Essays - 6.

The Story

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

Q. 1 What do you understand of the three voices in response to the question 'What does a novel do'?

Answer:

In response the question of 'What does a novel do', the first kind of a person gives a quick reply because he does not think deeply about it and looks at a novel as leisure, not literature. The second response is aggressive and considers it inferior because it tells a story even though he enjoys it. The third response is mixed with regret because it is aware of novels' popularity but knows that story-telling is a lower form.

Q. 2 What would you say are 'the finer growths' that the story supports in a novel?

Answer:

The 'finer growths' of a novel are the small parts of the novels that an author introduces like a character or sub-plot or an idea which makes one novel different from the other. Without these, there is nothing new in a novel to admire.

Q. 3 How does Forster trace the human interest in the story to primitive times?

Answer:

Forster thought story-telling went back to the Neolithic or maybe even Paleolithic Age. He says one can judge from the skull of the Neanderthal that it listened to stories. He believes that it was just an idle time for the early humans who were tired after hunting. Only the suspense of a story

held them after which they were so disinterested that they may have even killed the man.

Q. 4 Discuss the importance of time in the narration of a story.

Answer:

Time is central to the narration of every story. A novelist can't write a story without it. The story should follow a structured chronology without which the story cannot make sense and the novel cannot be understood. Novels always need a clock because it narrates events as it happened one after the other.

TALKING ABOUT THE TEXT

Q. 1 Discuss in pairs or in small groups

What does a novel do?

Answer:

Novel is generally being a fictional tale that can be set in any context. Over time, numerous genres of novels have emerged like historical, mystery, romance, fantasy, mythology, drama etc. However, when E. M. Forster was writing the essay, the genres of novels were much limited.

Q. 2 Discuss in pairs or in small groups

'Our daily life reflects a double allegiance to 'the life in time' and 'the life by values'.

Answer:

'The life in time' is following schedule or doing activities according to the day or time like going to school in week days and relaxing in the weekends. This is an ordered life. 'The life by values' includes our interests, views, priorities etc. which may not follow an order. Everyone has both of these lives even though the life by values is many times, more important.

Q. 3 Discuss in pairs or in small groups

The description of novels as organisms.

Answer:

Even though Forster says that story telling is a lower form of literature, novels can be described as an organism because it grows a story with every page. It develops on the character, the plot, the events, and the dialogues etc. paying attention to small details. Like an organism, it can do many functions and express various feelings and moods.

APPRECIATION

Q. 1 How does Forster use the analogy of Scheherazade to establish his point?

Answer:

Forster takes the example of Scheherazade who became wife to a king who executed all his wives after the first night. So Scheherazade told him a story every night and broke off at a point of suspense and hence the king didn't have her executed because he wanted to know what happened next. Forster says that this element of suspense is the only attraction of a story and other only power the novelist has on the readers.

Q. 2 Taking off from Forster's references to Emily Bronte, Sterne and Proust, discuss the treatment of time in some of the novels you have read.

Answer:

Over time, novels have creatively used the aspects of time. Most of the novels like. To Kill a Mockingbird, The Alchemist, Pride and Prejudice and Famous Five etc. follow a chronological pattern, revealing truth in time. However, some novels like The Girl on the Train narrates the story going back and forth in time and thereby becoming a thriller. Some genres like fantasy also narrate story of two or more realms like the

realm of God and the realm of normal humans like in mythological twists like The Red Pyramid where times passes differently in each.

LANGUAGE WORK

Q. 1 ‘Qua story’: what does the word mean? Find other expressions using the word qua.

Answer:

‘Qua’ means ‘in the capacity of’ so, ‘qua story’ means ‘in the capacity of being a story’. Qua can also use like a preposition meaning ‘as’ for example, the woman qua the head of the house decided the date.

Q. 2 Study the Note to Aspects of the Novel given at the end. Discuss the features that mark the piece as a talk as distinguished from a critical essay.

Answer:

The piece can be distinguished as talk through the repetitive usage of words like ‘I’, ‘You, ‘so to speak’, ‘only to imagine’ etc. which displease a reader. But these words, although informal talkative, provide effective pauses and improves expression in the sentences.

Q. 3 Try rewriting the lecture as a formal essay and examine Forster’s statement: ‘…since the novel is itself often colloquial, it may possibly withhold some of its secrets from the graver and grander streams of criticism’.

Answer:

Forster’s statement, ‘since the novel is itself often colloquial, it may possibly withhold some of its secrets from the graver and grander streams of criticism’ talks about how novel deals with the colloquial aspects of life and is written in a colloquial language so that it becomes accessible to humbler people too. Therefore, neither would it have the

characteristics of a formal essay nor would it deal with higher or more philosophical subject matters that can be subject to ‘grander’ criticisms.