Read** *In His Steps*, chapters seven through ten.  
Continue taking notes.



The **novelist and his selection**. The camera has often been used as an **analogy** to describe the novelist of today. A camera has a lens; and when the shutter over the lens is opened, a record is made of what is in front of the lens. Persons who do not think much about writing insist that a kind of camera record is what the novelist should make. Novelists, and persons who are serious about novels, know that no writer of fiction acts just like the open lens of the camera, which takes in everything to the front of it. The novelist is a critic of life; therefore, he will select and elect what he chooses to use critically, according to his vision of life. If he attempts to write a significant work, he must search for the actions, the events, the gestures, and the form that brings everything together with the meaning that communicates his vision to the reader.

A difference really does exist between the novelist and the open lens of the camera. That difference also exists between the novelist and the pure reporter. The novelist must be seriously engaged in selecting materials. Hundreds and thousands of persons, actions, and events exist in life, but not all are worth telling or writing. The form of the novel, it must be remembered, determines what material is retained and in what way that material is presented. The novelist composes a picture of life according to a chosen form. The novel contains, then, what the artist wants, needs, or can use. Important to his choices for the novel is what material he rejects.

The artist again rejects some things out of life because they do not fit the form or his vision. An incident may happen in "real life," perhaps

# SELF TEST 1

**Write true or false** (each answer, 1 point).

- 1.01 \_\_\_\_\_ The novel as we know it is based in the eighteenth century.
- 1.02 \_\_\_\_\_ Henry James was both a dramatist and a novelist.
- 1.03 \_\_\_\_\_ Reading the novel is a waste of time.
- 1.04 \_\_\_\_\_ A good novelist needs to use a plot.
- 1.05 \_\_\_\_\_ Drama and poetry were joined for the most part until the eighteenth century.
- 1.06 \_\_\_\_\_ A great tradition of dramatic writers never emerged again in England after Congreve.
- 1.07 \_\_\_\_\_ The novel is an ancient form of writing.
- 1.08 \_\_\_\_\_ The process of writing a novel is easily explainable.
- 1.09 \_\_\_\_\_ The novelist attempts to draw characters in action.
- 1.010 \_\_\_\_\_ Jane Austen emphasized plot.

**Match these items** (each answer, 2 points).

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1.011 _____ William Congreve             | a. 1700                                   |
| 1.012 _____ Jane Austen                  | b. writer's ability and experience        |
| 1.013 _____ Samuel Richardson            | c. <i>In His Steps</i>                    |
| 1.014 _____ end of the drama tradition   | d. <i>The Ambassadors</i>                 |
| 1.015 _____ beginning of novel tradition | e. <i>The Way of the World</i>            |
| 1.016 _____ Charles Sheldon              | f. necessary for balance in a good writer |
| 1.017 _____ plot                         | g. <i>Pamela</i>                          |
| 1.018 _____ Henry James                  | h. 1725                                   |
| 1.019 _____ range                        | i. ordered sequence of events             |
| 1.020 _____ detachment                   | j. <i>Northanger Abbey</i>                |
|  | k. 1740                                   |



**1.037** The Henry James novel that is sometimes used as an example of a perfect novel is \_\_\_\_\_.

**1.038** The novelist's selection of material requires that he both a. \_\_\_\_\_ and b. \_\_\_\_\_ material.

**Answer these questions** (each answer, 5 points).

**1.039** How does the novelist use his limitations best?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**1.040** What is the novelist's range? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**1.041** To what values should the values of a literary work be compared?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

	<b>SCORE</b> _____	<b>TEACHER</b> _____	initials _____	date _____
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804 N. 2nd Ave. E.  
Rock Rapids, IA 51246-1759

800-622-3070  
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