



THE NOVEL

Some books are to be tasted; others swallowed; and some few to be chewed and swallowed.

— Francis Bacon

A book is like a garden carried in the pocket

— Chinese proverb

A book is a mirror: If an ass peers into it, you can't expect an apostle to look out.

— G. C. Lichtenberg

The novel is the highest example of subtle interrelatedness that man has discovered.

— D. H. Lawrence

Almost all great writers have as their motif, more or less disguised, the "passage from childhood to maturity," the clash between the thrill of expectation, and the disillusioning knowledge of the truth. Lost Illusion is the undisclosed title of every novel.

— Andre Maurois

Whatever our theme in writing, it is old and tired. Whatever our place, it has been visited by the stranger, it will never be new again. It is only the vision that can be new; but that is enough.

— Eudora Welty

The man who does not read good books has no advantage over the man who can't read them.

—Mark Twain

WHAT IS A NOVEL?

It's an extended fictional prose narrative. As an *extended* narrative, the novel is distinguished from the **short story** and from the **novellette**: its magnitude permits a greater variety of characters, greater complication of plot (or plots), an ampler development of *milieu*, and a more subtle and sustained exploration of character than do the shorter, hence necessarily more concentrated modes. As a **prose** narrative, the novel is distinguished from the long verse narratives which were often **epics** or **romances**, rather than novels which usually attempt a more realistic recreation of experience.

The form of the novel is as protean as life and experience themselves, and the subject matter of the novel defies cataloging. The novel may concentrate upon **character**, almost to the exclusion of plot. It may merely be a series of **incidents** strung together like beads on a string, as the **picaresque novel** tends to be. It may be solidly plotted, with a structure as firm and sure as that of a **tragedy**. It may attempt to present the details of life with a scientist's detached and objective completeness, as in **naturalism**; or it may try by **image** and linguistic action to reproduce the unconscious flow of the emotions as **stream-of-consciousness novels** do. It may be **episodic**, loose in structure, **epic** in proportion -- what is called "panoramic" -- or it may be tightly-knit, bringing its material forward in dramatic orderliness -- what is called "scenic."

SOME ELEMENTS OF THE NOVEL

The elements of the **novel** are the same as those in any fictional narrative. The primary distinction lies only in the complexity of their development.

PLOT: A story line beginning with the establishment of a **conflict**, running through a series of **climaxes** and **anti-climaxes** to a final conflict and resolution.

CONFLICT: The collision of two opposing forces

1. a struggle against the forces of nature (man vs. nature)
2. a struggle against another person, usually the antagonist (man vs. man)
3. a struggle against society as a force (man vs. society)
4. a struggle for mastery by two elements within the protagonist (,am vs. self)

A fifth possible kind of conflict is often cited, the struggle against fate or destiny; however, such a struggle is usually realized through the action of one or more of the four basic conflicts. Conflict implies **motivation**, some purpose or goal to the conflict, not mere occurrence. The Greek word for conflict is **agon**, thus producing the terms **protagonist** and **antagonist**.

CHARACTERIZATION: The development of character through the pages of the novel by means of words. Characters are often described as **round** vs. **flat**, **static** vs. **dynamic**, **blocking** characters, **stock** characters, etc. There are three fundamental methods of **characterization** in fiction:

1. The explicit presentation by the author.
2. The presentation of the character in action.
3. The representation from within the character.

THEME: The central or dominating idea in a literary work.

SETTING: The physical, and sometimes spiritual, background against which the action of a narrative takes place. The elements which make up a **setting** are:

1. The actual geographical location, its topography, scenery, and physical arrangements.
2. The occupations and daily manner of living of the characters.
3. The time or period in which the action takes place, e.g. epoch, season.
4. The general environment of the characters, e.g. religious, mental, moral, social and emotional conditions.

KINDS OF NOVELS

Bildungsroman: It presents the development of the protagonist's mind and character, as he passes from childhood through varied experiences (usually including a spiritual crisis) into maturity and recognition of his identity and his role in the world. The development of an artist to maturity and mastery of his artistic craft is a **kunsterroman**.

Epistolary Novel: The narrative is conveyed entirely by an exchange of letters.

Gothic Novel: A form of novel in which magic, mystery, and the supernatural are the chief characteristics. The term is applied today to novels which discard the setting but maintain the atmosphere of brooding and unknown terror.

Historical Novel: It takes its setting and some of its characters and events from history; the term is usually applied only if the historical milieu and events are fairly elaborately developed, and important to the central narrative.

Novel of Manners: The social mores of a social class at a particular time and place are defined and described in detail and with great accuracy, and these mores become powerful controls over characters.

Picaresque Novel: "Picaresque" is Spanish for "rogue," and the typical story is of the escapades of a rascal who lives by his wits, and shows little if any alteration of character through the long succession of his adventures. Picaresque fiction is realistic in manner, episodic in structure, and usually satiric in aim.

Psychological Novel: This novel places major emphasis on interior characterization, not content to state just what happens, but going on to explain the "why" behind the action. Presenting the uninterrupted, uneven, and endless flow of thought of one or more characters – **stream-of-consciousness** -- is a favored technique.

Regional Novel: It emphasizes the setting, speech, and customs of a particular locality, not merely as local color, but as important conditions affecting the temperament of the characters and their ways of thinking, feeling, and acting.

Romance Novel: It has simplified characters, larger than life, sharply discriminated as heroes and villains. The protagonist is often solitary and isolated from the social context. The adventurous plot may be a quest for an ideal or the pursuit of an enemy. Nonrealistic and melodramatic events are sometimes symbolize the primal desires, hopes, and terrors of the human mind.

Sociological Novel: This novel emphasizes the influences of social and economic conditions on characters and events. If it also embodies an implicit or explicit thesis recommending social reform, it is a **propaganda novel**.

Another way to classify types of novels with the emphasis on particular subjects, such as

- **Campus (or academic) novel** – a novel whose main action is set in and around the campus of a university.
- **Comic (or graphic) novel** – a graphic medium in which images convey a sequential narrative
- **Crime fiction** – deals with crimes, their detection, criminals and their motives. Subgenres include detective fiction (including the whodunnit), legal thriller, courtroom drama, hard-boiled fiction, and spy novel
- **Fantasy** – uses magic and other supernatural forms as a primary element of plot, theme and/or setting
- **Science fiction** -- differs from fantasy in that, within the context of the story, its imaginary elements are largely possible within scientifically established or scientifically postulated laws of nature (though *some* elements in a story might still be pure imaginative speculation)
- **Horror** – intended to scare its readers, inducing feelings of horror and terror, whether natural or supernatural
- **Romance** – focused on the relationship and romantic love between two people
- **Gothic** – combines elements of both horror and romance
- **Westerns** -- comprises the history, geography, people, lore, and cultural expression of life in the Western United States, between the American Civil War and the end of the century.
- **Magical realism** -- an aesthetic style in which magical elements or illogical scenarios appear in an otherwise realistic or even "normal" setting.

100 Best First Lines from Novels

1. Call me Ishmael. Herman Melville, *Moby Dick* (1851)
2. It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife. Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (1813)
3. A screaming comes across the sky. Thomas Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973)
4. Many years later, as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendía was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover ice. Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967, trans. Gregory Rabassa)
5. Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins. Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (1955)
6. Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way. Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina* (1877, trans. Constance Garnett)
7. riverrun, past Eve and Adam's, from swerve of shore to bend of bay, brings us by a commodius vicus of recirculation back to Howth Castle and Environs. James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (1939)
8. It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen. George Orwell, *1984* (1949)
9. It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair. Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859)
10. I am an invisible man. Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (1952)
11. The Miss Lonelyhearts of the New York Post-Dispatch (Are you in trouble? -- Do you need advice? -- Write-to-Miss-Lonelyhearts-and she-will-help-you) sat at his desk and stared at a piece of white cardboard. Nathanael West, *Miss Lonelyhearts* (1933)
12. You don't know about me without you have read a book by the name of The Adventures of Tom Sawyer; but that ain't no matter. Mark Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885)
13. Someone must have slandered Josef K., for one morning, without having done anything truly wrong, he was arrested. Franz Kafka, *The Trial* (1925, trans. Breon Mitchell)
14. You are about to begin reading Italo Calvino's new novel, *If on a winter's night a traveler*. Italo Calvino, *If on a winter's night a traveler* (1979, trans. William Weaver)
15. The sun shone, having no alternative, on the nothing new. Samuel Beckett, *Murphy* (1938)
16. If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born, and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me, and all that David Copperfield kind of crap, but I don't feel like going into it, if you want to know the truth. J. D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951)
17. Once upon a time and a very good time it was there was a moocow coming down along the road and this moocow that was coming down along the road met a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo. James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916)
18. This is the saddest story I have ever heard. Ford Madox Ford, *The Good Soldier* (1915)
19. I wish either my father or my mother, or indeed both of them, as they were in duty both equally bound to it, had minded what they were about when they begot me; had they duly considered how much depended upon what they were then doing; -that not only the production of a rational Being was concerned in it, but that possibly the happy formation and temperature of his body, perhaps his genius and the very cast of his mind; -- and, for aught they knew to the contrary, even the fortunes of his whole house might take their turn from the humours and dispositions which were then uppermost: -- Had they duly weighed and considered all this, and proceeded accordingly, -- I am verily persuaded I should have made a quite different figure in the world, from that, in which the reader is likely to see me. Laurence Sterne, *Tristram Shandy* (1759-1767)
20. Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show. Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield* (1850)
21. Stately, plump Buck Mulligan came from the stairhead, bearing a bowl of lather on which a mirror and a razor lay crossed. James Joyce, *Ulysses* (1922)
22. It was a dark and stormy night; the rain fell in torrents, except at occasional intervals, when it was checked by a violent gust of wind which swept up the streets (for it is in London that our scene lies), rattling along the house-tops, and fiercely agitating the scanty flame of the lamps that struggled against the darkness. Edward George Bulwer-Lytton, *Paul Clifford* (1830)
23. One summer afternoon Mrs. Oedipa Maas came home from a Tupperware party whose hostess had put perhaps too much kirsch in the fondue to find that she, Oedipa, had been named executor, or she supposed executrix, of the estate of one Pierce Inverarity, a California real estate mogul who had once lost two million dollars in his spare time but still had assets numerous and tangled enough to make the job of sorting it all out more than honorary. Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966)
24. It was a wrong number that started it, the telephone ringing three times in the dead of night, and the voice on the other end asking for someone he was not. Paul Auster, *City of Glass* (1985)
25. Through the fence, between the curling flower spaces, I could see them hitting. William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury* (1929)
26. 124 was spiteful. Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (1987)
27. Somewhere in la Mancha, in a place whose name I do not care to remember, a gentleman lived not long ago, one of those who has a lance and ancient shield on a shelf and keeps a skinny nag and a greyhound for racing. Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote* (1605, trans. Edith Grossman)
28. Mother died today. Albert Camus, *The Stranger* (1942, trans. Stuart Gilbert)
29. Every summer Lin Kong returned to Goose Village to divorce his wife. Shuyu. Ha Jin, *Waiting* (1999)
30. The sky above the port was the color of television, tuned to a dead channel. William Gibson, *Neuromancer* (1984)
31. I am a sick man . . . I am a spiteful man. Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Notes from Underground* (1864, trans. Michael R. Katz)
32. Where now? Who now? When now? Samuel Beckett, *The Unnamable* (1953, trans. Patrick Bowles)
33. Once an angry man dragged his father along the ground through his own orchard. "Stop!" cried the groaning old man at last, "Stop! I did not drag my father beyond this tree." Gertrude Stein, *The Making of Americans* (1925)
34. In a sense, I am Jacob Horner. John Barth, *The End of the Road* (1958)
35. It was like so, but wasn't. Richard Powers, *Galatea 2.2* (1995)
36. — Money . . . in a voice that rustled. William Gaddis, *J R* (1975)
37. Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself. Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925)
38. All this happened, more or less. Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969)
39. They shoot the white girl first. Toni Morrison, *Paradise* (1998)
40. For a long time, I went to bed early. Marcel Proust, *Swann's Way* (1913, trans. Lydia Davis)
41. The moment one learns English, complications set in. Felipe Alfau, *Chromos* (1990)
42. Dr. Weiss, at forty, knew that her life had been ruined by literature. Anita Brookner, *The Debut* (1981)
43. I was the shadow of the waxwing slain / By the false azure in the windowpane; Vladimir Nabokov, *Pale Fire* (1962)
44. Ships at a distance have every man's wish on board. Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937)
45. I had the story, bit by bit, from various people, and, as generally happens in such cases, each time it was a different story. Edith Wharton, *Ethan Frome* (1911)
46. Ages ago, Alex, Allen and Alva arrived at Antibes, and Alva allowing all, allowing anyone, against Alex's admonition, against Allen's angry assertion: another African amusement. . . anyhow, as all argued, an awesome African army assembled and arduously advanced against an African anthill, assiduously annihilating ant after ant, and afterward, Alex astonishingly accuses Albert as also accepting Africa's antipodal ant annexation. Walter Abish, *Alphabetical Africa* (1974)
47. There was a boy called Eustace Clarence Scrubb, and he almost deserved it. C. S. Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (1952)
48. He was an old man who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream and he had gone eighty-four days now without taking a fish. Ernest Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952)
49. It was the day my grandmother exploded. Iain M. Banks, *The Crow Road* (1992)
50. I was born twice: first, as a baby girl, on a remarkably smogless Detroit day in January of 1960; and then again, as a teenage boy, in an emergency room near Petoskey, Michigan, in August of 1974. Jeffrey Eugenides, *Middlesex* (2002)
51. Elmer Gantry was drunk. Sinclair Lewis, *Elmer Gantry* (1927)
52. We started dying before the snow, and like the snow, we continued to fall. Louise Erdrich, *Tracks* (1988)
53. It was a pleasure to burn. Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* (1953)
54. A story has no beginning or end; arbitrarily one chooses that moment of experience from which to look back or from which to look ahead. Graham Greene, *The End of the Affair* (1951)
55. Having placed in my mouth sufficient bread for three minutes' chewing, I withdrew my powers of sensual perception and retired into the privacy of my mind, my eyes and face assuming a vacant and preoccupied expression. Flann O'Brien, *At Swim-Two-Birds* (1939)
56. I was born in the Year 1632, in the City of York, of a good Family, tho' not of that Country, my Father being a Foreigner of Bremen, who settled first at Hull; He got a good Estate by Merchandise, and leaving off his Trade, lived afterward at York, from whence he had married my Mother, whose Relations were named Robinson, a very good Family in that Country, and from whom I was called Robinson Kreutznaer; but by the usual Corruption of Words in England, we are now called, nay we call our selves, and write our Name Crusoe, and so my Companions always call'd me. -- Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719)
57. In the beginning, sometimes I left messages in the street. --David Markson, *Wittgenstein's Mistress* (1988)
58. Miss Brooke had that kind of beauty which seems to be thrown into relief by poor dress. George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (1872)
59. It was love at first sight. Joseph Heller, *Catch-22* (1961)
60. What if this young woman, who writes such bad poems, in competition with her husband, whose poems are equally bad, should stretch her remarkably long and well-made legs out before you, so that her skirt slips up to the tops of her stockings? Gilbert Sorrentino, *Imaginative Qualities of Actual Things* (1971)

61. I have never begun a novel with more misgiving. W. Somerset Maugham, *The Razor's Edge* (1944)

62. Once upon a time, there was a woman who discovered she had turned into the wrong person. Anne Tyler, *Back When We Were Grownups* (2001)

63. The human race, to which so many of my readers belong, has been playing at children's games from the beginning, and will probably do it till the end, which is a nuisance for the few people who grow up. G. K. Chesterton, *The Napoleon of Notting Hill* (1904)

64. In my younger and more vulnerable years my father gave me some advice that I've been turning over in my mind ever since. F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (1925)

65. You better not never tell nobody but God. Alice Walker, *The Color Purple* (1982)

66. "To be born again," sang Gibreel Farishta tumbling from the heavens, "first you have to die." Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses* (1988)

67. It was a queer, sultry summer, the summer they electrocuted the Rosenbergs, and I didn't know what I was doing in New York. Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar* (1963)

68. Most really pretty girls have pretty ugly feet, and so does Mindy Metalman, Lenore notices, all of a sudden. David Foster Wallace, *The Broom of the System* (1987)

69. If I am out of my mind, it's all right with me, thought Moses. Saul Bellow, *Herzog* (1964)

70. Francis Marion Tarwater's uncle had been dead for only half a day when the boy got too drunk to finish digging his grave and a Negro named Buford Munson, who had come to get a jug filled, had to finish it and drag the body from the breakfast table where it was still sitting and bury it in a decent and Christian way, with the sign of its Saviour at the head of the grave and enough dirt on top to keep the dogs from digging it up. Flannery O'Connor, *The Violent Bear it Away* (1960)

71. Granted: I am an inmate of a mental hospital; my keeper is watching me, he never lets me out of his sight; there's a peephole in the door, and my keeper's eye is the shade of brown that can never see through a blue-eyed type like me. Günter Grass, *The Tin Drum* (1959, trans. Ralph Manheim)

72. When Dick Gibson was a little boy he was not Dick Gibson. Stanley Elkin, *The Dick Gibson Show* (1971)

73. Hiram Clegg, together with his wife Emma and four friends of the faith from Randolph Junction, were summoned by the Spirit and Mrs. Clara Collins, widow of the beloved Nazarene preacher Ely Collins, to West Condon on the weekend of the eighteenth and nineteenth of April, there to await the End of the World. Robert Coover, *The Origin of the Brunists* (1966)

74. She waited, Kate Croy, for her father to come in, but he kept her unconsciously, and there were moments at which she showed herself, in the glass over the mantel, a face positively pale with the irritation that had brought her to the point of going away without sight of him. Henry James, *The Wings of the Dove* (1902)

75. In the late summer of that year we lived in a house in a village that looked across the river and the plain to the mountains. Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (1929)

76. "Take my camel, dear," said my Aunt Dot, as she climbed down from this animal on her return from High Mass. Rose Macaulay, *The Towers of Trebizond* (1956)

77. He was an inch, perhaps two, under six feet, powerfully built, and he advanced straight at you with a slight stoop of the shoulders, head forward, and a fixed-from-under stare which made you think of a charging bull. Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim* (1900)

78. The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there. L. P. Hartley, *The Go-Between* (1953)

79. On my naming day when I come 12 I gone front spear and kilt a wyld boar he parbly ben the las wyld pig on the Bundel Downs any how there hadnt ben none for a long time befor him nor I aint looking to see none agen. Russell Hoban, *Riddley Walker* (1980)

80. Justice? -- You get justice in the next world, in this world you have the law. William Gaddis, *A Frolic of His Own* (1994)

81. Vaughan died yesterday in his last car-crash. J. G. Ballard, *Crash* (1973)

82. I write this sitting in the kitchen sink. Dodie Smith, *I Capture the Castle* (1948)

83. "When your mama was the geek, my dreamlets," Papa would say, "she made the nipping off of noggins such a crystal mystery that the hens themselves yearned toward her, waltzing around her, hypnotized with longing." Katherine Dunn, *Geek Love* (1983)

84. In the last years of the Seventeenth Century there was to be found among the fops and fools of the London coffee-houses one rangy, gangling flitch called Ebenezer Cooke, more ambitious than talented, and yet more talented than prudent, who, like his friends-in-folly, all of whom were supposed to be educating at Oxford or Cambridge, had found the sound of Mother English more fun to game with than her sense to labor over, and so rather than applying himself to the pains of scholarship, had learned the knack of versifying, and groundout quires of couplets after the fashion of the day, afroth with Joves and Jupiters, aclang with jarring rhymes, and string-taut with similes stretched to the snapping-point. John Barth, *The Sot-Weed Factor* (1960)

85. When I finally caught up with Abraham Trahearne, he was drinking beer with an alcoholic bulldog named Fireball Roberts in a ramshackle joint just outside of Sonoma, California, drinking the heart right out of a fine spring afternoon. James Crumley, *The Last Good Kiss* (1978)

86. It was just noon that Sunday morning when the sheriff reached the jail with Lucas Beauchamp though the whole town (the whole county too for that matter) had known since the night before that Lucas had killed a white man. William Faulkner, *Intruder in the Dust* (1948)

87. I, Tiberius Claudius Drusus Nero Germanicus This-that-and-the-other (for I shall not trouble you yet with all my titles) who was once, and not so long ago either,

known to my friends and relatives and associates as "Claudius the Idiot," or "That Claudius," or "Claudius the Stammerer," or "Clau-Clau-Claudius" or at best as "Poor Uncle Claudius," am now about to write this strange history of my life; starting from my earliest childhood and continuing year by year until I reach the fateful point of change where, some eight years ago, at the age of fifty-one, I suddenly found myself caught in what I may call the "golden predicament" from which I have never since become disentangled. Robert Graves, *I, Claudius* (1934)

88. Of all the things that drive men to sea, the most common disaster, I've come to learn, is women. Charles Johnson, *Middle Passage* (1990)

89. I am an American, Chicago born -- Chicago, that somber city -- and goat things as I have taught myself, free-style, and will make the record in my own way: first to knock, first admitted; sometimes an innocent knock, sometimes a not so innocent. Saul Bellow, *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953)

90. The towers of Zenith aspired above the morning mist; austere towers of steel and cement and limestone, sturdy as cliffs and delicate as silver rods. Sinclair Lewis, *Babbitt* (1922)

91. I will tell you in a few words who I am: lover of the hummingbird that darts to the flower beyond the rotted sill where my feet are propped; lover of bright needlepoint and the bright stitching fingers of humorless old ladies bent to their sweet and infamous designs; lover of parasols made from the same puffy stuff as a young girl's underdrawers; still lover of that small naval boat which somehow survived the distressing years of my life between her decks or in her pilothouse; and also lover of poor dear black Sonny, my mess boy, fellow victim and confidant, and of my wife and child. But most of all, lover of my harmless and sanguine self. --John Hawkes, *Second Skin* (1964)

92. He was born with a gift of laughter and a sense that the world was mad. Raphael Sabatini, *Scaramouche* (1921)

93. Psychics can see the color of time it's blue. Ronald Sukenick, *Blown Away* (1986)

94. In the town, there were two mutes and they were always together. Carson McCullers, *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* (1940)

95. Once upon a time two or three weeks ago, a rather stubborn and determined middle-aged man decided to record for posterity, exactly as it happened, word by word and step by step, the story of another man for indeed what is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal, a somewhat paranoiac fellow unmarried, unattached, and quite irresponsible, who had decided to lock himself in a room a furnished room with a private bath, cooking facilities, a bed, a table, and at least one chair, in New York City, for a year 365 days to be precise, to write the story of another person -- a shy young man about 19 years old -- who, after the war the Second World War, had come to America the land of opportunities from France under the sponsorship of his uncle -- a journalist, fluent in five languages -- who himself had come to America from Europe Poland it seems, though this was not clearly established sometime during the war after a series of rather gruesome adventures, and who, at the end of the war, wrote to the father his cousin by marriage of the young man whom he considered as a nephew, curious to know if he the father and his family had survived the German occupation, and indeed was deeply saddened to learn, in a letter from the young man -- a long and touching letter written in English, not by the young man, however, who did not know a damn word of English, but by a good friend of his who had studied English in school -- that his parents both his father and mother and his two sisters one older and the other younger than he had been deported they were Jewish to a German concentration camp Auschwitz probably and never returned, no doubt having been exterminated deliberately X * X * X * X, and that, therefore, the young man who was now an orphan, a displaced person, who, during the war, had managed to escape deportation by working very hard on a farm in Southern France, would be happy and grateful to be given the opportunity to come to America that great country he had heard so much about and yet knew so little about to start a new life, possibly go to school, learn a trade, and become a good, loyal citizen. Raymond Federman, *Double or Nothing* (1971)

96. Time is not a line but a dimension, like the dimensions of space. Margaret Atwood, *Cat's Eye* (1988)

97. He -- for there could be no doubt of his sex, though the fashion of the time did something to disguise it -- was in the act of slicing at the head of a Moor which swung from the rafters. Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (1928)

98. High, high above the North Pole, on the first day of 1969, two professors of English Literature approached each other at a combined velocity of 1200 miles per hour. David Lodge, *Changing Places* (1975)

99. They say when trouble comes close ranks, and so the white people did. Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966)

100. The cold passed reluctantly from the earth, and the retiring fogs revealed an army stretched out on the hills, resting. Stephen Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895)

Source: *American Book Review*. <http://americanbookreview.org/100BestLines.asp>

100 Best Last Lines from Novels

1. ...you must go on, I can't go on, I'll go on. –Samuel Beckett, *The Unnamable* (1953; trans. Samuel Beckett)
2. Who knows but that, on the lower frequencies, I speak for you? –Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (1952)
3. So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past. –F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (1925)
4. ...I was a Flower of the mountain yes when I put the rose in my hair like the Andalusian girls used or shall I wear a red yes and how he kissed me under the Moorish wall and I thought well as well him as another and then I asked him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he asked me would I yes to say yes my mountain flower and first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes. –James Joyce, *Ulysses* (1922)
5. But I reckon I got to light out for the Territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she's going to adopt me and sivilize me and I can't stand it. I been there before. –Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885)
6. "Yes," I said. "Isn't it pretty to think so?" –Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* (1926)
7. He loved Big Brother. –George Orwell, *1984* (1949)
8. 'It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to than I have ever known.' –Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859)
9. The offing was barred by a black bank of clouds, and the tranquil waterway leading to the uttermost ends of the earth flowed sombre under an overcast sky—seemed to lead into the heart of an immense darkness. –Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (1902)
10. Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision. –Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (1927)
11. His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead. –James Joyce, "The Dead" in *Dubliners* (1914)
12. I am thinking of aurochs and angels, the secret of durable pigments, prophetic sonnets, the refuge of art. And this is the only immortality you and I may share, my Lolita. –Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (1955)
13. And you say, "Just a moment, I've almost finished *If on a winter's night a traveler* by Italo Calvino." –Italo Calvino, *If on a winter's night a traveler* (1979; trans. William Weaver)
14. Ah Bartleby! Ah humanity! –Herman Melville, *Bartleby the Scrivener* (1853)
15. Before reaching the final line, however, he had already understood that he would never leave that room, for it was foreseen that the city of mirrors (or mirages) would be wiped out by the wind and exiled from the memory of men at the precise moment when Aureliano Babilonia would finish deciphering the parchments, and that everything written on them was unrepeatably since time immemorial and forever more, because races condemned to one hundred years of solitude did not have a second opportunity on earth. –Gabriel García Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967; trans. Gregory Rabassa)
16. Then I went back into the house and wrote, It is midnight. The rain is beating on the windows. It was not midnight. It was not raining. –Samuel Beckett, *Molloy* (1951, trans. Patrick Bowles)
17. So in America when the sun goes down and I sit on the old broken-down river pier watching the long, long skies over New Jersey and sense all that raw land that rolls in one unbelievable huge bulge over to the West Coast, and all that road going, all the people dreaming in the immensity of it, and in Iowa I know by now the children must be crying in the land where they let the children cry, and tonight the stars'll be out, and don't you know that God is Pooh Bear? the evening star must be drooping and shedding her sparkler dims on the prairie, which is just before the coming of complete night that blesses the earth, darkens all rivers, cups the peaks and folds the final shore in, and nobody, nobody knows what's going to happen to anybody besides the forlorn rags of growing old, I think of Dean Moriarty, I even think of Old Dean Moriarty the father we never found, I think of Dean Moriarty. –Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* (1957)
18. *I don't hate it* he thought, panting in the cold air, the iron New England dark; *I don't. I don't! I don't hate it! I don't hate it!* –William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936)
19. L--d! said my mother, what is all this story about?— — A COCK and a BULL, said Yorick— —And one of the best of its kind I ever heard. –Laurence Sterne, *Tristram Shandy* (1759–1767)
20. 'I shall feel proud and satisfied to have been the first author to enjoy the full fruit of his writings, as I desired, because my only desire has been to make men hate those false, absurd histories in books of chivalry, which thanks to the exploits of my real Don Quixote are even now tottering, and without any doubt will soon tumble to the ground. Farewell.' –Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote* (1605, 1615; trans. John Rutherford)
21. If I were a younger man, I would write a history of human stupidity; and I would climb to the top of Mount McCabe and lie down on my back with my history for a pillow; and I would take from the ground some of the blue-white poison that makes statues of men; and I would make a statue of myself, lying on my back, grinning horribly, and thumbing my nose at You Know Who. –Kurt Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle* (1963)
22. **YOU HAVE FALLEN INTO ART—RETURN TO LIFE** –William H. Gass, *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife* (1968)
23. In your rocking-chair, by your window dreaming, shall you long, alone. In your rocking-chair, by your window, shall you dream such happiness as you may never feel. –Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie* (1900)
24. *Go, my book, and help destroy the world as it is.* –Russell Banks, *Continental Drift* (1985)
25. It was the devious-cruising Rachel, that in her retracing search after her missing children, only found another orphan. –Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick* (1851)
26. The knife came down, missing him by inches, and he took off. –Joseph Heller, *Catch-22* (1961)
27. Is it possible for anyone in Germany, nowadays, to raise his right hand, for whatever the reason, and not be flooded by the memory of a dream to end all dreams? –Walter Abish, *How German Is It?* (1980)
28. Lastly, she pictured to herself how this same little sister of hers would, in the after-time, be herself a grown woman; and how she would keep, through all her riper years, the simple and loving heart of her childhood; and how she would gather about her other little children, and make *their* eyes bright and eager with many a strange tale, perhaps even with the dream of Wonderland of long ago; and how she would feel with all their simple sorrows, and find a pleasure in all their simple joys, remembering her own child-life, and the happy summer days. –Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865)
29. But the effect of her being on those around her was incalculably diffusive: for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs. –George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (1871–72)
30. He was soon borne away by the waves and lost in darkness and distance. –Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (1818)
31. Now everybody — –Thomas Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973)
32. But, in spite of these deficiencies, the wishes, the hopes, the confidence, the predictions of the small band of true friends who witnessed the ceremony, were fully answered in the perfect happiness of the union. –Jane Austen, *Emma* (1816)
33. It was the nightmare of real things, the fallen wonder of the world. –Don DeLillo, *The Names* (1982)
34. He knew what those jubilant crowds did not know but could have learned from books: that the plague bacillus never dies or disappears for good; that it can lie dormant for years and years in furniture and linen-chests; that it bides its time in bedrooms, cellars, trunks, and bookshelves; and that perhaps the day would come when, for the bane and the enlightening of men, it would rouse up its rats again and send them forth to die in a happy city. –Albert Camus, *The Plague* (1947; trans. Stuart Gilbert)
35. This is not the scene I dreamed of. Like much else nowadays I leave it feeling stupid, like a man who lost his way long ago but presses on along a road that may lead nowhere. –J. M. Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980)
36. "Like a dog!" he said, it was as if the shame of it must outlive him. –Franz Kafka, *The Trial* (1925; trans. Willa and Edwin Muir)
37. P.S.
Sorry I forgot to give you the mayonnaise.
–Richard Brautigan, *Trout Fishing in America* (1967)
38. For everything to be consummated, for me to feel less alone, I had only to wish that there be a large crowd of spectators the day of my execution and that they greet me with cries of hate. –Albert Camus, *The Stranger* (1942; trans. Matthew Ward)
39. Yes, they will trample me underfoot, the numbers marching one two three, four hundred million five hundred six, reducing me to specks of voiceless dust, just as, in all good time, they will trample my son who is not my son, and his son who will not be his, and his who will not be his, until the thousand and first generation, until a thousand and one midnights have bestowed their terrible gifts and a thousand and one children have died, because it is the privilege and the curse of midnight's children to be both masters and victims of their times, to forsake privacy and be sucked into the annihilating whirlpool of the multitudes, and to be unable to live or die in peace. –Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* (1981)
40. Oedipa settled back, to await the crying of lot 49. –Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49* (1965)
41. I lingered round them, under that benign sky; watched the moths fluttering among the heath, and hare-bells; listened to the soft wind breathing through the grass; and wondered how any one could ever imagine unquiet slumbers for the sleepers in that quiet earth. –Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* (1847)
42. A way a lone a last a loved a long the –James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (1939)
43. Columbus too thought he was a flop, probably, when they sent him back in chains. Which didn't prove there was no America. –Saul Bellow, *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953)
44. Everything we need that is not food or love is here in the tabloid racks. The tales of the supernatural and extraterrestrial. The miracle vitamins, the cures for cancer, the remedies for obesity. The cults of the famous and the dead. –Don DeLillo, *White Noise* (1985)
45. Are there any questions? –Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* (1986)

46. It was a fine cry—loud and long—but it had no bottom and it had no top, just circles and circles of sorrow. –Toni Morrison, *Sula* (1973)
47. And so, as Tiny Tim observed, God bless Us, Every One! –Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol* (1843)
48. “No glot...C’lom Fliday” –William S. Burroughs, *Naked Lunch* (1959)
49. The creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which. –George Orwell, *Animal Farm* (1945)
50. “Poor Grendel’s had an accident,” I whisper. “So may you all.” –John Gardner, *Grendel* (1971)
51. So I mean listen I got this neat idea hey, you listening? Hey? You listening...? –William Gaddis, *J R* (1975)
52. Don’t ever tell anybody anything. If you do, you start missing everybody. –J. D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951)
53. The aircraft rise from the runways of the airport, carrying the remnants of Vaughan’s semen to the instrument panels and radiator grilles of a thousand crashing cars, the stances of a million passengers. –J. G. Ballard, *Crash* (1973)
54. Whatever we had missed, we possessed together the precious, the incommunicable past. –Willa Cather, *My Antonia* (1918)
55. We shall come back, no doubt, to walk down the Row and watch young people on the tennis courts by the clump of mimosas and walk down the beach by the bay, where the diving floats lift gently in the sun, and on out to the pine grove, where the needles thick on the ground will deaden the footfall so that we shall move among the trees as soundlessly as smoke. But that will be a long time from now, and soon now we shall go out of the house and go into the convulsion of the world, out of history into history and the awful responsibility of Time. –Robert Penn Warren, *All the King’s Men* (1946)
56. He knelt by the bed and bent over her, draining their last moment to its lees; and in the silence there passed between them the word which made all clear. –Edith Wharton, *The House of Mirth* (1905)
57. “All that is very well,” answered Candide, “but let us cultivate our garden.” –Voltaire, *Candide* (1759; trans. Robert M. Adams)
58. He was the only person caught in the collapse, and afterward, most of his work was recovered too, and it is still spoken of, when it is noted, with high regard, though seldom played. –William H. Gaddis, *The Recognitions* (1955)
59. Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead. –James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916)
60. One bird said to Billy Pilgrim, “Poo-tee-weet?” –Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969)
61. For now she knew what Shalimar knew: If you surrendered to the air, you could ride it. –Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon* (1977)
62. I never saw any of them again—except the cops. No way has yet been invented to say goodbye to them. –Raymond Chandler, *The Long Goodbye* (1953)
63. The key to the treasure is the treasure. –John Barth, “Dunyazadiad” from *Chimera* (1972)
64. After a while I went out and left the hospital and walked back to the hotel in the rain. –Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (1929)
65. This is the difference between this and that. –Gertrude Stein, *A Novel of Thank You* (1958)
66. But wherever they go, and whatever happens to them on the way, in that enchanted place on the top of the Forest, a little boy and his Bear will always be playing. –A. A. Milne, *The House at Pooh Corner* (1928)
67. “Vaya con Dios, my darklin’, and remember: vote early and vote often, don’t take any wooden nickels, and” —by now I was rolling about helplessly on the spare-room floor, scrunched up around my throbbing pain and bawling like a baby—“always leave ’em laughin’ as you say good-bye!” –Robert Coover, *The Public Burning* (1977)
68. Then there are more and more endings: the sixth, the 53rd, the 131st, the 9,435th ending, endings going faster and faster, more and more endings, faster and faster until this book is having 186,000 endings per second. –Richard Brautigan, *A Confederate General from Big Sur* (1964)
69. She sat staring with her eyes shut, into his eyes, and felt as if she had finally got to the beginning of something she couldn’t begin, and she saw him moving farther and farther away, farther and farther into the darkness until he was the pin point of light. –Flannery O’Connor, *Wise Blood* (1952)
70. He heard the ring of steel against steel as a far door clanged shut. –Richard Wright, *Native Son* (1940)
71. So that, in the end, there was no end. –Patrick White, *The Tree of Man* (1955)
72. The old man was dreaming about the lions. –Ernest Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952)
73. Somebody threw a dead dog after him down the ravine. –Malcolm Lowry, *Under the Volcano* (1947)
74. Tell me how free I am. –Richard Powers, *Prisoner’s Dilemma* (1988)
75. “We shall never be again as we were!” –Henry James, *The Wings of the Dove* (1902)
76. ‘I closed my eyes, head drooping, like a person drunk for so long she no longer knows she’s drunk, and then, drunk, awoke to the world which lay before me.’ –Kathy Acker, *Don Quixote* (1986)
77. “Tomorrow, I’ll think of some way to get him back. After all, tomorrow is another day.” –Margaret Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind* (1936)
78. He never sleeps, the judge. He is dancing, dancing. He says that he will never die. –Cormac McCarthy, *Blood Meridian* (1985)
79. “And then the storm of shit begins” –Roberto Bolaño, *By Night in Chile* (2000; trans. Chris Andrews)
80. Everything had gone right with me since he had died, but how I wished there existed someone to whom I could say that I was sorry. –Graham Greene, *The Quiet American* (1956)
81. It’s old light, and there’s not much of it. But it’s enough to see by. –Margaret Atwood, *Cat’s Eye* (1988)
82. Ah: runs. Runs. –John Updike, *Rabbit, Run* (1960)
83. They were only a thin slice, held between the contiguous impressions that composed our life at that time; the memory of a particular image is but regret for a particular moment; and houses, roads, avenues are as fugitive, alas, as the years. –Marcel Proust, *Swann’s Way* (1913; trans. C. K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin)
84. But I knew that Catherine had kissed me because she trusted me, and that made me happy then but now I am sad because by the time my eyes close each night I suspect that as usual I have been fooling myself, that she, too, is in her grave. –William T. Vollmann, *You Bright and Risen Angels* (1987)
85. But that is the beginning of a new story—the story of the gradual renewal of a man, the story of his gradual regeneration, of his passing from one world into another, of his initiation into a new unknown life. That might be the subject of a new story, but our present story is ended. –Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Crime and Punishment* (1866; trans. Constance Garnett)
86. He waited for someone to tell him who to be next. –Brian Evenson, *The Open Curtain* (2006)
87. That’s it. The sun in the evening. The moon at dawn. The still voice. –John Hawkes, *Second Skin* (1964)
88. “Meet Mrs Bundren,” he says. –William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying* (1930)
89. this way this way this way this way this way this way this
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–Ronald Sukenick, *Out* (1973)
90. ...and to all you other cats and chicks out there, sweet or otherwise, buried deep in wordy tombs, who never yet have walked from off the page, a shake and a hug and a kiss and a drink. Cheers! –Gilbert Sorrentino, *Mulligan Stew* (1979)
91. Come, children, let us shut up the box and the puppets, for our play is played out. –William Makepeace Thackeray, *Vanity Fair* (1847–48)
92. Maybe I will go to Paris. Who knows? But I’ll sure as hell never go back to Texas again. –James Crumley, *The Final Country* (2001)
93. “Terminal.” –John Barth, *The End of the Road* (1958)
94. From the sky a swift Angel descends, an Angel with a golden helmet and green spurs, a flaming sword in his hand, an Angel escaped from the Indo-Hispanic altars of opulent hunger, from need overcome by sleep, from the coupling of opposites: body and soul, wakefulness and death, living and sleeping, remembering and desiring, imagining: the happy boy who reaches the sad land carries all this on his lips, he bears the memory of death, white and extinguished, like the flame that went out in his mother’s belly: for a swift, marvelous instant, the boy being born knows that this light of memory, wisdom, and death was an Angel and that this other Angel who flies from the navel of heaven with the sword in his hand is the fraternal enemy of the first: he is the Baroque Angel, with a sword in his hand and quetzal wings, and a serpent doublet, and a golden helmet, the Angel strikes, strikes the lips of the boy being born on the beach: the burning and painful sword strikes his lips and the boy forgets, he forgets everything forgets everything, f
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–Carlos Fuentes, *Christopher Unborn* (1987; trans. Alfred MacAdam and Carlos Fuentes)
95. From here on in I rag nobody. –Mark Harris, *Bang the Drum Slowly* (1956)
96. My love for my children makes me glad that I am what I am and keeps me from desiring to be otherwise; and yet, when I sometimes open a little box in which I still keep my fast yellowing manuscripts, the only tangible remnants of a vanished dream, a dead ambition, a sacrificed talent, I cannot repress the thought that, after all, I have chosen the lesser part, that I have sold my birthright for a mess of pottage. –James Weldon Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man* (1912)
97. There was the hum of bees, and the musky odor of pinks filled the air. –Kate Chopin, *The Awakening* (1899)
98. And he couldn’t do it. He could not fucking die. How could he leave? How could he go? Everything he hated was here. –Philip Roth, *Sabbath’s Theater* (1995)
99. So much of life in its meshes! She called in her soul to come and see. –Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937)
100. “GOOD GRIEF—IT’S DADDY!” –Terry Southern and Mason Hoffenberg, *Candy* (1958)