

Chapter 4: Why the Novel Matters

NCERT · Class 12 · English · Kaleidoscope · Non Fiction

Questions

Question 1

How does the novel reflect the wholeness of a human being?

Solution

Answer. The novel reflects the wholeness of a human being by changing the vitality of the whole person, not just simple instincts. Like most literary genres, novels are composed of characters. These characters are the protagonists of the soul, just like humans. Hence, the liveliness of the novel depends entirely upon its characters, where characters have different personalities. A novel displays different attributes of a human being, showing off all the good deeds of every individual, leaving it to the reader to interpret. Thus, this is how the novel reflects the wholeness of the human being.

Question 2

Why does the author consider the novel superior to philosophy, science or even poetry?

Solution

Answer. According to the author, D.H. Lawrence considers the novel a superior genre among books. He believes that novels are the only good books in life and that not all books are life. He also believes that the novel teaches the lives of readers who are trembling to survive. Novels can bring life to readers more than philosophy, poetry or science. Therefore, the author believes that novels are superior to philosophy, science, and even poetry.

Question 3

What does the author mean by ‘tremulations on ether’ and ‘the novel as a tremulation’?

Solution

Answer. The author says the novel is a 'tremulations on the ether'. He means that novels induce liveliness in the readers where the other books are not proficient enough. Reading regular books indicates reading messages or gathering news that is being read over the radio. One can never identify the actual information; instead, one can feel happy or sad about the specific news for some time. But the novel portrays a multi-dimensional view of the characters, and the readers can relate with them personally. A novel teaches valuable life lessons which any reader can inculcate in their own lives and make their decisions. Thus, the novel is a life-inducing factor in the writer's thought processes, which significantly affects the readers.

Question 4

What are the arguments presented in the essay against the denial of the body by spiritual thinkers?

Solution

Answer. The author, D.H. Lawrence, compares a human body to that of a vessel containing the soul and that the soul is the only thing alive. Life is most meaningful, and being active is the most fantastic thing. Humans are just limited to the body, which overlooks the importance of the body and restricts them to the body. The author uses an example of the hand and denies the hand is a lifeless object used only as a medium of writing is entirely incorrect. Similarly, a person talks about the importance of souls in heaven. However, the author Lawrence, being a novelist, says that 'paradise is in the palm of your hand.' A philosopher talks about infinity and the pure spirit who knows everything. But these are just pieces of life that act as messages or news being read over the radio. Hence, the body is alive, and man is more alive than any other entity and denying it is a wrong decision by spiritual thinkers.

Talking about the Text

Question 1

The interest in a novel springs from the reactions of characters to circumstances. It is more important for characters to be true to themselves (integrity) than to what is expected of them (consistency). (A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds – Emerson.)

Solution

Answer. The basis of every novel is its character – plots, plots, twists and turns – all about the characters depicted in the novel. Therefore, the characters must be faithful to their integrity, which is the

essence of the characters. If not, they lose their charm and become boring, flat characters.

There are two types of characters in the novel – Round and Flat characters. Flat characters are those that remain consistent in their behaviour throughout the plot. Not a single instance in the story changes them or has any effect on them. While round characters, on the other hand, keep developing throughout the story and create an impact on the storyline. They keep the readers glued to the novel, making it interesting for the reader.

Thus, if every character is flat by following what should be done rather than following their instincts, the novel will lose its charm and become dull. Hence, the author believes, “It is more important for characters to be true to themselves (integrity) than to what is expected of them (consistency).”

Question 2

‘The novel is the one bright book of life.’ ‘Books are not life.’ Discuss the distinction between the two statements. Recall Ruskin’s definition of ‘What Is a Good Book?’ in Woven Words Class XI.

Solution

Answer. Unlike the other books on philosophy, science, etc., the novel portrays the real aspects of life and depicts life in its natural form for its readers to gain knowledge from them. They acquire several life lessons. Hence, the novel is ‘the bright book of life.’ But the author also points out that ‘Books are not life.’ The novel portrays real-like issues and characters, he means to say that it is not reality itself. It is a fantasy of someone’s imagination which real-life issues and feelings might have inspired. Although the novel portrays reality, it isn’t reality itself. In his work, ‘What Is a Good Book?’, Ruskin Bond says that it is vital for the readers to understand what the author has wanted to convey. This idea is similar to Lawrence, who asks the reader to take inspiration from the novel.

Appreciation

Question 1

Certain catchphrases are recurrently used as pegs to hang the author’s thoughts throughout the essay. List these and discuss how they serve to achieve the argumentative force of the essay.

Solution

Answer. Here are a few catchphrases:

- Body – The author describes the importance of the body and discusses how the body is the ultimate phase of being in learner mode.
- Spirit – The spirit, according to the author, is a misleading concept which makes a man get into confusion. It leads a man to things that are unreal to the imagination.
- Man alive – This is the realistic concept of the author in which he says that everything happens because man is alive.
- Tremulations – Here, tremulations are the talks that the philosophers and saints do because of which man-alive may be influenced to change his course of action.
- Change – The only constant.

Question 2

The language of the argument is intense and succeeds in convincing the reader through rhetorical devices. Identify the devices used by the author to achieve this force.

Solution

Answer. Given below is the list of rhetorical devices used to intensify the language of argument:

- Allusion – The mention of the Bible.
- Amplification – The repetitive use of words like man alive, spirit, tremulations, etc.
- Metonymy – By saying that ‘The novel is the one bright book of life.’

Language Work

A. Vocabulary

Question 1

There are a few non-English expressions in the essay. Identify them and mention the language they belong to. Can you guess the meaning of the expressions from the context?

Solution

- Mens sana in corpore sano is a Latin phrase, usually translated as “a healthy mind in a healthy body.”
- C’est la vie! is a French phrase used to express acceptance or resignation in the face of a difficult or unpleasant situation.

2. Given below are a few roots from Latin. Make a list of the words that can be derived from them.

mens (mind) corpus(body) sanare (to heal)

Mind – Remind mastermind, never mind.

Body – Bodily, anybody, nobody.

to heal – To heal up.

TASK

Question 2

Identify other sentences from the text with intransitive verbs and copulas.

Solution

Answer. Other sentences from the text with intransitive verbs and copulas are

a) My hand, as it writes.

b) Whatever is me alive is me.
