

Genre Focus Lesson

I. Objectives

- To read to enjoy a novel
- To preview and make predictions about a novel
- To identify and understand a novel's elements: setting, characters, plot, point of view, and theme
- To respond and connect to a novel
- To plan a sequel to a novel

II. Motivating Options

Preview and Predict Before students begin reading, have them look at the novel's title and cover illustration. Then ask them to skim the first pages of the book. Encourage them to write down predictions about what may happen in the story, based on the title, illustration, and opening pages. Students can go back and confirm or revise their predictions as they read.

III. Teaching Strategies

A novel is a long work of fiction. It is often divided into chapters and, because of its length, may feature elements that are more developed than those in shorter works of fiction.

A. Analyzing

1. **Elements of a Novel** The elements of a novel are the same as those in a short story.
 - a. **Setting** Explain that as in a short story, a novel's setting is the time and place in which it occurs. The setting in a novel may change many times and may be described in great detail. An

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author may choose to focus on particular details of setting; these details may have an important effect on the characters and the plot of a novel.

Ask students how their own setting – the time and place in which they live – affects their lives. How would they be different if they lived in another time or place?

- b. Characters** Point out that because of a novel's length, it may include more characters and may develop them more fully. Novels may feature both dynamic characters, who change throughout the course of the book, and static characters, who stay the same. They may include round characters, who are complex and fully developed, and flat characters, who show only one aspect of their personality.

Invite students to describe someone they know who could make a good character for a novel. What traits make this character interesting?

- c. Plot** Remind students that a plot develops from a conflict, rises to a climax, and is resolved. Explain that in a novel, there may be several episodes, or narrative events, each with its own plot cycle. There may also be subplots, or minor plots, each with a plot cycle as well.

Have students describe an internal conflict in a story or movie they have seen recently. Encourage them to explain the forces causing the conflict.

- d. Point of View** Remind students of the three vantage points from which a work of fiction can be told. First, there is omniscient third-person point of view, in which the narrator can describe what all characters are thinking and feeling. There is limited third-person, in which the narrator focuses on one character's thoughts and feelings. Finally, in first-person point of view, the narrator, using the pronoun "I," reveals the story through a single character's eyes. Ask students to work in pairs to write a paragraph about an event. One partner can

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write using the first-person point of view. The other can rewrite the paragraph in the omniscient third-person point of view.

Encourage students to read a passage of the novel aloud using a different point of view than the one in which it is written.

Discuss with them how the new point of view changes the focus and meaning of the passage.

- e. **Theme** Remind students that a theme is the central idea or insight in a literary work. A novel may include more than one theme. To find a novel's theme, it can be helpful to note how the main character has changed during the story. Another important clue may be the way in which the main conflict is resolved.

Have students brainstorm a list of themes from books they have read and films they have seen. Lead them to see that many works may share similar themes.

2. **Vocabulary** Have students work together to create a dictionary for the novel. Students can jot down and define unfamiliar words as they read. When they are finished, they can get together and make an alphabetized booklet of words and definitions from the novel.
3. **Author's Craft** Point out that although a novel contains the same basic elements as a short story, its length gives an author a much larger canvas on which to create a world of imagination. Readers may feel that they come to know the characters, are familiar with the setting, and have experienced the ups and downs of the plot by the time they are finished reading. Reading an absorbing novel can be like taking a trip to a new place, where you meet new people and experience new events and feelings.

B. Responding

1. **Literature Groups** After reading the novel, have students work in groups to discuss their reactions to and opinions of the work.

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Encourage them to support their statements with examples from the book. (For more suggestions on using Literature Groups, see *Literature Groups Sourcebook: Strategies and Activities*.)

2. **Planning a Sequel** Have students work in groups to plan a sequel to the novel they have read. Encourage them to answer the following questions as they plan:

- Where should the sequel take place?
- What new characters, if any, should be introduced?
- What conflicts should arise? How should they be resolved?
- What should the sequel's theme be?

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