

The twentieth century novel and Virginia Woolf

'Though we see the same world, we see it through different eyes'

'If you do not tell the truth about yourself you cannot tell it about other people'

Virginia Woolf

The twentieth century represents a break with the naturalist school, and a movement towards a more subtle and complex vision of man and his world. In this period the traditional novel was replaced by the psychological novel: man, more than the action, became the main interest of the novelist.

Two factors influenced this change:

- the total disruption of the old social, moral and intellectual values after the First World War
- the new developments in psychology, especially the advent of Freud's psychoanalysis.

So the realistic novel was replaced by the stream of consciousness novel.

THE STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS NOVEL

This term refers to the continuous flow of inner experiences. It refers to a technique of presenting the perceptions, thoughts and feelings of characters in a narrative style. The stream of consciousness novel renders the continuous flow of our mind with its free play of images and associations through the interior monologue, which is a kind of soliloquy of the mind with itself. This new method consists in writing about the thoughts taking place in the character's mind. In this way the reader is taken inside the characters' mind and he can follow their feelings and thoughts.

VIRGINIA WOOLF AND MRS. DALLOWAY

The writer who best used the interior monologue was Virginia Woolf.

She was a very prolific writer: *Night and Day*, *Jacob's Room*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, *Orlando: A Biography*, *The Waves*, *The Years* are only some of her works.

She believed that the novel should explore man's mental experience and his complex consciousness. External reality was important only for the influence it had on man's inner life, the life of the mind. Virginia was really brilliant in the use of the stream of consciousness technique. A great example is Mrs. Dalloway.

Mrs. Dalloway is not a conventionally narrated novel, but it is a collage, a mosaic, a portrait. It pieces together bits of Mrs. Dalloway's past and bits of her present on a single day. The novel opens and finishes in the course of 24 hours, during which Mrs. Dalloway prepares a party which will take place in the evening. What is important is to go beyond the plot and realize what Mrs. Dalloway has been and what she has become.

The novel is set in London, on a mid-June day, in 1923. There is no real plot, but simply a mosaic of reminiscences, considerations about past and present situations, impressions. It opens at 10 o'clock on

Wednesday morning with Clarissa Dalloway in Bond Street buying flowers for the party she is giving in the evening, and ends with the party itself. All the action is centered on her and it is around her that a lot of people come and go, meet and part. The action develops through these people's minds, their thoughts, their feelings, recollections presented in an alternation of flashbacks and present actions.

A1. 'Though we see the same world, we see it through different eyes' means that ...

- A) the world is seen through different eyes
- B) the world around us is the same
- C) the world around us is a matter of perspective
- D) the world around us is different

A2. In the twentieth century ...

T F

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| A) writers are interested in man and his inner world | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B) writers are interested in the naturalist school | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C) the psychological novel replaces the traditional novel | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| D) writers are no longer interested in the action | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

A3. After the First World War ...

T F

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| A) there was the development of the stream of consciousness novel | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B) there was the development of the realistic novel | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C) there were developments in psychology | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| D) there was a reinforcement of the old social, moral and intellectual values | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

A4. The term 'stream of consciousness' refers to ...

T F

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|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| A) the flux of inner life | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B) the narration of the complexity of man's thoughts and feelings | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C) the flux of human mind | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| D) the flow of thoughts in the conscious mind | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

A5. The term 'interior monologue' refers to ...

T F

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| A) the technique of writing about the world | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B) the technique of writing about the character's thoughts | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C) the thoughts running through the character's mind | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| D) thinking in words | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

A6. Virginia Woolf

- A) didn't write many works

- B) wrote a lot of works
- C) wrote only seven works
- D) wrote few works

A7. Virginia Woolf believed that ...

T **F**

- A) inner life was more important than outer life
- B) external reality was very important
- C) man's consciousness should be explored by the novel
- D) the novel should be about man's inner life

A8. Mrs Dalloway ...

T **F**

- A) is Virginia Woolf's masterpiece
- B) is a mosaic of impressions
- C) ends with a party
- D) is a novel

A9. Clarissa Dalloway ...

T **F**

- A) is the main character of the novel
- B) lives in London
- C) is the only character of the novel
- D) is organizing a party

A10. The term 'flashback' ...

T **F**

- A) is a synonym of reminiscence
- B) refers to past events
- C) refers to present events
- D) refers to future events

A11. What's the main difference between the psychological and the realistic novel?

A12. Why was the realistic novel replaced by the psychological novel?

A13. Explain the term 'stream of consciousness'

A14. What is the interior monologue?

A15. What was Virginia Woolf interested in?

A16. What is Mrs. Dalloway? Where and when is it set?

A17. What is Mrs. Dalloway about?
