B. A. First Year Optional English Syllabus

Name of the course: Understanding Prose Fiction

Syllabus

Unit No. Contents

I The Elements of Prose Fiction

II Brief History of English Prose Fiction

III Novel- The Old Man and the Sea: Ernest Hemingway

IV Novella- Animal Farm: George Orwell

l V Short Story - A)The Country of the Blind : H. G. wells

B) The Three Strangers: Thomas Hardy

VI Short Story - A) The Man from Mars : Margaret Atwood

B) The Purloined Letter: Edgar Allen Poe

Prescribed text :An Anthology of English Prose Fiction to be published by Macmillan Education Continuous Internal Evaluation: 35 Marks

Two class tests of 10 marks each + Home Assignment/Presentation/Seminar/Project of 15 marks = 35 marks

End Semester Examination: 40 marks

Question Paper Pattern

Question no.1- Essay type question with internal choice (based on Units III and IV)- 15 marks

Question no.2- Essay type question with internal choice (based on Units V and VI)- 15 marks Question no.3-Short notes with internal choice

Q.3(A)–Unit I (One out of Two)Q.3(B)–Unit II (One out of Two) - 10 marks

Q. 1)Elements of Nonfiction

The main elements of creative nonfiction are **setting, descriptive imagery, figurative language**, **plot**, and **character**. The overarching element or requirement that distinguishes creative nonfiction from any other genre of writing is that while other literary genres can spring from the imagination, **creative nonfiction is, by definition, true.** As you complete the assigned readings in this chapter, keep track of the following elements as they arise in your readings: see if you can identify each of them. Learning these elements now will form a solid foundation for the rest of the class.

Setting

Each story has a setting. The setting is the place where the story takes place. Usually, an effective story establishes its setting early in the story: otherwise readers will have a difficult time visualizing the action of the story. Below is an example of how a writer might establish setting in a way which immerses the reader: by showing rather than telling.

Descriptive Imagery

You have probably encountered **descriptive imagery** before. Basically, it is the way the writer paints the scene, or image, in the mind of the reader. It usually involves descriptions of one or more of the five senses: sight, sound, smell, touch, or taste. For example, how would you describe a lemon to a person who has never seen one before?

Imagine you are describing a lemon to someone who has never seen one before. How would you describe it using all five senses?

- Sight
- Sound
- Smell
- Touch
- Taste

One might describe a lemon as yellow, sour-smelling and tasting, and with a smooth, bumpy skin. They might describe the sound of the lemon as a thump on the table if

it is dropped, or squelching if it is squished underfoot. By painting a picture in the reader's mind, it immerses them in the story so that they feel they are actually there.

Figurative Language

As a counterpart to descriptive imagery, figurative language is using language in a surprising way to describe a literary moment. Figurative language can take the form of metaphor, such as saying "the lemon tree was heavy with innumerable miniature suns." Since the lemons are not actually suns, this is figurative. Figurative language can also take the form of simile: "aunt Becky's attitude was as sour as a lemon." By comparing an abstract concept (attitude) to an object (lemon), it imparts a feeling/meaning in a more interesting way.

Plot

Plot is one of the basic elements of every story: put simply, plot refers to the actual events that take place within the bounds of your narrative. Using our rhetorical situation vocabulary, we can identify “plot” as the primary subject of a descriptive personal narrative. Three related elements to consider are scope, sequence, and pacing.

Scope

The term scope refers to the boundaries of plot. Where and when does the story begin and end? What is its focus? What background information and details does the story require? I often think about narrative scope as the edges of a photograph: a photo, whether of a vast landscape or a microscopic organism, has boundaries. Those boundaries inform the viewer’s perception.

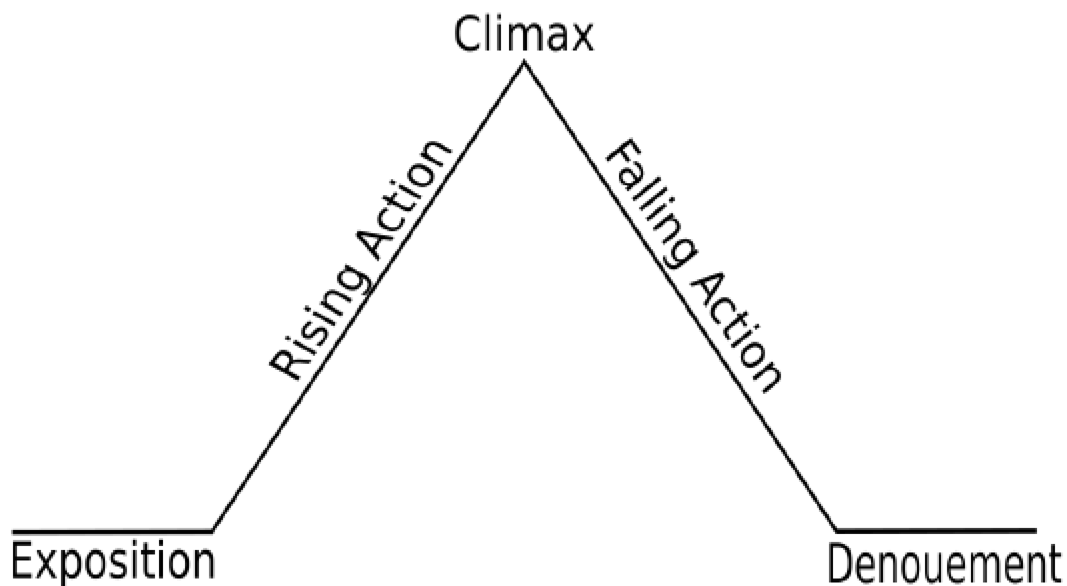
The way we determine scope varies based on rhetorical situation, but I can say generally that many developing writers struggle with a scope that is too broad: writers often find it challenging to zero in on the events that drive a story and prune out extraneous information.

Consider, as an example, how you might respond if your friend asked what you did last weekend. If you began with, “I woke up on Saturday morning, rolled over, checked my phone, fell back asleep, woke up, pulled my feet out from under the covers, put my feet on the floor, stood up, stretched…” then your friend might have stopped listening by the time you get to the really good stuff. Your scope is too broad, so you’re including details that distract or bore your reader. Instead, focus on the most exciting or meaningful moment(s) of your day: "I woke up face-down to

the crunch of shattered glass underneath me. When I wobbled to my feet I realized I was in a large, marble room with large windows overlooking the flashing neon lights of the Las Vegas strip. I had no idea how I got there!" Readers can expect this story will focus on how the storyteller arrived in Las Vegas, and it is much more interesting than including every single detail of the day.

Sequence

The sequence of your plot—the order of the events—will determine your reader's experience. There are an infinite number of ways you might structure your story, and the shape of your story is worth deep consideration. Although the traditional forms for a narrative sequence are not your only options, let's take a look at a few tried-and-true shapes your plot might take.



Freytag's Pyramid is in the public domain

Freytag's Pyramid: Chronological

A. **Exposition**: Here, you're setting the scene, introducing characters, and preparing the reader for the journey.

B. **Rising action**: In this part, things start to happen. You (or your characters) encounter conflict, set out on a journey, meet people, etc.

C. **Climax**: This is the peak of the action, the main showdown, the central event toward which your story has been building.

D. **Falling action**: Now things start to wind down. You (or your characters) come away from the climactic experience changed—at the very least, you are wiser for having had that experience.

E. **Resolution**: Also known as dénouement, this is where all the loose ends get tied up. The central conflict has been resolved, and everything is back to normal, but perhaps a bit different.

Nonlinear Narrative

A nonlinear narrative may be told in a series of flashbacks or vignettes. It might jump back and forth in time. Stories about trauma are often told in this fashion. If using this plot form, be sure to make clear to readers how/why the jumps in time are occurring. A writer might clarify jumps in time by adding time-stamps or dates or by using symbolic images to connect different vignettes.

Pacing

While scope determines the boundaries of plot, and sequencing determines where the plot goes, pacing determines how quickly readers move through the story. In short, it is the amount of time you dedicate to describing each event in the story.

I include *pacing* with *sequence* because a change to one often influences the other. Put simply, pacing refers to the speed and fluidity with which a reader moves through your story. You can play with pacing by moving more quickly through events, or even by experimenting with sentence and paragraph length. Consider how the "flow" of the following examples differ:

Characters

A major requirement of any story is the use of characters. Characters bring life to the story. Keep in mind that while human characters are most frequently featured in stories, sometimes there are non-human characters in a story such as animals or even the environment itself.

Characterization

Whether a story is fiction or nonfiction, writers should spend some time thinking about characterization: the development of characters through actions, descriptions, and dialogue. Your audience will be more engaged with and sympathetic toward your narrative if they can vividly imagine the characters as real people.

Characterization can be accomplished in two ways:

a. **Directly**, through specific description of the character—What kind of clothes do they wear? What do they look, smell, sound like?—or,
b. **Indirectly**, through the behaviors, speech, and thoughts of the character—What kind of language, dialect, or register do they use? What is the tone, inflection, and timbre of their voice? How does their manner of speaking reflect their attitude toward the listener? How do their actions reflect their traits? What's on their mind that they won't share with the world?

Thinking through these questions will help you get a better understanding of each character (often including yourself!). You do not need to include all the details, but they should inform your description, dialogue, and narration.

Point of View

The position from which your story is told will help shape your reader's experience, the language your narrator and characters use, and even the plot itself. You might recognize this from *Dear White People* Volume 1 or *Arrested Development* Season 4, both Netflix TV series. Typically, each episode in these seasons explores similar plot events, but from a different character's perspective. Because of their unique vantage points, characters can tell different stories about the same realities.

This is, of course, true for our lives more generally. In addition to our differences in knowledge and experiences, we also interpret and understand events differently. In our writing, narrative position is informed by point-of-view and the emotional valences I refer to here as tone and mood.

Point-of-view (POV): the perspective from which a story is told.

- This is a grammatical phenomenon—i.e., it decides pronoun use—but, more importantly, it impacts tone, mood, scope, voice, and plot.

Although point-of-view will influence tone and mood, we can also consider what feelings we want to convey and inspire independently as part of our narrative position.

Tone: the emotional register of the story's language.

- What emotional state does the narrator of the story (not the author, but the speaker) seem to be in? What emotions are you trying to imbue in your writing?

Mood: the emotional register a reader experiences.

- What emotions do you want your reader to experience? Are they the same feelings you experienced at the time?

Q. 2)

Animal Farm

Animal Farm opens on Manor Farm, where animals are subservient to their human master, a farmer named Jones. One night an aged boar called Old Manor calls a meeting of his fellow animals, and puts forth the call that they should one day rise up in rebellion against the humans who enslave them. Old Manor suggests that once humans have been overthrown, no animal should act like a human by sleeping in a bed, wearing clothes, drinking alcohol, or engaging in trade. The meeting is concluded with old Major teaching the animals a song called Beasts of England, which becomes their anthem. When old Major dies, the pigs Napoleon, Snowball and Squealer take leadership roles, and develop old Major's teachings into a system called Animalism.

The rebellion occurs one day when Jones and his men neglect to feed the animals for an entire day, prompting the cows to break into the store shed. With news of the successful rebellion reaching the outside world, animals across England are heard singing Beasts of England, and other farmers are concerned their own animals may attempt the same thing. Jones makes an attempt to recapture the farm, but the animals are led to victory by Snowball, in what becomes known as the Battle of the Cowshed. Tensions between Snowball and Napoleon worsen over their disagreement in policy. Snowball wants to build a windmill to create electrical power, but Napoleon unleashes a pack of dogs he has been secretly raising, and they chase Snowball away from the farm. Following Snowball's expulsion, Napoleon uses Squealer to convince the other animals that Snowball is a criminal and a traitor, and Napoleon assumes control.

When the windmill is midway through construction, a storm causes it to collapse overnight. Napoleon blames this destruction on Snowball, and circulates rumours that Snowball visits at night to cause mischief, distracting the animals from their lack of food and long hours of heavy labour. After the windmill is completed, neighbouring farmer Frederick invades the farm with armed men, and the animals retreat to the buildings. While hiding, the men use blasting powder to destroy the windmill, inspiring the animals to attack and eventually drive them away with heavy casualties on both sides. When construction is resumed again, the large horse Boxer takes on the majority of the work, taking a toll on his aging body. After being found collapsed one day, the pigs arrange to have him treated by a veterinarian in town, but the wagon that comes to take him reads "horse slaughterer". Reading this, Benjamin the donkey raises alarm, but the other animals are unable to save Boxer, and he is too weak to escape. Several days later Squealer announces that Boxer has died peacefully in the hospital, with Squealer there at his side. He assures the animals the horse slaughterer sign was simply because the wagon used to belong to one.

Years pass, and Animal Farm has become profitable, but the animals continue to work very hard for minimal rations. Only the oldest among them remember the rebellion, and it seems a distant memory. The pigs begin walking on their hind legs, wearing clothes, and carrying whips. When Clover and Benjamin are confused by these developments, they go to read the Seven Commandments, and see that they now simply read: ALL ANIMALS ARE EQUAL, BUT SOME ANIMALS ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS.

Q. No. 2) The Old Man and the Sea

The Old Man and the Sea is the story of an epic struggle between an old, seasoned fisherman and the greatest catch of his life. For eighty-four days, Santiago, an aged Cuban fisherman, has set out to sea and returned empty-handed. So conspicuously unlucky is he that the parents of his young, devoted apprentice and friend, Manolin, have forced the boy to leave the old man in order to fish in a more prosperous boat. Nevertheless, the boy continues to care for the old man upon his return each night. He helps the old man tote his gear to his ramshackle hut, secures food for him, and discusses the latest developments in American baseball, especially the trials of

the old man's hero, Joe DiMaggio. Santiago is confident that his unproductive streak will soon come to an end, and he resolves to sail out farther than usual the following day.

On the eighty-fifth day of his unlucky streak, Santiago does as promised, sailing his skiff far beyond the island's shallow coastal waters and venturing into the Gulf Stream. He prepares his lines and drops them. At noon, a big fish, which he knows is a marlin, takes the bait that Santiago has placed one hundred fathoms deep in the waters. The old man expertly hooks the fish, but he cannot pull it in. Instead, the fish begins to pull the boat.

Unable to tie the line fast to the boat for fear the fish would snap a taut line, the old man bears the strain of the line with his shoulders, back, and hands, ready to give slack should the marlin make a run. The fish pulls the boat all through the day, through the night, through another day, and through another night. It swims steadily northwest until at last it tires and swims east with the current. The entire time, Santiago endures constant pain from the fishing line. Whenever the fish lunges, leaps, or makes a dash for freedom, the cord cuts Santiago badly. Although wounded and weary, the old man feels a deep empathy and admiration for the marlin, his brother in suffering, strength, and resolve.

On the third day the fish tires, and Santiago, sleep-deprived, aching, and nearly delirious, manages to pull the marlin in close enough to kill it with a harpoon thrust. Dead beside the skiff, the marlin is the largest Santiago has ever seen. He lashes it to his boat, raises the small mast, and sets sail for home. While Santiago is excited by the price that the marlin will bring at market, he is more concerned that the people who will eat the fish are unworthy of its greatness.

As Santiago sails on with the fish, the marlin's blood leaves a trail in the water and attracts sharks. The first to attack is a great mako shark, which Santiago manages to slay with the harpoon. In the struggle, the old man loses the harpoon and lengths of valuable rope, which leaves him vulnerable to other shark attacks. The old man fights off the successive vicious predators as best he can, stabbing at them with a crude spear he makes by lashing a knife to an oar, and even clubbing them with the boat's tiller. Although he kills several sharks, more and more appear, and by the

time night falls, Santiago's continued fight against the scavengers is useless. They devour the marlin's precious meat, leaving only skeleton, head, and tail. Santiago chastises himself for going "out too far," and for sacrificing his great and worthy opponent. He arrives home before daybreak, stumbles back to his shack, and sleeps very deeply.

The next morning, a crowd of amazed fishermen gathers around the skeletal carcass of the fish, which is still lashed to the boat. Knowing nothing of the old man's struggle, tourists at a nearby café observe the remains of the giant marlin and mistake it for a shark. Manolin, who has been worried sick over the old man's absence, is moved to tears when he finds Santiago safe in his bed. The boy fetches the old man some coffee and the daily papers with the baseball scores, and watches him sleep. When the old man wakes, the two agree to fish as partners once more. The old man returns to sleep and dreams his usual dream of lions at play on the beaches of Africa.

Q. No. 3 (A) A Summary and Analysis of H. G. Wells's 'The Country of the Blind'

The story is about a mysterious valley in South America where a community grew up, separated from the rest of civilisation. A disease struck the community which meant that people went blind, until each new generation was born completely sightless.

A man from Ecuador, named Nunez, while acting as a mountain-guide for some Englishmen, falls and ends up amongst this 'country of the blind'. He has heard the legends about them, and regards the whole thing as an adventure. He recalls the old proverb, 'In the Country of the Blind the One-Eyed Man is King', and thinks he will 'teach' them about the world beyond their village.

When he is taken to see their elders, however, he discovers that over the course of the fourteen generations that their people had lived in this valley, they had developed their own world cut off from the rest of civilisation: their valley was the whole world to them, and birds in the sky were 'angels' with their gift of flight and their beautiful song. Instead of day and night, they divide

the day up into ‘warm’ and ‘cold’, because they cannot see the light but can sense the temperature of the land by day and night. Because they don’t need to work by daylight, they sleep during the warm and work during the cold.

Communication between Nunez and the blind is not perfect, and when they are trying to ascertain who he is, they misinterpret his responses and believe his name is ‘Bogota’. The people of the Country of the Blind view Nunez as someone who has been created so that he might learn from them; Nunez, of course, has other ideas and wishes to teach the blind. His speech is not as beautiful or as elegant as theirs.

Although Nunez believes he is a King among these people, he is ‘a clumsy and useless stranger’ whose sense of hearing and smell is nowhere near as good as it is among those he considers his royal subjects. They do not recognise such concepts as ‘sight’ and ‘blind’: these words do not figure in their vocabulary. He seeks to amaze them with his knowledge of what the world looks like, but they disbelieve him, arguing that the world ends at the edges of their own valley and that there is a roof of stone over the world. However, he cannot survive for long on his own, without food, and so he ends up going back to them and submitting to them, apologising for his former behaviour and telling them what he knows they want to hear: that he was mistaken when he said he could ‘see’ and that there is a stone roof over the world, as they argue there is.

Nunez becomes a citizen of the Country of the Blind, and is attracted to a young woman, Medina-saroté, who is unmarried because her face does not conform to the ideals of feminine beauty among the blind (but very much appeals to Nunez, since she has long eyelashes and lacks the sunken eyes which the rest of the blind have in this world). The two of them fall in love and Nunez ventures to tell her about the beauty of sight. She listens and appears to understand.

However, Yacob, her father, forbids them to marry because he views Nunez as an ‘idiot’ who ‘has delusions’. He proposes a surgical operation to remove Nunez’s eyes so he will be cured and can then marry Medina-saroté. Nunez resists the proposal at first, but Medina-saroté tells him he should go through with it for her, so they will be allowed to be together. Although she seems to understand Nunez’s gift of sight, she knows that her father will not allow them to marry unless her would-be husband is ‘cured’ of his ability to see.

He agrees to this reluctantly, but when the day arrives for the operation to be carried out, he finds he cannot go through with it, so much does his sight mean to him. So he leaves the village and begins the long climb up the mountains so that he might escape the Country of the Blind and get back to Bogota and civilisation. The story ends with him lying ‘peacefully contented’ under the stars when night comes.

Q. No. 3 (B) **The Man from Mars**

Margaret Atwood

Margaret Atwood has written this story not only to examine what it is to be the “other” in a foreign culture but also to explore what it is to be “other” in one’s own social milieu. The title refers to the enigmatic, unnamed man who is so alien from Christine and her contemporaries that he might as well be from Mars. At their first encounter, Christine is polite, putting on her official welcoming smile, but his differences are so drastic that he is grossly unattractive to her. She concludes their conversation with a terminal smile, but such nuances are lost on him.

A contact zone, a place where two different cultures confront each other, is established between Christine and the man, but it is such unfamiliar territory for both of them that they cannot navigate it in ways beneficial to either of them. The young man’s passion seems to be to maintain the contact zone no matter what, but he has no idea how to get to know Christine in the context of Canadian society.

Christine knows people from other cultures and thinks of herself as a liberal. Atwood wants to show that Christine is limited by Western ideology, even though Christine herself believes that she is tolerant and progressive. She has an uneasy relationship with Elvira, her mother’s West Indian housekeeper. Puzzled by Elvira’s surliness, Christine has no idea how to overcome the barriers between them. Even though Christine’s intentions are good, she is constrained by a dominant ideology that necessarily limits her perspective and compassion.

The Asian man is not the only outsider; Christine is an outsider in her own family. Her mother is petite and graceful, and Christine has two beautiful sisters, one already married, the other soon to be. Christine, large and athletic, does not fit her culture’s definition of beautiful. She has compensated for her outsider status by becoming involved in politics and athletics. Her male friends feel comfortable with her as a fellow athlete and hard worker, but to them she is neither attractive nor interesting.

It is the “man from Mars” who sees Christine as an alluring woman and, in so doing, brings about a change in her status. She becomes attractive because another man finds her so. It is as if her value as a commodity increases because there suddenly is a demand when there was not one before. While she is living in the contact zone and interacting daily with this unstoppable man, her life becomes exciting, full of the unknown. She looks forward to the daily chases as she and her follower jog-trot between her classes.

The man oversteps the boundaries of what is permissible in the contact zone. He does not realize that his actions are going to be read by Canadian culture as dangerously out of bounds. Although he never does anything physically to harm Christine, the pervasive reality of violence toward women, of stalkers and Peeping Toms, feeds her imagination; she begins to fear he will have a weapon; when called, the police quickly label him as a psychotic.

When he is sent back to Montreal and finally to his home country, Christine's collateral quickly falls, and she returns to her old, dull roles within the social strata of her cultural context. Atwood wants readers to recognize that not only the man but also Christine have missed some kind of chance. Sensitive readers are not so quick to condemn him as a psychotic; they share Christine's sad curiosity and disappointment that they never get to negotiate the contact zone and know who he is and what drives him to pursue Christine with such intensity.