

Characteristics of modern novel

1. Modern novel is remarkable for its popularity, variety and complexity.
2. Novels are being written practically on all possible themes and subjects.
3. A number of different trends are to be noticed.
4. The modern novel is realistic. It deals with all the facts of contemporary life, the pleasant as well as the unpleasant, the beautiful as well as the ugly, and does not present merely a one sided view of life. Life is presented with detached accurate, regardless of morals or ideological considerations. The sufferings of the poor, their misery and wretchedness, as well as good in them, their sense of social solidarity, their follow felling and sympathy, are realistically presented.
5. The modern age is an era of disintegration and interrogation.
6. Old values have been discarded and they have not been replaced by new ones. Man is today caught between "two worlds, the one dying, the other seeking to be born". The choice between capitalism and communism, science and religion. God and the Atom Bomb is a difficult one, and the result is that man is baffled and confused.
7. The modern novel presents realistically the doubts, and conflicts and frustrations of the modern worlds.
8. It is therefore, pessimistic in tone.
9. There is large scale criticism. Even condemnation of contemporary values and civilization, E.M. Forster is undisguised in his attack on the business mind, the worship of bigness in industrialized England of the post-war generations. Aldous Huxley analyses the disease of modern civilization and searches for a cure, and Conrad's novel are all pessimistic and tragic.
10. The realism of the modern novel is nowhere seen to better advantage than in the treatment of sex. The novel has entirely broken free from the Victorian inhibition of sex.

There is a frank and free treatment of the problems of love, sex and marriage.

11. The modern novel is neither merely an entertainment nor merely light story meant for after dinner reading. It has evolved as a serious art form.

It is very well constructed having nothing loose or rambling about it. As E. Albert points out, "Henry James Conrad evolved techniques which revolutionized the form of the novel. Edwin Mure is right in pointing out that plot seems to have died out of the 20th century "Stream of consciousness novel".

"The great modern novels like Ulysses are still stories but they are stories, without an ending and the characteristic modern novel is a story without an ending".

12. The modern novel is like an incomplete sentence and "its incompleteness is a reflection of the incompleteness of a whole region of thought and belief".

Under the influence of new psychological theories, life is not regarded as a continuous flow, but as a series of separate and successive moments.

The modern novel is predominantly psychological. Novelists like Henry James, Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, have made the English novel extremely psychological in nature.

13. They revealed that human consciousness has very deep layers, and buried under the conscious, are the sub-conscious and the unconscious.