

ARA 314

THE NOVEL I



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Course code: ARA 314

Course title: The Novel I

Course credit load: 2 Units

Series 1: Definition And History Of The Arabic Novel

Part 1.1 Definition Of The Arabic Novel

- 1.1.1 Meaning of the novel in Arabic literature
- 1.1.2 Distinction between the novel and other Arabic prose forms (e.g., maqāmāt, hikāyāt)
- 1.1.3 Early critical perspectives on defining the Arabic novel

Part 1.2 Historical Background Of The Arabic Novel

- 1.2.1 Origins of narrative traditions in Arabic (folk tales, epics, maqāmāt)
- 1.2.2 Early influences from translated works and contact with European literature
- 1.2.3 Emergence of the Arabic novel in the 19th century (e.g., Jurjī Zaydān, Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal)

Part 1.3 Development Of The Arabic Novel In The Modern Period

- 1.3.1 Growth of the novel in the 20th century (social, political, and cultural themes)
- 1.3.2 Contributions of pioneering novelists (e.g., Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, Najīb Maḥfūz)
- 1.3.3 The Arabic novel as a reflection of societal change and identity

Part 1.4 Significance Of The Arabic Novel In Literary Studies

- 1.4.1 Role of the novel in shaping modern Arabic literature
- 1.4.2 The novel as a medium for cultural and political expression
- 1.4.3 Importance of studying the Arabic novel in university-level Arabic courses



Introduction

Stories have always been central to human culture, and in Arabic literary tradition they have taken many forms, from oral tales and epics to written prose such as the *maqāmāt*. The novel, however, represents a modern development that brought new ways of narrating life, society, and identity. Understanding how the Arabic novel was defined and how it emerged historically is essential for appreciating its role in shaping modern Arabic literature. This Series sets the foundation for your study of the novel by tracing its meaning and historical trajectory.

The aim of this Series is to introduce you to the definition of the Arabic novel and to guide you through its historical development. By the end of the Series, you will be able to explain what distinguishes the novel from other Arabic prose forms, describe its origins, and analyse its significance in the broader context of Arabic literary studies.

We shall commence this Series by exploring the definition of the Arabic novel and clarifying how it differs from earlier prose traditions. Next, we will examine the historical background, including narrative roots in Arabic culture and the influence of translated works. Following that, we will consider the development of the Arabic novel in the modern period, highlighting pioneering authors and their contributions. Finally, we will wrap up by discussing the significance of the Arabic novel in literary studies, showing how it became a vital medium for cultural and political expression.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 1.1** define the Arabic novel and distinguish it from other prose forms such as *maqāmāt* and *hikāyāt*,
- **SLO 1.2** explain early critical perspectives on the definition of the Arabic novel,
- **SLO 1.3** describe the historical background of the Arabic novel, including its roots in folk tales, epics, and *maqāmāt*,



- **SLO 1.4** analyse the influence of translated works and European literary contact on the emergence of the Arabic novel,
- **SLO 1.5** trace the development of the Arabic novel in the 19th century, identifying pioneering figures such as Jurjī Zaydān and Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal,
- **SLO 1.6** evaluate the growth of the Arabic novel in the 20th century, focusing on social, political, and cultural themes,
- **SLO 1.7** assess the contributions of major novelists such as Ṭāhā Ḥusayn and Najīb Maḥfūz to Arabic literary development, and
- **SLO 1.8** explain the significance of the Arabic novel as a medium for cultural and political expression and its importance in modern literary studies.

1.1 Definition Of The Arabic Novel

1.1.1 Meaning of the novel in Arabic literature

The **novel** (الرواية) in Arabic literature is a modern prose form that narrates events through structured storytelling, combining elements such as plot, character, setting, and theme. Unlike earlier Arabic prose traditions such as the **maqāmāt** (a genre of rhymed prose interspersed with poetry, often satirical) or **hikāyāt** (folk tales and stories), the novel is distinguished by its sustained narrative and focus on individual and social experiences. It became a vehicle for exploring identity, cultural change, and modernity in Arab societies.

Fill in the blank: The novel in Arabic literature differs from earlier prose traditions such as maqāmāt and _____.



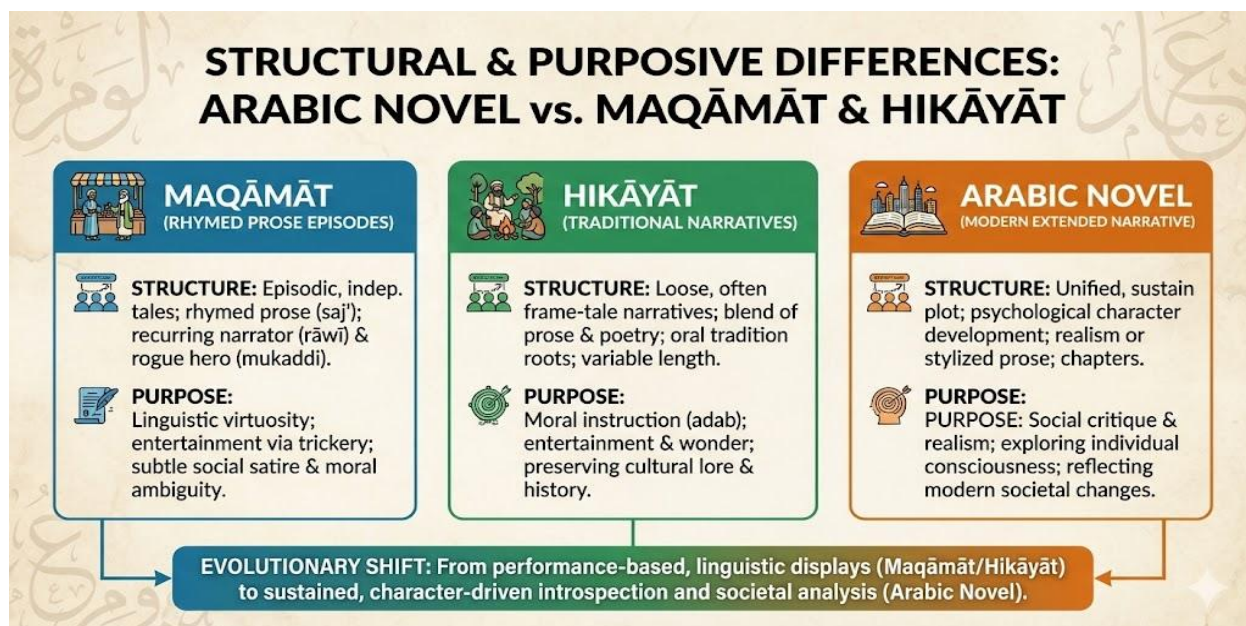


Figure 1.1: Distinction between the Arabic novel and earlier prose traditions

1.1.2 Distinction between the novel and other Arabic prose forms

The Arabic novel differs from earlier prose forms in several ways. The **maqāmāt** relied heavily on rhetorical flourishes and episodic adventures, while the **hikāyāt** were often oral tales passed down through generations. In contrast, the novel presents a coherent narrative with developed characters and themes, often reflecting social, political, and cultural realities. This distinction is important because it marks the transition from traditional storytelling to modern literary expression.

Fill in the blank: The **maqāmāt** relied heavily on rhetorical flourishes, while the novel presents a _____ narrative with developed characters.

Form Characteristics

Maqāmāt Episodic prose combining **rhetorical flourishes, satire, and poetry**, often showcasing linguistic artistry.

Hikāyāt Oral folk tales, usually **moral or entertaining**, reflecting popular culture and storytelling traditions.



Form Characteristics

Novel A sustained narrative with **developed characters, plot, and social/cultural themes**, emerging as a modern literary form.

Box 1.1: Distinction between Arabic prose forms and the novel

1.1.3 Early critical perspectives on defining the Arabic novel

Early Arab critics debated how to define the novel, since it was a relatively new form in Arabic literature. Some saw it as an imported genre influenced by European models, while others emphasised its adaptation to Arab cultural contexts. Over time, scholars recognised the novel as a legitimate Arabic literary form, capable of expressing both traditional values and modern concerns. This critical acceptance paved the way for the flourishing of the Arabic novel in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Fill in the blank: Early Arab critics debated whether the novel was an imported genre or an adaptation to _____ cultural contexts.



Plate 1.1: Early Arabic novel manuscripts and printed editions



Pilot questions 1.1

1. Who introduced the maqāmāt genre, and how does it differ from the Arabic novel?
2. Fill in the blank: The novel in Arabic literature differs from earlier prose traditions such as maqāmāt and _____.
3. What is the main distinction between the maqāmāt and the novel?
4. Fill in the blank: The maqāmāt relied heavily on rhetorical flourishes, while the novel presents a _____ narrative with developed characters.
5. What did early Arab critics debate about the definition of the Arabic novel?
6. Fill in the blank: Early Arab critics debated whether the novel was an imported genre or an adaptation to _____ cultural contexts.

1.2 Historical Background Of The Arabic Novel

1.2.1 Origins of narrative traditions in Arabic

The Arabic novel did not emerge in isolation. It was preceded by rich **narrative traditions** such as **folk tales** (قصص شعبية), **epics** (ملاحم), and the **maqāmāt** (a genre of rhymed prose mixed with poetry, often humorous or satirical). These earlier forms provided models of storytelling, characterisation, and moral lessons. They were widely circulated in oral and written forms, shaping the cultural environment in which the novel later developed.

Fill in the blank: The maqāmāt combined rhymed prose with _____, often in a humorous or satirical style.





Plate 1.2: Manuscript illustration of Arabic narrative traditions

1.2.2 Early influences from translated works and contact with European literature

During the 18th and 19th centuries, Arab intellectuals encountered European literary works through translation and cultural exchange. Translations of French and English novels introduced new narrative techniques, such as sustained plots and psychological characterisation. These influences encouraged Arab writers to adapt the novel form to their own cultural contexts, blending imported structures with indigenous themes.

Fill in the blank: Translations of French and English novels introduced new narrative techniques such as sustained plots and _____ characterisation.



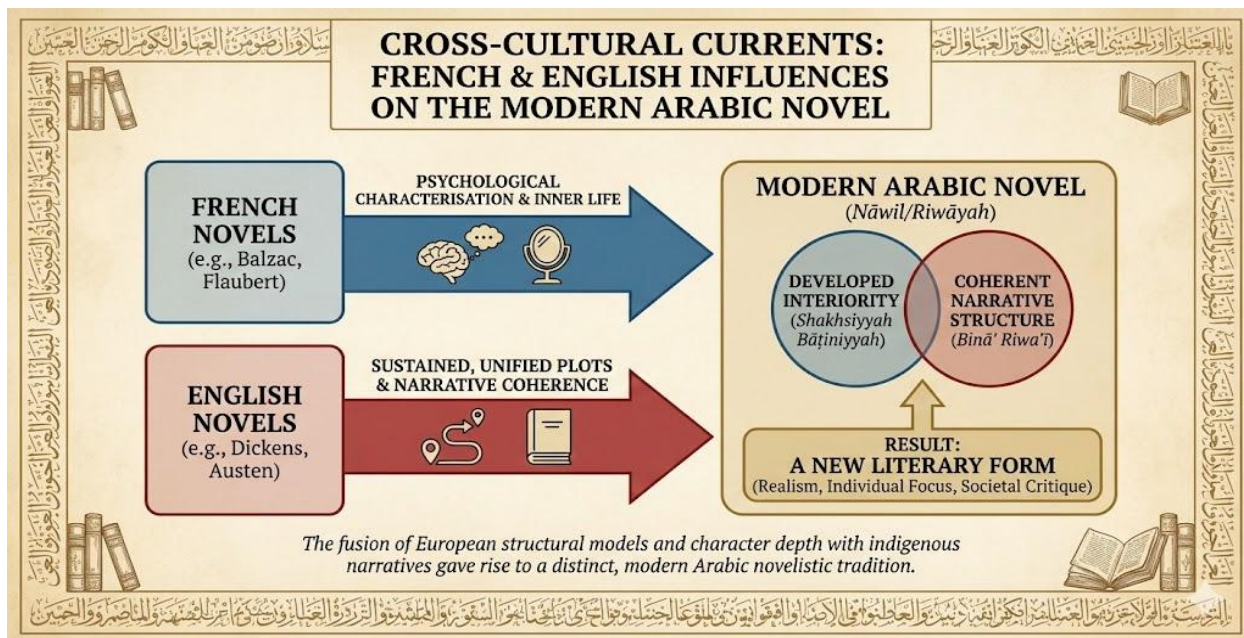


Figure 1.2: Influence of European literature on the Arabic novel

1.2.3 Emergence of the Arabic novel in the 19th century

The Arabic novel began to take shape in the 19th century, with pioneers such as **Jurjī Zaydān** and **Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal**. Zaydān wrote historical novels that combined entertainment with education, while Haykal's *Zaynab* (1914) is often considered the first modern Arabic novel, focusing on rural life and social issues. These early works demonstrated how the novel could serve as a mirror of society, addressing themes of identity, reform, and modernisation.

Fill in the blank: Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal's novel _____ (1914) is often considered the first modern Arabic novel.

Pioneer	Contribution
Jurjī Zaydān (1861–1914)	Wrote historical novels that combined entertainment with education , introducing readers to Arab history and identity.
Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal (1888–1956)	Authored <i>Zaynab</i> (1914), regarded as the first modern Arabic novel , focusing on rural life, social reform, and modernisation.



Early Novels Overall	Reflected themes of identity, reform, and modernisation , bridging tradition with modern literary forms.
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Box 1.2: Pioneers of the Arabic novel

Pilot questions 1.2

1. What narrative traditions preceded the Arabic novel?
2. Fill in the blank: The maqāmāt combined rhymed prose with _____, often in a humorous or satirical style.
3. How did translations of European novels influence the Arabic novel?
4. Fill in the blank: Translations of French and English novels introduced new narrative techniques such as sustained plots and _____ characterisation.
5. Who were the pioneers of the Arabic novel in the 19th century?
6. Fill in the blank: Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal's novel _____ (1914) is often considered the first modern Arabic novel.

1.3 Development Of The Arabic Novel In The Modern Period

1.3.1 Growth of the novel in the 20th century

The 20th century witnessed the **growth of the Arabic novel** as a dominant literary form. Writers began to use the novel to address pressing social, political, and cultural issues. Themes such as colonialism, nationalism, social reform, and the struggle for identity became central. The novel provided a platform for exploring the transformation of Arab societies, reflecting both the challenges and aspirations of the modern era.

Fill in the blank: In the 20th century, Arabic novelists often addressed themes such as colonialism, nationalism, and _____.



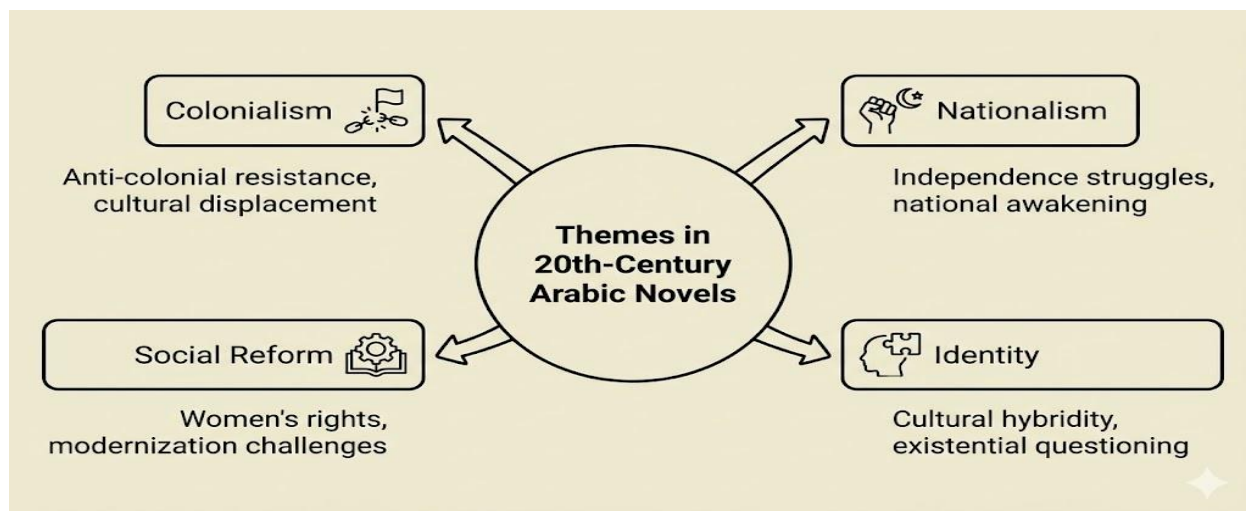


Figure 1.3: Themes in 20th-century Arabic novels

1.3.2 Contributions of pioneering novelists

Several pioneering novelists shaped the Arabic novel during this period. **Ṭāhā Ḥusayn** used the novel to explore intellectual and social reform, while **Najīb Maḥfūz**, awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1988, became renowned for his depictions of Egyptian society across generations. Maḥfūz's *Cairo Trilogy* is a landmark in Arabic literature, portraying family life, political change, and cultural transformation. These contributions established the Arabic novel as a respected literary genre worldwide.

Fill in the blank: Najīb Maḥfūz's *Cairo Trilogy* is a landmark in Arabic literature, portraying family life and _____ change.



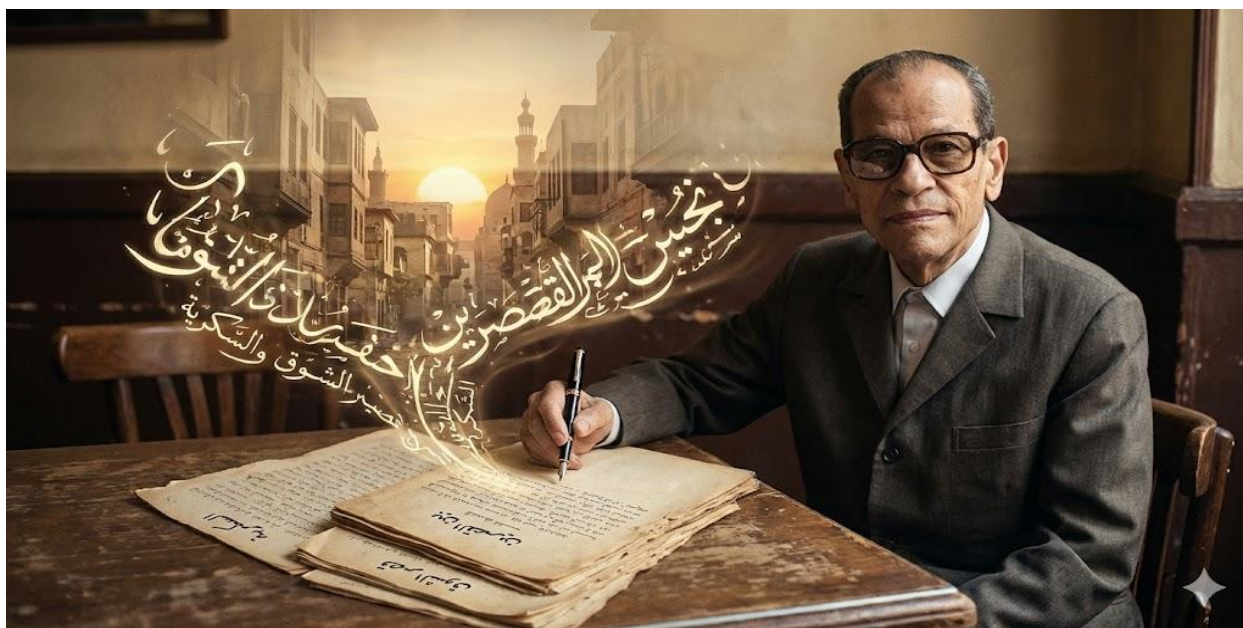


Plate 1.3: Najīb Mahfūz and the Cairo Trilogy

1.3.3 The Arabic novel as a reflection of societal change and identity

The Arabic novel became a mirror of societal change, reflecting shifts in politics, culture, and identity. Novels explored the tension between tradition and modernity, the role of women in society, and the impact of urbanisation. By presenting characters and plots rooted in everyday life, the novel allowed readers to engage with their own realities and question the direction of their societies.

Fill in the blank: The Arabic novel became a mirror of societal change, reflecting shifts in politics, culture, and _____.

Aspect	Explanation
Tradition vs Modernity	Novels explored the tension between preserving cultural traditions and embracing modern reforms.
Role of Women in Society	Fiction examined women's experiences, rights, and evolving roles within family and public life.



Impact of Urbanisation	Addressed the social and cultural changes brought by city life, migration, and modern infrastructure.
Cultural and Political Identity	Reflected struggles with colonialism, nationalism, and identity formation in a changing Arab world.

Box 1.3: The Arabic novel as a reflection of society

Pilot questions 1.3

1. What themes characterised the growth of the Arabic novel in the 20th century?
2. Fill in the blank: In the 20th century, Arabic novelists often addressed themes such as colonialism, nationalism, and _____.
3. Who were two pioneering novelists in the modern Arabic novel?
4. Fill in the blank: Najīb Maḥfūẓ's *Cairo Trilogy* is a landmark in Arabic literature, portraying family life and _____ change.
5. How did the Arabic novel reflect societal change and identity?
6. Fill in the blank: The Arabic novel became a mirror of societal change, reflecting shifts in politics, culture, and _____.

1.4 Significance Of The Arabic Novel In Literary Studies

1.4.1 Role of the novel in shaping modern Arabic literature

The **Arabic novel** has played a central role in shaping modern Arabic literature. Unlike earlier prose forms, the novel provided a sustained narrative that could capture the complexities of modern life. It became a tool for writers to explore social realities, political struggles, and cultural transformations. By doing so, the novel helped establish modern Arabic literature as a dynamic field that engages with contemporary issues.



Fill in the blank: The Arabic novel provided a sustained narrative that could capture the complexities of _____ life.

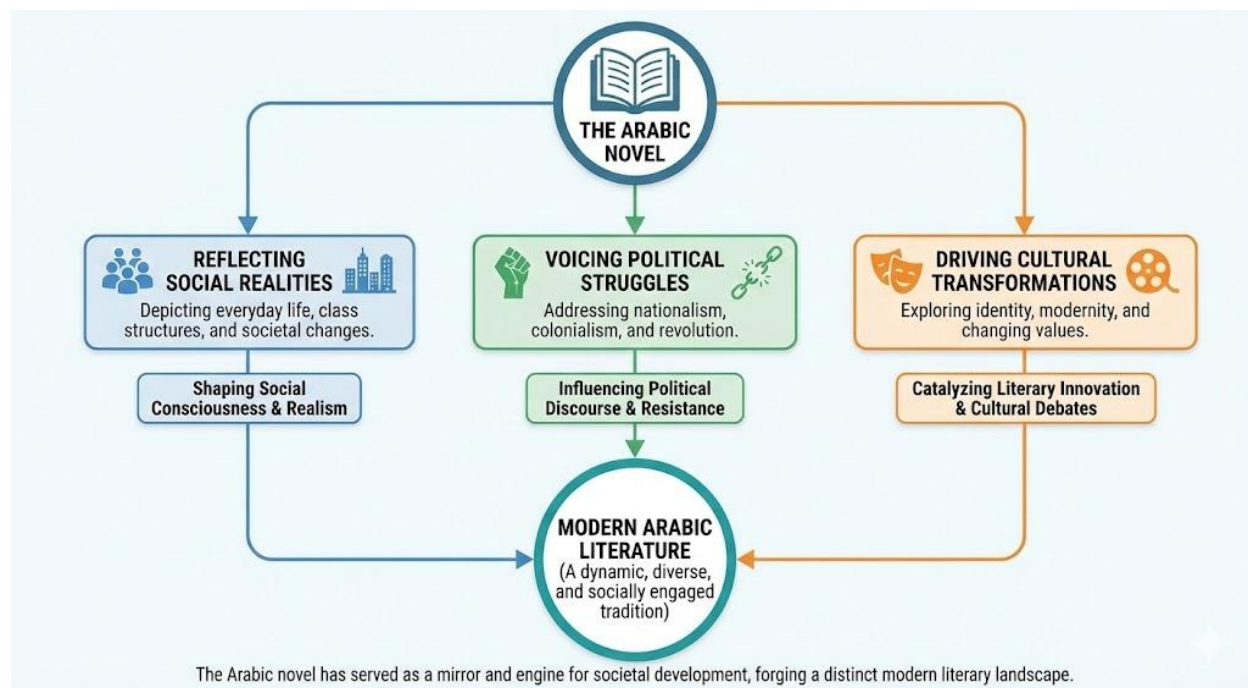


Figure 1.4: Role of the Arabic novel in modern Arabic literature

1.4.2 The novel as a medium for cultural and political expression

The Arabic novel became a powerful medium for **cultural and political expression**. Writers used it to critique colonialism, highlight social injustices, and advocate for reform. Novels often reflected the voices of marginalised groups, including women and the poor, giving them representation in literature. In this way, the novel served not only as entertainment but also as a platform for dialogue and change within Arab societies.

Fill in the blank: The Arabic novel became a powerful medium for cultural and _____ expression.

Role	Explanation
Critiqued Colonialism and Social Injustice	Novels exposed the realities of foreign domination and inequality, challenging oppressive structures.



Advocated for Reform and Modernisation	Writers used fiction to promote social progress, education, and cultural renewal.
Represented Marginalised Voices	Literature gave space to women, peasants, and other underrepresented groups, amplifying their experiences.
Platform for Dialogue and Change	The novel became a medium for debate, fostering awareness and collective action in society.

Box 1.4: The novel as cultural and political expression

1.4.3 Importance of studying the Arabic novel in university-level Arabic courses

Studying the Arabic novel at university level is important because it allows learners to engage with both literary artistry and historical context. The novel provides insight into how Arab societies responded to modernisation, colonialism, and cultural change. It also helps learners develop analytical skills by examining narrative techniques, themes, and characterisation. For students of Arabic literature, the novel is therefore a vital subject that connects tradition with modernity.

Fill in the blank: Studying the Arabic novel helps learners develop analytical skills by examining narrative techniques, themes, and _____.





Plate 1.4: University study of Arabic novels

Pilot questions 1.4

1. How did the Arabic novel shape modern Arabic literature?
2. Fill in the blank: The Arabic novel provided a sustained narrative that could capture the complexities of _____ life.
3. In what ways did the Arabic novel serve as a medium for cultural and political expression?
4. Fill in the blank: The Arabic novel became a powerful medium for cultural and _____ expression.
5. Why is the study of the Arabic novel important in university-level Arabic courses?
6. Fill in the blank: Studying the Arabic novel helps learners develop analytical skills by examining narrative techniques, themes, and _____.

Series Summary



This Series has introduced you to the definition and historical development of the Arabic novel, setting the foundation for your study of modern Arabic literature. Its purpose was to clarify how the novel differs from earlier prose traditions, trace its origins, and highlight its role in shaping cultural and literary identity. By engaging with this material, you have seen how the novel emerged as a distinct genre, influenced by both indigenous narrative traditions and European literary models.

We began by defining the Arabic novel and distinguishing it from forms such as the *maqāmāt* and *hikāyāt*. We then explored its historical background, including folk tales, epics, and the impact of translated works, before examining its emergence in the 19th century through pioneers like Jurjī Zaydān and Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal. Following that, we considered its growth in the 20th century, focusing on themes of social reform, identity, and the contributions of figures such as Ṭāhā Ḥusayn and Najīb Maḥfūz. Finally, we reflected on the significance of the Arabic novel in literary studies, emphasising its role as a medium for cultural and political expression. In line with the Series Learning Outcomes, you should now be able to define the Arabic novel, explain its critical perspectives, describe its historical roots, analyse external influences, trace its development, evaluate its thematic growth, assess the contributions of major novelists, and explain its importance in modern literary scholarship.



Glossary of Terms

- **Arabic novel:** A modern prose form in Arabic literature that presents a sustained narrative with developed characters, plot, and themes, often reflecting social, cultural, and political realities.
- **Epics (malāḥim):** Long narrative poems or stories in Arabic tradition that recount heroic deeds and legendary events, serving as precursors to the novel.
- **Folk tales (qīṣaṣ sha‘biyya):** Traditional oral stories passed down through generations in Arab societies, often containing moral lessons or entertainment, and influencing the later development of the novel.
- **Hikāyāt:** Arabic folk stories or tales, usually short and entertaining, which differ from the novel by lacking sustained narrative and complex characterisation.
- **Jurjī Zaydān:** A 19th-century Arab novelist known for historical novels that combined education with entertainment, considered a pioneer of the Arabic novel.
- **Maqāmāt:** A classical Arabic prose genre characterised by rhymed prose interspersed with poetry, often satirical or humorous, distinct from the sustained narrative of the novel.
- **Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal:** An Egyptian writer whose novel *Zaynab* (1914) is often regarded as the first modern Arabic novel, focusing on rural life and social issues.
- **Najīb Maḥfūz:** An Egyptian novelist awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1988, best known for the *Cairo Trilogy*, which portrays Egyptian society across generations.
- **Narrative traditions:** Storytelling practices in Arabic culture, including folk tales, epics, and maqāmāt, which provided the foundation for the later emergence of the novel.
- **Ṭahā Ḥusayn:** An influential Egyptian intellectual and novelist who used fiction to explore themes of social reform and cultural identity in modern Arabic literature.
- **Zaynab:** A novel written by Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal in 1914, widely considered the first modern Arabic novel, notable for its depiction of rural Egyptian life.



Concept Check Questions [Series 1]

Objective questions

1. Who compiled the historical novels that combined entertainment with education in the 19th century? (Linked to SLO 1.5)
2. Fill in the blank: Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal's novel _____ (1914) is often considered the first modern Arabic novel. (Linked to SLO 1.5)
3. Which Egyptian novelist won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1988? (Linked to SLO 1.7)
4. Fill in the blank: The Arabic novel provided a sustained narrative that could capture the complexities of _____ life. (Linked to SLO 1.8)
5. Which earlier Arabic prose form combined rhymed prose with poetry, often satirical in nature? (Linked to SLO 1.1)

Short-answer questions

6. Define the Arabic novel and explain how it differs from maqāmāt and hikāyāt. (Linked to SLO 1.1)
7. Explain one early critical perspective on the definition of the Arabic novel. (Linked to SLO 1.2)
8. Describe how translations of European novels influenced the Arabic novel. (Linked to SLO 1.4)
9. Identify two major themes explored in Arabic novels during the 20th century. (Linked to SLO 1.6)
10. Why is the study of the Arabic novel important in university-level Arabic courses? (Linked to SLO 1.8)



Long-answer questions

11. Analyse the historical background of the Arabic novel, focusing on its roots in folk tales, epics, and maqāmāt. (Linked to SLO 1.3)
 - *Basic response*: Based on Series-only knowledge.
 - *Value-added response*: For outstanding learners who go beyond the basics.
12. Evaluate the contributions of Najīb Maḥfūz to Arabic literature, with reference to the Cairo Trilogy. (Linked to SLO 1.7)
 - *Basic response*: Based on Series-only knowledge.
 - *Value-added response*: For outstanding learners who go beyond the basics.
13. Discuss the significance of the Arabic novel as a medium for cultural and political expression. (Linked to SLO 1.8)
 - *Basic response*: Based on Series-only knowledge.
 - *Value-added response*: For outstanding learners who go beyond the basics.

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 1]

Objective questions

1. Jurjī Zaydān
2. Zaynab
3. Najīb Maḥfūz
4. Modern
5. Maqāmāt

Short-answer questions



6. The Arabic novel is a modern prose form with sustained narrative, developed characters, and social themes. It differs from *maqāmāt*, which are episodic and rhetorical, and *hikāyāt*, which are short folk tales.
7. Early critics debated whether the novel was an imported European genre or an adaptation to Arab cultural contexts.
8. Translations introduced sustained plots and psychological characterisation, encouraging Arab writers to adapt these techniques.
9. Colonialism and nationalism (others include social reform and identity).
10. It helps learners engage with literary artistry and historical context, while developing analytical skills.

Long-answer questions

11. *Basic response:* The Arabic novel has roots in folk tales, epics, and *maqāmāt*, which provided narrative structures and themes. These traditions shaped the cultural environment for the novel's emergence.

Value-added response: Outstanding learners may add that these traditions also reflected societal values and moral lessons, which were later adapted into modern novels to address identity and reform.

12. *Basic response:* Najīb Maḥfūz contributed significantly through works like the *Cairo Trilogy*, portraying Egyptian society and cultural transformation.

Value-added response: Learners may extend this by noting his Nobel Prize recognition and his influence on global perceptions of Arabic literature.

13. *Basic response:* The Arabic novel served as a medium for cultural and political expression, critiquing colonialism and representing marginalised voices.

Value-added response: Outstanding learners may add that the novel also fostered dialogue about modernisation, reform, and the role of women, making it a transformative force in Arab societies.



Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 1]

Part 1.1

1. Al-Hamadhānī introduced the maqāmāt genre, which differs from the Arabic novel by being episodic, rhetorical, and interspersed with poetry.
2. Hikāyāt.
3. The maqāmāt relied on rhetorical flourishes, while the novel presents a coherent narrative with developed characters.
4. Coherent.
5. Early Arab critics debated whether the novel was an imported genre or an adaptation to Arab cultural contexts.
6. Arab.

Part 1.2

1. Folk tales, epics, and maqāmāt.
2. Poetry.
3. Translations introduced sustained plots and psychological characterisation, encouraging Arab writers to adapt these techniques.
4. Psychological.
5. Jurjī Zaydān and Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal.
6. *Zaynab*.

Part 1.3

1. Colonialism, nationalism, social reform, and identity.
2. Identity.



3. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn and Najīb Maḥfūz.
4. Political.
5. By portraying everyday life, social issues, and cultural transformation, the Arabic novel reflected societal change and identity.
6. Identity.

Part 1.4

1. It provided a sustained narrative that captured the complexities of modern life, shaping modern Arabic literature.
2. Modern.
3. It critiqued colonialism, highlighted social injustices, advocated reform, and represented marginalised voices.
4. Political.
5. It connects tradition with modernity, develops analytical skills, and provides insight into Arab societies.
6. Characterisation.



References and Attributions [Series 1]

General References

- Allen, R. (1995). *The Arabic novel: An historical and critical introduction*. Syracuse University Press.
- Badawi, M. M. (1992). *Modern Arabic literature*. Cambridge University Press.
- El-Enany, R. (1993). *Naguib Mahfouz: The pursuit of meaning*. Routledge.
- Haykal, M. H. (1914). *Zaynab*. Cairo: Al-Muqtataf Press.
- Zaydān, J. (1891–1914). *Historical novels*. Beirut: Al-Hilal Press.

Illustrations

- *Figure 1.1: Distinction between the Arabic novel and earlier prose traditions*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate a diagram comparing the Arabic novel with maqāmāt and hikāyāt, highlighting differences in structure and purpose.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic novel vs maqamat hikayat OER diagram”
- *Box 1.1: Distinction between Arabic prose forms and the novel*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate a text box listing distinctions between maqāmāt, hikāyāt, and the Arabic novel.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic prose forms vs novel maqamat hikayat OER”
- *Plate 1.1: Early Arabic novel manuscripts and printed editions*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.



- Prompt: “Generate an image of early Arabic novel manuscripts or printed editions, showing the transition from traditional prose to modern narrative.”
- Suggested OER search string: “early Arabic novel manuscripts printed editions OER”
- *Plate 1.2: Manuscript illustration of Arabic narrative traditions*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate an image of an illustrated Arabic manuscript showing folk tales or maqāmāt traditions.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic folk tales maqamat manuscript illustration OER”
- *Figure 1.2: Influence of European literature on the Arabic novel*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate a diagram showing how French and English novels influenced the Arabic novel, highlighting sustained plots and psychological characterisation.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “European influence Arabic novel translation OER”
- *Box 1.2: Pioneers of the Arabic novel*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate a text box listing pioneers of the Arabic novel, including Jurjī Zaydān and Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Jurji Zaydan Muhammad Husayn Haykal pioneers Arabic novel OER”
- *Figure 1.3: Themes in 20th-century Arabic novels*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.



- Prompt: “Generate a diagram showing themes in 20th-century Arabic novels, including colonialism, nationalism, social reform, and identity.”
- Suggested OER search string: “themes 20th century Arabic novel OER”
- *Plate 1.3: Najīb Maḥfūẓ and the Cairo Trilogy*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate an image of Najīb Maḥfūẓ with manuscripts of the Cairo Trilogy, symbolising his contribution to Arabic literature.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Najib Mahfouz Cairo Trilogy Arabic novel OER”
- *Box 1.3: The Arabic novel as a reflection of society*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate a text box listing how the Arabic novel reflects societal change, including tradition vs modernity, women’s roles, and urbanisation.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic novel societal change identity OER”
- *Figure 1.4: Role of the Arabic novel in modern Arabic literature*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate a diagram showing how the Arabic novel shaped modern Arabic literature, highlighting social realities, political struggles, and cultural transformations.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic novel role modern Arabic literature OER”
- *Box 1.4: The novel as cultural and political expression*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate a text box listing how the Arabic novel served as cultural and political expression, including critique of colonialism and representation of marginalised voices.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic novel cultural political expression OER”



- *Plate 1.4: University study of Arabic novels*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate an image of students studying Arabic novels in a classroom or library setting.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “students studying Arabic novel university OER”



Series 2: Emergence And Development Of The Novel In Arabic Literature

Part 2.1 Early Emergence Of The Arabic Novel

- 2.1.1 Social and cultural conditions leading to the rise of the novel
- 2.1.2 Influence of translation movements and European contact
- 2.1.3 Early experiments in Arabic narrative prose before the novel's consolidation

Part 2.2 Pioneering Figures And Foundational Works

- 2.2.1 Jurjī Zaydān and the historical novel tradition
- 2.2.2 Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal and *Zaynab* as the first modern Arabic novel
- 2.2.3 Other early contributors and their thematic concerns

Part 2.3 Growth And Diversification In The 20th Century

- 2.3.1 Expansion of themes: nationalism, reform, and identity
- 2.3.2 Contributions of Ṭāhā Ḥusayn and Najīb Maḥfūz
- 2.3.3 Regional diversity: Egyptian, Levantine, and Maghrebi novel traditions

Part 2.4 The Arabic Novel As A Modern Literary Institution

- 2.4.1 Establishment of the novel in Arabic literary canon
- 2.4.2 Role of publishing houses, journals, and literary criticism
- 2.4.3 The novel as a reflection of Arab modernity and cultural transformation

Introduction

In the last Series, we explored the definition and historical background of the Arabic novel, tracing its roots in folk tales, epics, and maqāmāt, and examining how it became recognised as a modern literary form. Building on that foundation, this Series will guide you through the



emergence and development of the Arabic novel as it grew into a central genre of Arabic literature. Understanding this progression is crucial, as it reveals how the novel adapted to social change, cultural encounters, and intellectual movements across the Arab world.

The aim of this Series is to examine the conditions that led to the rise of the Arabic novel, highlight the contributions of pioneering figures, and analyse how the novel diversified and became established as a modern literary institution. By the end of the Series, you will be able to explain the factors behind its emergence, identify key authors and works, and evaluate its role in shaping Arabic literary culture.

We shall commence this Series by studying the early emergence of the Arabic novel, focusing on the social and cultural conditions as well as the influence of translation movements. Next, we will move on to pioneering figures such as Jurjī Zaydān and Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal, examining their foundational works. Following that, we will continue with the growth and diversification of the novel in the 20th century, considering themes of nationalism, reform, and identity, alongside contributions from Ṭāhā Ḥusayn and Najīb Maḥfūz. Finally, we will wrap up by discussing how the Arabic novel became a recognised literary institution, supported by publishing houses, journals, and criticism, and how it came to reflect Arab modernity and cultural transformation.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 2.1** explain the social and cultural conditions that led to the early emergence of the Arabic novel,
- **SLO 2.2** analyse the influence of translation movements and European literary contact on Arabic narrative prose,
- **SLO 2.3** describe early experiments in Arabic narrative prose before the novel was consolidated,
- **SLO 2.4** evaluate the contributions of Jurjī Zaydān to the historical novel tradition,



- **SLO 2.5** define the significance of Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal's *Zaynab* as the first modern Arabic novel,
- **SLO 2.6** identify other early contributors to the Arabic novel and outline their thematic concerns,
- **SLO 2.7** trace the growth and diversification of the Arabic novel in the 20th century, focusing on themes such as nationalism, reform, and identity,
- **SLO 2.8** assess the contributions of Ṭāhā Ḥusayn and Najīb Maḥfūz to the development of the Arabic novel,
- **SLO 2.9** compare regional traditions of the Arabic novel, including Egyptian, Levantine, and Maghrebi contributions, and
- **SLO 2.10** explain how the Arabic novel became established as a modern literary institution through publishing houses, journals, and literary criticism.

2.1 Early Emergence Of The Arabic Novel

2.1.1 Social and cultural conditions leading to the rise of the novel

The **social and cultural conditions** of the Arab world in the 18th and 19th centuries created fertile ground for the emergence of the novel. The decline of traditional literary forms such as the **maqāmāt** (a genre of rhymed prose interspersed with poetry, often satirical) and the rise of new educational institutions encouraged writers to experiment with modern prose. Urbanisation, the growth of printing presses, and the spread of newspapers also provided new platforms for storytelling. These changes reflected a society in transition, where literature began to mirror the realities of everyday life rather than relying solely on rhetorical flourishes.

Fill in the blank: The decline of traditional forms such as the maqāmāt and the rise of _____ institutions encouraged writers to experiment with modern prose.



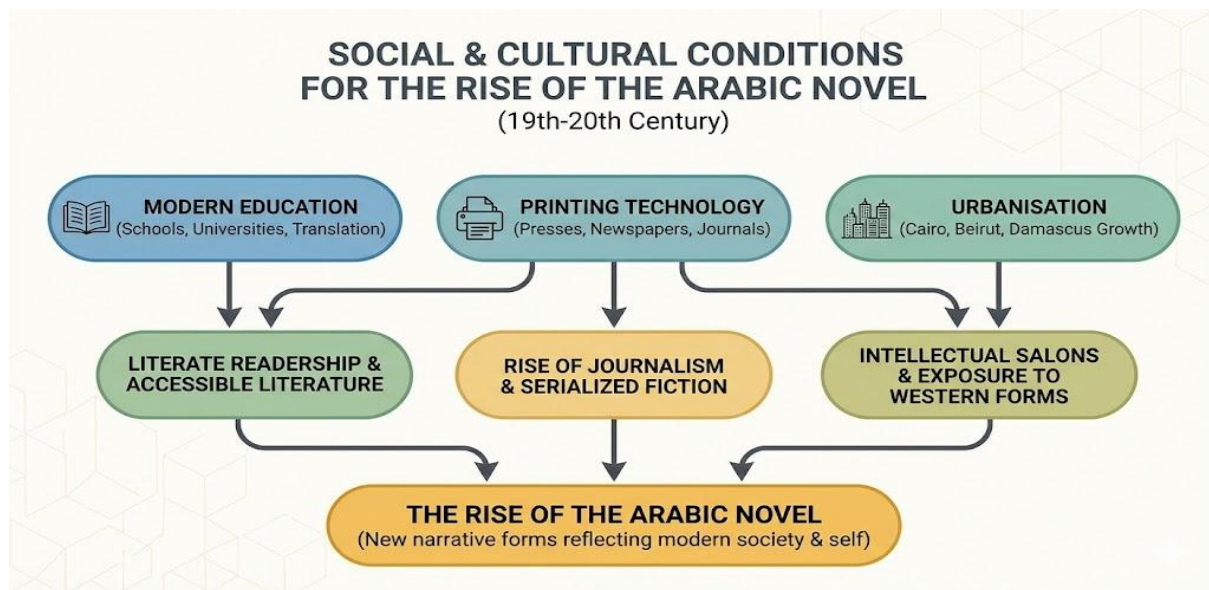


Figure 2.1: Social and cultural conditions behind the Arabic novel's emergence

2.1.2 Influence of translation movements and European contact

The **translation movements** of the 19th century played a crucial role in shaping the Arabic novel. Arab intellectuals translated French and English novels, introducing new narrative techniques such as sustained plots, psychological characterisation, and realism. Contact with European culture through travel, study, and colonial encounters further exposed Arab writers to modern literary forms. These influences did not replace Arabic traditions but rather blended with them, creating a hybrid form that was distinctly Arab yet modern.

Fill in the blank: Translation movements introduced new narrative techniques such as sustained plots and _____ characterisation.





Plate 2.1: Early Arabic translations of European novels

2.1.3 Early experiments in Arabic narrative prose before the novel's consolidation

Before the Arabic novel was fully consolidated, writers experimented with prose forms that resembled novels. These included extended stories published in newspapers and journals, often with social or moral themes. Some works imitated European models, while others drew heavily on Arabic traditions of storytelling. These experiments demonstrated the flexibility of Arabic prose and prepared the ground for the first recognised Arabic novels in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Fill in the blank: Early experiments in Arabic narrative prose were often published in _____ and journals, with social or moral themes.

Feature	Explanation
Extended Stories in Newspapers and Journals	Serialized narratives appeared in print, reaching a growing literate audience in the 19th century.
Blend of European Models and Arabic Traditions	Writers adapted European narrative techniques while retaining Arabic rhetorical and storytelling styles.
Focus on Social and Moral Themes	Early prose explored reform, education, morality, and cultural identity, reflecting societal concerns.



Prepared the Ground for the First Arabic Novels	These experiments laid the foundation for modern Arabic fiction, leading to works like <i>Zaynab</i> (1914).
--	--

Box 2.1: Early experiments in Arabic narrative prose

Pilot questions 2.1

1. What social and cultural conditions encouraged the rise of the Arabic novel?
2. Fill in the blank: The decline of traditional forms such as the *maqāmāt* and the rise of _____ institutions encouraged writers to experiment with modern prose.
3. How did translation movements influence the Arabic novel?
4. Fill in the blank: Translation movements introduced new narrative techniques such as sustained plots and _____ characterisation.
5. What were some features of early experiments in Arabic narrative prose before the novel's consolidation?
6. Fill in the blank: Early experiments in Arabic narrative prose were often published in _____ and journals, with social or moral themes.

2.2 Pioneering Figures And Foundational Works

2.2.1 Jurjī Zaydān and the historical novel tradition

Jurjī Zaydān (1861–1914) was a Lebanese-Egyptian intellectual and novelist who played a crucial role in shaping the Arabic novel. He is best known for his **historical novels**, which combined entertainment with education. Zaydān used narrative fiction to teach Arab readers about Islamic history, weaving stories around key events and figures. His novels were widely read and helped popularise the novel form in Arabic literature. By blending historical detail with imaginative storytelling, Zaydān demonstrated how the novel could serve both cultural and educational purposes.



Fill in the blank: Jurjī Zaydān used narrative fiction to teach Arab readers about _____ history.

Contribution	Explanation
Introduced Historical Novels	Wove Arab and Islamic history into narrative form, making the past accessible to readers.
Combined Entertainment with Education	Balanced storytelling with historical lessons, fostering cultural awareness.
Popularised the Novel Form	His serialized works in journals and books reached wide audiences, helping establish the novel in Arabic literature.
Blended Historical Detail with Imaginative Storytelling	Used creative plots and characters to enliven historical events, bridging fact and fiction.

Box 2.2: Jurjī Zaydān’s contributions

2.2.2 Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal and *Zaynab* as the first modern Arabic novel

Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal (1888–1956) is often credited with writing the first modern Arabic novel, *Zaynab* (1914). Unlike Zaydān’s historical novels, *Zaynab* focused on contemporary social issues, particularly rural Egyptian life and the struggles of ordinary people. It introduced realism into Arabic fiction, portraying characters with psychological depth and exploring themes such as love, tradition, and social reform. *Zaynab* marked a turning point in Arabic literature, showing that the novel could reflect everyday realities and address pressing social concerns.

Fill in the blank: Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal’s *Zaynab* (1914) focused on rural _____ life and social issues.





Plate 2.2: Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal and the novel Zaynab

2.2.3 Other early contributors and their thematic concerns

Beyond Zaydān and Haykal, other writers contributed to the early development of the Arabic novel. Some experimented with romantic themes, while others addressed political and social reform. These early contributors reflected the diversity of Arab societies and the growing interest in using literature as a means of cultural expression. Their works laid the groundwork for the expansion of the Arabic novel in the 20th century, ensuring that the genre would not be confined to a single style or theme.

Fill in the blank: Early contributors to the Arabic novel often addressed themes of romantic love, politics, and _____ reform.



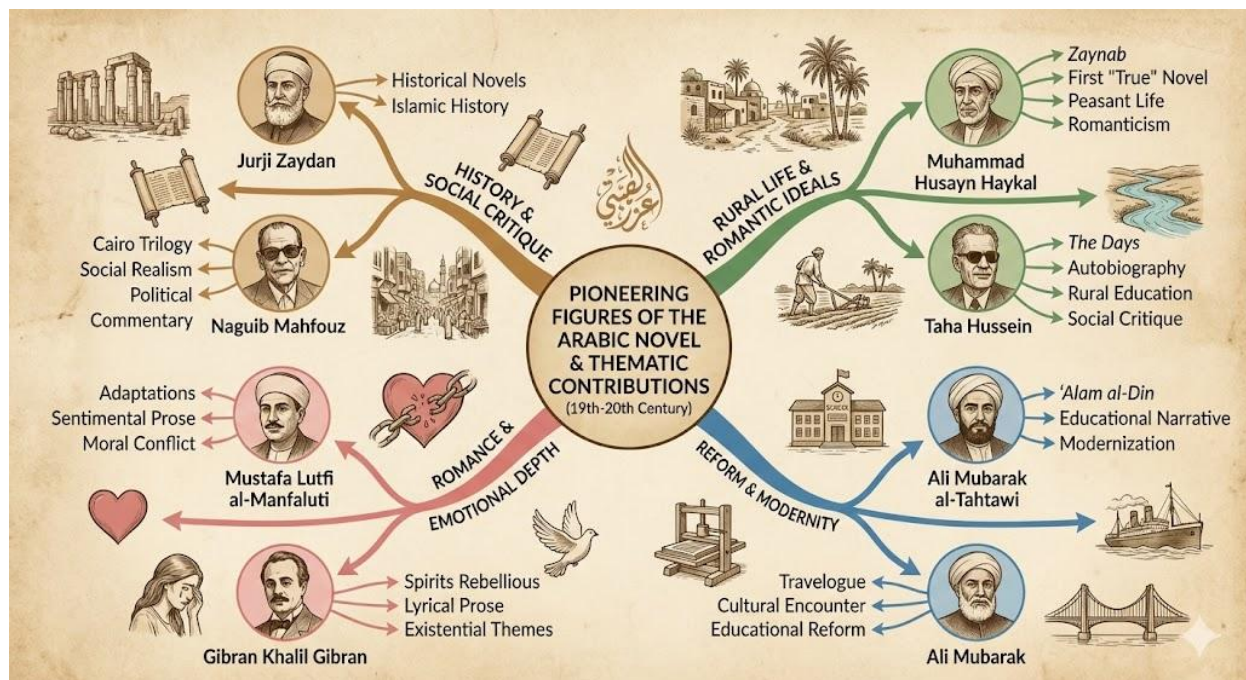


Figure 2.2: Pioneering figures and thematic concerns in early Arabic novels

Pilot questions 2.2

1. What was Jurjī Zaydān's main contribution to the Arabic novel?
2. Fill in the blank: Jurjī Zaydān used narrative fiction to teach Arab readers about _____ history.
3. Why is Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal's *Zaynab* considered the first modern Arabic novel?
4. Fill in the blank: Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal's *Zaynab* (1914) focused on rural _____ life and social issues.
5. What themes did other early contributors to the Arabic novel explore?
6. Fill in the blank: Early contributors to the Arabic novel often addressed themes of romantic love, politics, and _____ reform.



2.3 Growth And Diversification In The 20th Century

2.3.1 Expansion of themes: nationalism, reform, and identity

During the 20th century, the Arabic novel expanded significantly in scope and subject matter. Writers began to use the novel to explore themes such as **nationalism** (the struggle for independence and unity), **social reform** (addressing issues like education, poverty, and inequality), and **identity** (the tension between tradition and modernity). These themes reflected the political and cultural transformations taking place across the Arab world, making the novel a powerful mirror of society.

Fill in the blank: In the 20th century, Arabic novelists often explored themes of nationalism, social reform, and _____.

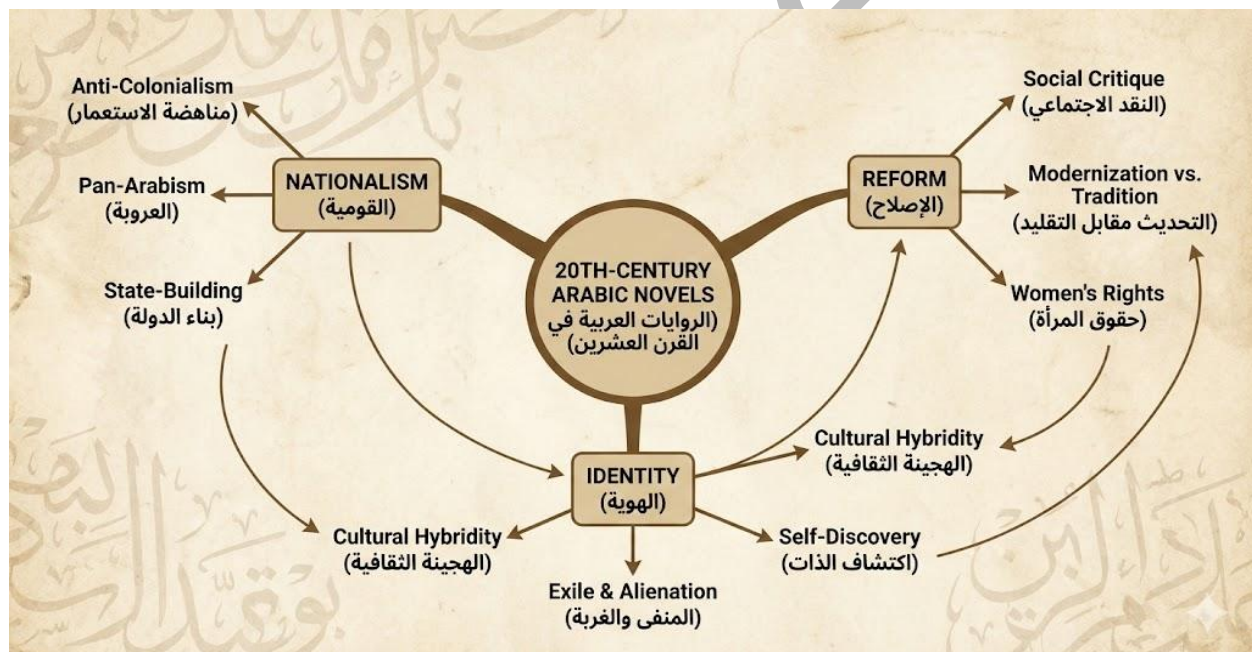


Figure 2.3: Expansion of themes in 20th-century Arabic novels

2.3.2 Contributions of Ṭāhā Ḥusayn and Najīb Maḥfūz

Ṭāhā Ḥusayn (1889–1973) was a leading intellectual who used the novel to promote social reform and cultural renewal. His works often challenged traditional norms and encouraged critical thinking. **Najīb Maḥfūz** (1911–2006), awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1988, became the most celebrated Arab novelist. His *Cairo Trilogy* depicted Egyptian society across



generations, blending realism with philosophical depth. Together, these figures demonstrated the novel's ability to engage with both everyday life and broader intellectual debates.

Fill in the blank: Najīb Maḥfūz's *Cairo Trilogy* depicted Egyptian society across _____.

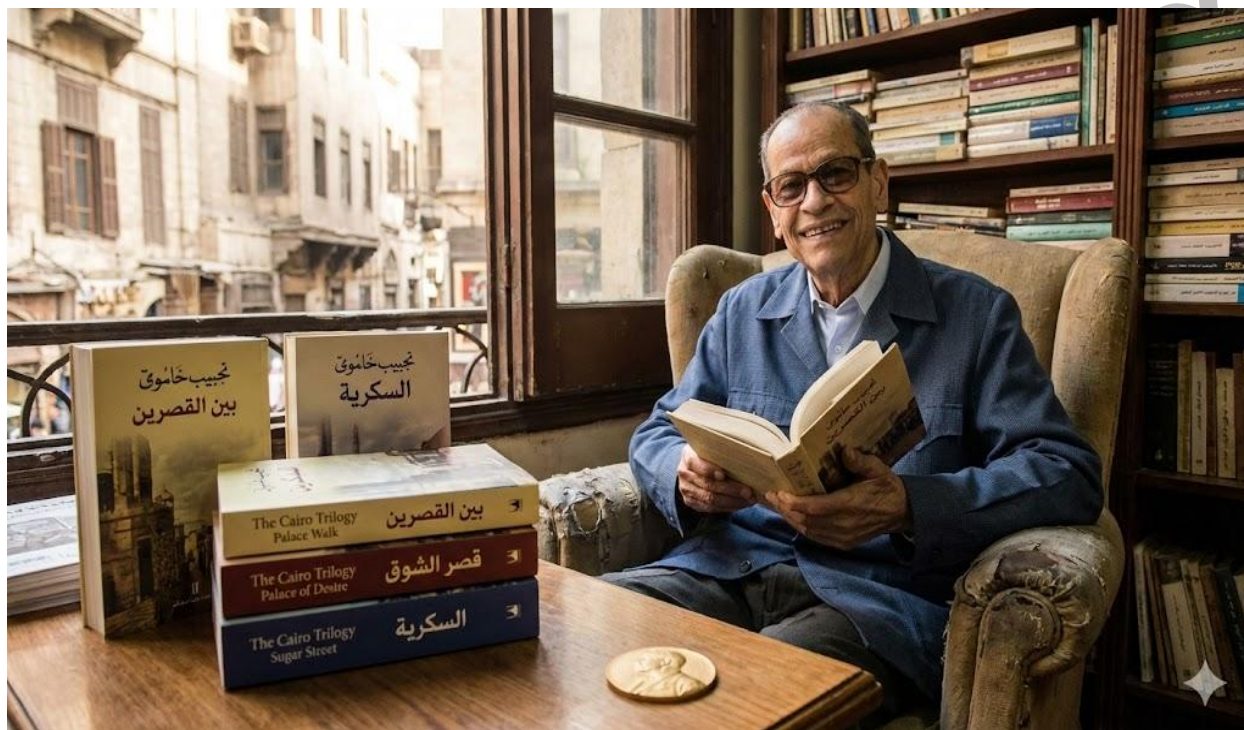


Plate 2.3: Najīb Maḥfūz and the Cairo Trilogy

2.3.3 Regional diversity: Egyptian, Levantine, and Maghrebi novel traditions

The Arabic novel diversified regionally during the 20th century. In **Egypt**, writers focused on urban life, family structures, and political change. In the **Levant**, novels often addressed themes of exile, identity, and the impact of colonialism. In the **Maghreb**, writers explored cultural hybridity, reflecting the influence of both Arabic and French traditions. This regional diversity enriched the Arabic novel, making it a truly pan-Arab literary form that expressed varied experiences while maintaining shared cultural roots.

Fill in the blank: In the Maghreb, Arabic novels often reflected cultural hybridity influenced by both Arabic and _____ traditions.

Tradition	Themes and Focus
-----------	------------------



Egyptian Tradition	Explored urban life, family dynamics, and political change , often centered in Cairo and reflecting the rise of modern society.
Levantine Tradition	Focused on exile, identity, and colonialism , portraying displacement and the search for cultural belonging.
Maghrebi Tradition	Highlighted cultural hybridity , blending Arabic and French influences, and addressing postcolonial realities.

Box 2.3: Regional diversity in the Arabic novel

Pilot questions 2.3

1. What themes characterised the expansion of the Arabic novel in the 20th century?
2. Fill in the blank: In the 20th century, Arabic novelists often explored themes of nationalism, social reform, and _____.
3. What contributions did Ṭāhā Husayn and Najīb Maḥfūz make to the Arabic novel?
4. Fill in the blank: Najīb Maḥfūz's *Cairo Trilogy* depicted Egyptian society across _____.
5. How did regional traditions diversify the Arabic novel in the 20th century?
6. Fill in the blank: In the Maghreb, Arabic novels often reflected cultural hybridity influenced by both Arabic and _____ traditions.

2.4 The Arabic Novel As A Modern Literary Institution

2.4.1 Establishment of the novel in Arabic literary canon

By the mid-20th century, the **Arabic novel** had firmly established itself within the literary canon. Unlike earlier prose forms, the novel was now recognised as a legitimate genre capable of addressing intellectual, cultural, and social concerns. Literary critics began to study novels alongside poetry and classical prose, acknowledging their artistic and cultural value. This



institutional recognition marked a turning point, as the novel became central to modern Arabic literary studies.

Fill in the blank: By the mid-20th century, the Arabic novel was recognised as a legitimate genre within the Arabic _____.

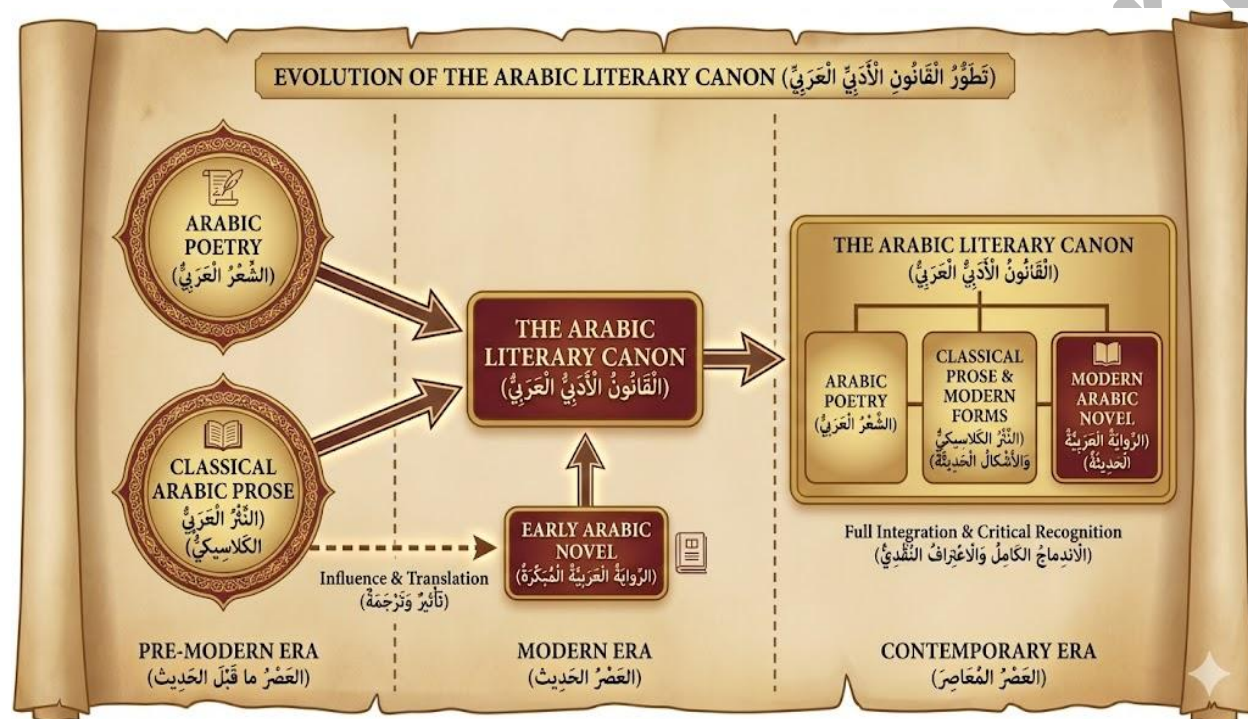


Figure 2.4: The Arabic novel in the literary canon

2.4.2 Role of publishing houses, journals, and literary criticism

The growth of **publishing houses** and **literary journals** in the Arab world provided vital platforms for novelists. These institutions enabled the circulation of novels to wider audiences and fostered literary debate. Journals often published serialized novels, making them accessible to readers who could not afford books. At the same time, **literary criticism** developed as a discipline, with scholars analysing narrative techniques, themes, and cultural significance. Together, these institutions supported the novel's rise as a modern literary form.

Fill in the blank: Literary journals often published _____ novels, making them accessible to wider audiences.



Institution	Role
Publishing Houses	Facilitated the production and distribution of novels, making them accessible to wider audiences.
Literary Journals	Published serialized novels, reviews, and essays , helping to popularize the novel form and engage readers.
Literary Criticism	Provided analysis of narrative techniques, themes, and cultural impact , shaping the development of Arabic fiction.

Box 2.4: Institutions supporting the Arabic novel

2.4.3 The novel as a reflection of Arab modernity and cultural transformation

The Arabic novel became a reflection of **Arab modernity**, capturing the cultural transformations of the 20th century. Writers used the novel to explore the tension between tradition and modernity, the rise of nationalism, and the impact of colonialism and independence. Novels also addressed issues such as urbanisation, gender roles, and generational change. By presenting these themes through relatable characters and plots, the novel offered readers a way to engage with their own societies and imagine possible futures.

Fill in the blank: The Arabic novel reflected Arab modernity by exploring the tension between tradition and _____.





Plate 2.4: The Arabic novel as a reflection of Arab modernity

Pilot questions 2.4

1. How did the Arabic novel become established in the literary canon?
2. Fill in the blank: By the mid-20th century, the Arabic novel was recognised as a legitimate genre within the Arabic _____.
3. What role did publishing houses and journals play in supporting the Arabic novel?
4. Fill in the blank: Literary journals often published _____ novels, making them accessible to wider audiences.
5. How did the Arabic novel reflect Arab modernity and cultural transformation?
6. Fill in the blank: The Arabic novel reflected Arab modernity by exploring the tension between tradition and _____.

Series Summary

This Series has examined the emergence and development of the Arabic novel, highlighting the conditions that enabled its rise and the figures who shaped its early trajectory. Its purpose was to



show how the novel evolved from experimental prose into a recognised literary institution, reflecting the cultural, social, and political transformations of the Arab world. By engaging with this material, you have seen how the Arabic novel became a central genre in modern Arabic literature, bridging tradition and modernity.

We began by exploring the early social and cultural conditions that encouraged the novel's rise, including education, printing, and translation movements. We then studied pioneering figures such as Jurjī Zaydān, who popularised the historical novel, and Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal, whose *Zaynab* marked the first modern Arabic novel. Following that, we considered the growth and diversification of the novel in the 20th century, focusing on themes of nationalism, reform, and identity, alongside contributions from Ṭāhā Ḥusayn and Najīb Maḥfūz, as well as regional traditions across Egypt, the Levant, and the Maghreb. Finally, we reflected on how the Arabic novel became a modern literary institution, supported by publishing houses, journals, and criticism, and how it came to embody Arab modernity. In line with the Series Learning Outcomes, you should now be able to explain the conditions of its emergence, analyse external influences, evaluate the contributions of key figures, trace its thematic growth, compare regional traditions, and explain its establishment as a central part of Arabic literary culture.

Glossary of Terms

- **Cairo Trilogy:** A series of three novels by Najīb Maḥfūz that depict Egyptian society across generations, exploring themes of family, politics, and cultural change.
- **Historical novel:** A type of novel that blends fictional storytelling with real historical events and figures, used by Jurjī Zaydān to educate Arab readers about Islamic history.
- **Identity:** A recurring theme in Arabic novels, referring to the tension between tradition and modernity, and the search for cultural and personal belonging.
- **Jurjī Zaydān:** A Lebanese-Egyptian novelist and intellectual (1861–1914) who popularised the historical novel in Arabic literature, combining entertainment with education.



- **Literary canon:** The recognised body of works considered central and valuable in a literary tradition. By the mid-20th century, the Arabic novel became part of the Arabic literary canon.
- **Literary criticism:** The study and analysis of literature, including narrative techniques, themes, and cultural significance. It developed as a discipline alongside the rise of the Arabic novel.
- **Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal:** An Egyptian writer (1888–1956) credited with writing *Zaynab* (1914), regarded as the first modern Arabic novel focusing on rural Egyptian life and social issues.
- **Najīb Maḥfūz:** An Egyptian novelist (1911–2006) awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1988, celebrated for his realistic depictions of Egyptian society and philosophical depth.
- **Nationalism:** A theme in 20th-century Arabic novels, reflecting struggles for independence, unity, and identity in Arab societies.
- **Publishing houses:** Institutions that produced and distributed Arabic novels, helping them reach wider audiences and establish the genre as a modern literary form.
- **Serialized novels:** Novels published in instalments in literary journals, making them accessible to readers who could not afford complete books.
- **Social reform:** A theme in Arabic novels addressing issues such as education, poverty, inequality, and the need for cultural renewal.
- **Ṭahā Ḥusayn:** An Egyptian intellectual and novelist (1889–1973) who used fiction to promote social reform and cultural renewal, challenging traditional norms.
- **Translation movements:** Efforts in the 19th century to translate European novels into Arabic, introducing new narrative techniques such as realism and psychological characterisation.



- **Zaynab:** A novel written by Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal in 1914, widely considered the first modern Arabic novel, notable for its depiction of rural Egyptian life and social issues.



Concept Check Questions [Series 2]

Objective questions

1. Who is credited with writing the first modern Arabic novel *Zaynab* (1914)? (Linked to SLO 2.5)
2. Fill in the blank: Jurjī Zaydān popularised the _____ novel in Arabic literature. (Linked to SLO 2.4)
3. Which Arab novelist won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1988? (Linked to SLO 2.8)
4. Fill in the blank: In the Maghreb, Arabic novels often reflected cultural hybridity influenced by both Arabic and _____ traditions. (Linked to SLO 2.9)
5. By the mid-20th century, the Arabic novel was recognised as part of the Arabic literary _____. (Linked to SLO 2.10)

Short-answer questions

6. Explain how translation movements influenced the emergence of the Arabic novel. (Linked to SLO 2.2)
7. Describe the social and cultural conditions that encouraged the rise of the Arabic novel. (Linked to SLO 2.1)
8. Identify two thematic concerns explored in Arabic novels during the 20th century. (Linked to SLO 2.7)
9. What role did publishing houses and journals play in supporting the Arabic novel? (Linked to SLO 2.10)
10. Compare the thematic focus of Egyptian and Levantine novel traditions in the 20th century. (Linked to SLO 2.9)

Long-answer questions

11. Analyse the contributions of Jurjī Zaydān to the Arabic novel, focusing on his historical works. (Linked to SLO 2.4)



- *Basic response*: Based on Series-only knowledge.
- *Value-added response*: For outstanding learners who go beyond the basics.

12. Evaluate the significance of Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal's *Zaynab* in the development of the Arabic novel. (Linked to SLO 2.5)

- *Basic response*: Based on Series-only knowledge.
- *Value-added response*: For outstanding learners who go beyond the basics.

13. Discuss the contributions of Ṭāhā Ḥusayn and Najīb Maḥfūz to the growth of the Arabic novel in the 20th century. (Linked to SLO 2.8)

- *Basic response*: Based on Series-only knowledge.
- *Value-added response*: For outstanding learners who go beyond the basics.

Explain how the Arabic novel became a reflection of Arab modernity and cultural transformation. (Linked to SLO 2.10)

- *Basic response*: Based on Series-only knowledge.
- *Value-added response*: For outstanding learners who go beyond the basics.

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 2]

Objective questions

1. Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal
2. Historical
3. Najīb Maḥfūz
4. French
5. Canon

Short-answer questions



6. Translation movements introduced sustained plots, realism, and psychological characterisation, blending European techniques with Arabic traditions.
7. The rise of education, printing presses, newspapers, and urbanisation created conditions for the novel's emergence.
8. Nationalism and social reform (others include identity and modernity).
9. Publishing houses distributed novels widely, while journals published serialized works and criticism, supporting literary debate.
10. Egyptian novels often focused on urban life and political change, while Levantine novels explored exile, identity, and colonialism.

Long-answer questions

11. *Basic response:* Jurjī Zaydān contributed by writing historical novels that combined entertainment with education, popularising the novel form.
Value-added response: Outstanding learners may add that Zaydān's novels educated readers about Islamic history and demonstrated how fiction could serve cultural and intellectual purposes.
12. *Basic response:* *Zaynab* is considered the first modern Arabic novel, focusing on rural Egyptian life and social issues.
Value-added response: Learners may extend this by noting its realism, psychological depth, and its role in shifting Arabic literature towards everyday realities.
13. *Basic response:* Ṭāhā Ḥusayn promoted social reform through fiction, while Najīb Maḥfūz depicted Egyptian society across generations, earning global recognition.
Value-added response: Outstanding learners may add that Maḥfūz's Nobel Prize elevated Arabic literature internationally, while Ḥusayn's intellectual influence shaped cultural debates.
14. *Basic response:* The Arabic novel reflected Arab modernity by exploring tradition versus modernity, nationalism, and social change.
Value-added response: Outstanding learners may add that novels also addressed gender



roles, generational tensions, and urbanisation, making them a mirror of Arab societies in transition.

Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 2]

Part 2.1

1. The rise of education, printing presses, newspapers, and urbanisation.
2. Educational.
3. They introduced sustained plots, realism, and psychological characterisation.
4. Psychological.
5. Extended stories in newspapers and journals, blending European models with Arabic traditions, often with social or moral themes.
6. Newspapers.

Part 2.2

1. He popularised the historical novel, combining entertainment with education.
2. Islamic.
3. It was the first modern Arabic novel, focusing on rural Egyptian life and social issues, introducing realism and psychological depth.
4. Egyptian.
5. Romantic love, politics, and social reform.
6. Social.

Part 2.3

1. Nationalism, social reform, and identity.
2. Identity.



3. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn promoted social reform and cultural renewal, while Najīb Maḥfūz depicted Egyptian society across generations and gained global recognition.
4. Generations.
5. Egyptian novels focused on urban life and politics, Levantine novels explored exile and colonialism, and Maghrebi novels reflected cultural hybridity.
6. French.

Part 2.4

1. It was recognised as a legitimate genre within the Arabic literary canon.
2. Canon.
3. Publishing houses distributed novels, journals published serialized works, and criticism analysed themes and techniques.
4. Serialized.
5. By exploring tradition versus modernity, nationalism, gender roles, and social change.
6. Modernity.

References and Attributions [Series 2]

General References

- Allen, R. (1995). *The Arabic novel: An historical and critical introduction*. Syracuse University Press.
- Badawi, M. M. (1992). *Modern Arabic literature*. Cambridge University Press.
- El-Enany, R. (1993). *Naguib Mahfouz: The pursuit of meaning*. Routledge.
- Haykal, M. H. (1914). *Zaynab*. Cairo: Al-Muqtataf Press.
- Zaydān, J. (1891–1914). *Historical novels*. Beirut: Al-Hilal Press.



Illustrations

- *Figure 2.1: Social and cultural conditions behind the Arabic novel's emergence*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate a diagram showing social and cultural conditions that led to the rise of the Arabic novel, including education, printing, and urbanisation.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic novel social cultural conditions emergence OER”
- *Plate 2.1: Early Arabic translations of European novels*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate an image of early Arabic translations of European novels, showing books or manuscripts in Arabic script.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic translations European novels 19th century OER”
- *Box 2.1: Early experiments in Arabic narrative prose*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate a text box listing early experiments in Arabic narrative prose before the novel's consolidation.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “early Arabic narrative prose experiments OER”
- *Box 2.2: Jurjī Zaydān's contributions*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate a text box listing Jurjī Zaydān's contributions to the Arabic novel.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Jurji Zaydan historical Arabic novels OER”
- *Plate 2.2: Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal and the novel Zaynab*



- Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
- Prompt: “Generate an image of Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal with an early edition of his novel Zaynab.”
- Suggested OER search string: “Muhammad Husayn Haykal Zaynab Arabic novel OER”
- *Figure 2.2: Pioneering figures and thematic concerns in early Arabic novels*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate a diagram showing pioneering figures of the Arabic novel and their thematic contributions, including history, rural life, romance, and reform.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “early contributors Arabic novel themes OER”
- *Figure 2.3: Expansion of themes in 20th-century Arabic novels*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate a diagram showing themes in 20th-century Arabic novels, including nationalism, reform, and identity.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “themes 20th century Arabic novel nationalism reform identity OER”
- *Plate 2.3: Najīb Maḥfūz and the Cairo Trilogy*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate an image of Najīb Maḥfūz with copies of the Cairo Trilogy, symbolising his contribution to Arabic literature.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Najib Mahfouz Cairo Trilogy Arabic novel OER”
- *Box 2.3: Regional diversity in the Arabic novel*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate a text box listing regional diversity in the Arabic novel, including Egyptian, Levantine, and Maghrebi traditions.”



- Suggested OER search string: “regional diversity Arabic novel Egyptian Levantine Maghrebi OER”
- *Figure 2.4: The Arabic novel in the literary canon*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate a diagram showing how the Arabic novel became part of the Arabic literary canon, alongside poetry and classical prose.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic novel literary canon establishment OER”
- *Box 2.4: Institutions supporting the Arabic novel*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate a text box listing institutions that supported the Arabic novel, including publishing houses, journals, and criticism.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “publishing houses journals Arabic novel criticism OER”
- *Plate 2.4: The Arabic novel as a reflection of Arab modernity*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate an image of an Arab literary conference or book fair showcasing Arabic novels as symbols of modernity and cultural transformation.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic novel modernity cultural transformation OER”



Series 3: Core Components Of The Novel

Part 3.1 Plot And Narrative Structure

- 3.1.1 Definition of plot in the Arabic novel
- 3.1.2 Narrative techniques: linear, episodic, and flashback
- 3.1.3 Role of conflict and resolution in shaping the story

Part 3.2 Characterisation And Perspective

- 3.2.1 Types of characters: protagonist, antagonist, and supporting figures
- 3.2.2 Methods of characterisation: direct description, dialogue, and action
- 3.2.3 Narrative perspective: first-person, third-person, and omniscient voice in Arabic novels

Part 3.3 Setting And Atmosphere

- 3.3.1 Importance of setting in Arabic novels (urban, rural, historical, and cultural contexts)
- 3.3.2 Atmosphere and mood: how writers evoke emotion and tone
- 3.3.3 Symbolic use of place and environment in Arabic fiction

Part 3.4 Themes And Style

- 3.4.1 Recurring themes in Arabic novels: identity, modernity, nationalism, and social reform
- 3.4.2 Literary style: realism, romanticism, and experimental approaches
- 3.4.3 Language and imagery: role of Arabic prose in shaping the novel's artistic quality

Introduction

In the last Series, we explored the emergence and development of the Arabic novel, tracing its journey from early experiments in prose to its establishment as a modern literary institution.



Having understood how the novel took root and evolved in Arabic literature, we now turn to its inner workings. This Series will focus on the **core components of the novel**, helping you to see how plot, characterisation, setting, and themes come together to create meaning and artistic impact. This knowledge is essential for analysing Arabic novels critically and appreciating their literary craft.

The aim of this Series is to equip you with the ability to identify, describe, and evaluate the fundamental elements of the Arabic novel. By the end of the Series, you should be able to explain how these components function individually and collectively, and apply this understanding to the study of selected Arabic texts.

We shall commence this Series by examining plot and narrative structure, looking at how conflict, resolution, and techniques such as linear and episodic narration shape the story. Next, we will move on to characterisation and perspective, considering how protagonists, antagonists, and supporting figures are developed, and how narrative voice influences the reader's experience. Following that, we will explore setting and atmosphere, focusing on the importance of place, mood, and symbolic environments in Arabic novels. Finally, we will wrap up by studying themes and style, highlighting recurring concerns such as identity, nationalism, and modernity, as well as the literary styles and language choices that give Arabic novels their distinctive artistry.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 3.1** define the concept of plot in the Arabic novel,
- **SLO 3.2** explain narrative techniques such as linear, episodic, and flashback structures,
- **SLO 3.3** analyse the role of conflict and resolution in shaping narrative development,
- **SLO 3.4** identify different types of characters including protagonist, antagonist, and supporting figures,



- **SLO 3.5** demonstrate methods of characterisation through description, dialogue, and action,
- **SLO 3.6** evaluate the impact of narrative perspective, including first-person, third-person, and omniscient voice,
- **SLO 3.7** describe the importance of setting in Arabic novels, focusing on urban, rural, historical, and cultural contexts,
- **SLO 3.8** explain how atmosphere and mood are created to evoke emotion and tone,
- **SLO 3.9** analyse the symbolic use of place and environment in Arabic fiction,
- **SLO 3.10** identify recurring themes in Arabic novels such as identity, modernity, nationalism, and social reform,
- **SLO 3.11** distinguish between literary styles including realism, romanticism, and experimental approaches, and
- **SLO 3.12** evaluate the role of Arabic prose, language, and imagery in shaping the artistic quality of the novel.

3.1 Plot And Narrative Structure

3.1.1 Definition of plot in the Arabic novel

The **plot** is the organised sequence of events that forms the backbone of a novel. In Arabic literature, the plot provides coherence and direction, guiding the reader through conflict, climax, and resolution. Unlike traditional forms such as the *maqāmāt*, which relied on episodic anecdotes, the Arabic novel uses plot to sustain a narrative across chapters and to reflect social and cultural realities. A well-constructed plot ensures that the story is not just entertaining but also meaningful, offering insights into Arab society and its transformations.

Fill in the blank: The plot is the organised sequence of _____ that forms the backbone of a novel.





Figure 3.1: Stages of plot development in Arabic novels

3.1.2 Narrative techniques: linear, episodic, and flashback

Narrative techniques are the methods used by authors to present the plot. In Arabic novels, three common techniques are:

- **Linear narration:** Events are presented in chronological order, often used in realist novels to depict everyday life.
- **Episodic narration:** The story unfolds in loosely connected episodes, echoing earlier Arabic prose traditions but adapted for modern themes.
- **Flashback (al-istirjāʿ):** A technique where past events are inserted into the narrative, often to explain a character's motivations or to provide historical context.

These techniques allow writers to experiment with time and perspective, enriching the narrative and engaging readers more deeply.



Fill in the blank: A flashback is a technique where _____ events are inserted into the narrative.

Technique	Explanation
Linear Narration	Events unfold in a chronological sequence , maintaining clarity and continuity in storytelling.
Episodic Narration	Story is presented through loosely connected episodes , often reflecting oral traditions and diverse perspectives.
Flashback	Past events are inserted into the narrative , enriching character development and deepening thematic context.

Box 3.1: Narrative techniques in Arabic novels

3.1.3 Role of conflict and resolution in shaping the story

Conflict is the struggle between opposing forces in a novel, which drives the plot forward. In Arabic novels, conflict often reflects social tensions such as tradition versus modernity, colonialism versus independence, or individual desires versus societal expectations. **Resolution** is the stage where the conflict is addressed, either through reconciliation, transformation, or tragedy. Together, conflict and resolution give the plot its dynamic quality, ensuring that the narrative is not static but evolves meaningfully.

Fill in the blank: In Arabic novels, conflict often reflects social tensions such as tradition versus _____.





Plate 3.1: Conflict and resolution in Arabic novels

Pilot questions 3.1

1. What is the definition of plot in the Arabic novel?
2. Fill in the blank: The plot is the organised sequence of _____ that forms the backbone of a novel.
3. What are the three main narrative techniques used in Arabic novels?
4. Fill in the blank: A flashback is a technique where _____ events are inserted into the narrative.
5. How do conflict and resolution shape the story in Arabic novels?
6. Fill in the blank: In Arabic novels, conflict often reflects social tensions such as tradition versus _____.

3.2 Characterisation And Perspective

3.2.1 Types of characters: protagonist, antagonist, and supporting figures

Characterisation refers to the way authors create and develop characters in a novel. In Arabic literature, characters are central to the narrative, embodying social values, conflicts, and cultural



identities. The **protagonist** is the main character whose journey drives the plot. The **antagonist** is the opposing force, often representing societal pressures or ideological conflict. **Supporting figures** enrich the story by providing context, contrast, or secondary perspectives. Together, these types of characters ensure that the novel reflects the complexity of Arab societies.

Fill in the blank: The protagonist is the main character whose _____ drives the plot.

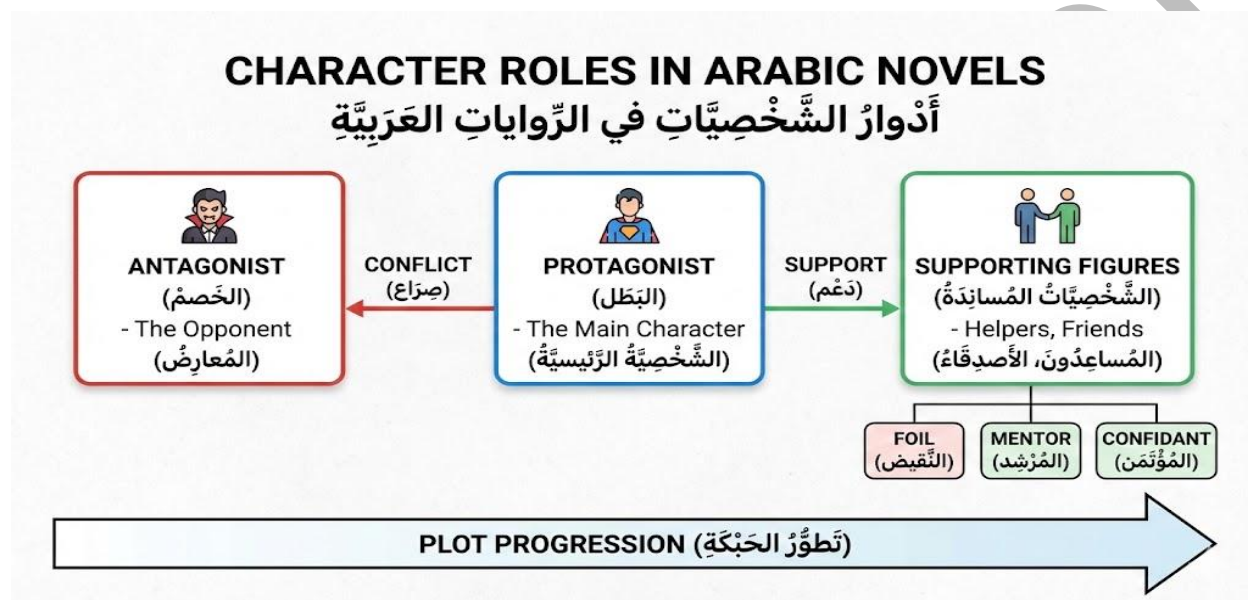


Figure 3.2: Types of characters in Arabic novels

3.2.2 Methods of characterisation: direct description, dialogue, and action

Authors use different **methods of characterisation** to bring characters to life. **Direct description** involves the narrator explicitly describing a character's traits. **Dialogue** reveals personality, values, and relationships through speech. **Action** shows character through behaviour and decisions. In Arabic novels, these methods are often combined to create multidimensional figures who reflect both individual struggles and collective identities.

Fill in the blank: Dialogue reveals a character's personality, values, and _____ through speech.

Method	Explanation



Direct Description	The narrator explicitly explains a character's traits, appearance, or inner qualities.
Dialogue	Conversations reveal personality, emotions, and relationships, adding depth to character portrayal.
Action	Behaviour, choices, and decisions demonstrate character values and development within the narrative.

Box 3.2: Methods of characterisation in Arabic novels

3.2.3 Narrative perspective: first-person, third-person, and omniscient voice in Arabic novels

Narrative perspective refers to the point of view from which the story is told. In Arabic novels, three common perspectives are:

- **First-person narration:** The story is told by a character within the novel, offering a personal and subjective view.
- **Third-person narration:** The narrator is outside the story, describing events objectively or with limited insight into characters.
- **Omniscient narration:** The narrator knows everything about the characters and events, providing a comprehensive view of the story.

The choice of perspective shapes how readers engage with the novel, influencing empathy, interpretation, and the depth of cultural insight.

Fill in the blank: Omniscient narration provides a _____ view of the story.



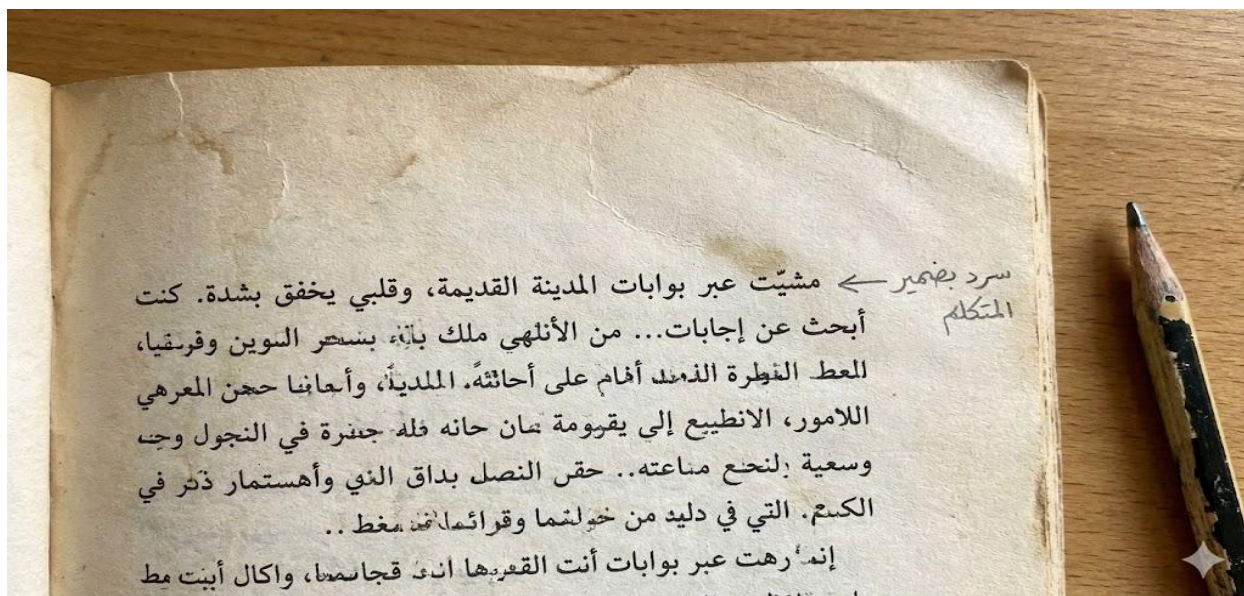


Plate 3.2: Narrative perspectives in Arabic novels

Pilot questions 3.2

1. What are the three main types of characters in Arabic novels?
2. Fill in the blank: The protagonist is the main character whose _____ drives the plot.
3. What methods of characterisation are commonly used in Arabic novels?
4. Fill in the blank: Dialogue reveals a character's personality, values, and _____ through speech.
5. What are the three main narrative perspectives used in Arabic novels?
6. Fill in the blank: Omniscient narration provides a _____ view of the story.

3.3 Setting And Atmosphere

3.3.1 Importance of setting in Arabic novels (urban, rural, historical, and cultural contexts)

The **setting** is the time and place in which a story unfolds. In Arabic novels, setting is not merely a backdrop but a vital component that shapes the narrative. Urban settings often highlight issues



of modernity, class, and political change, while rural settings reflect tradition, agricultural life, and community values. Historical settings allow writers to revisit significant events, while cultural contexts showcase customs, beliefs, and social practices. By situating characters within these environments, Arabic novelists provide readers with a vivid sense of place and identity.

Fill in the blank: In Arabic novels, rural settings often reflect tradition, agricultural life, and _____ values.

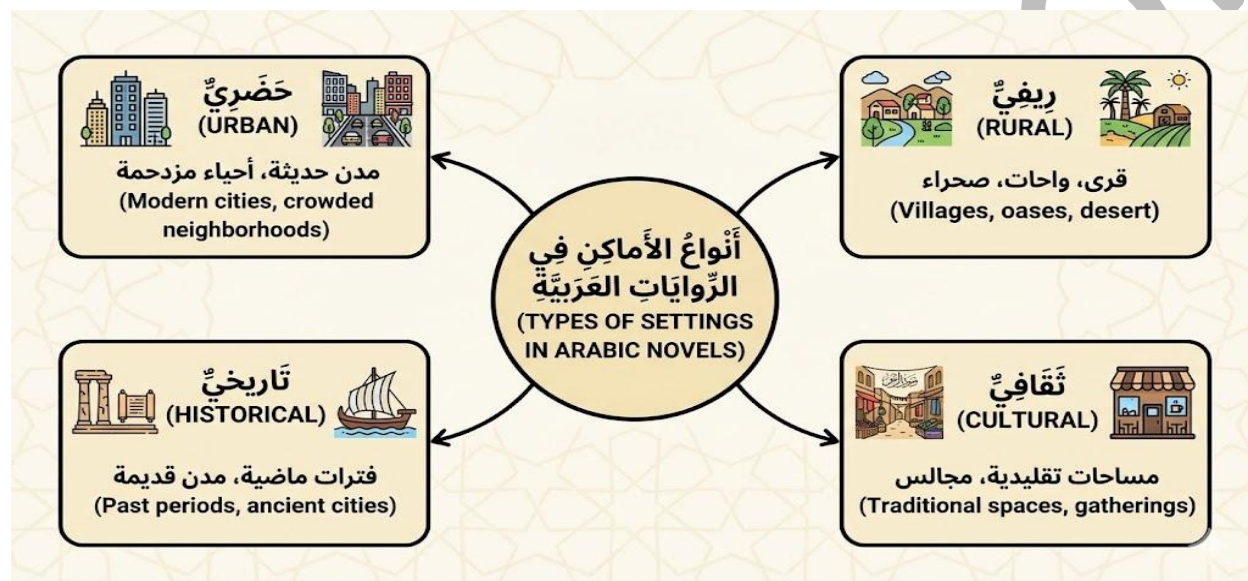


Figure 3.3: Types of settings in Arabic novels

3.3.2 Atmosphere and mood: how writers evoke emotion and tone

Atmosphere refers to the overall feeling or mood created in a novel. In Arabic literature, atmosphere is often shaped by descriptive language, imagery, and the interaction between characters and their environment. For example, a bustling Cairo street scene may evoke energy and tension, while a quiet desert landscape may create a mood of solitude or reflection. The atmosphere helps readers emotionally connect with the narrative, guiding their interpretation of events and themes.

Fill in the blank: Atmosphere refers to the overall _____ or mood created in a novel.





Plate 3.3: Atmosphere and mood in Arabic novels

3.3.3 Symbolic use of place and environment in Arabic fiction

In many Arabic novels, the **symbolic use of place** adds deeper meaning to the narrative. Cities may symbolise modernity and progress, while villages may represent tradition and continuity. The desert often symbolises endurance, spirituality, or isolation, while the home can embody family, belonging, or conflict. By using settings symbolically, authors enrich their stories with layers of meaning that resonate with cultural and historical experiences.

Fill in the blank: In Arabic novels, the desert often symbolises endurance, spirituality, or

_____.

Place	Symbolic Meaning
City	Represents modernity and progress , often linked to social change, political movements, and cultural transformation.
Village	Symbolises tradition and continuity , reflecting rural life, communal bonds, and heritage.



Desert	Evokes endurance, spirituality, and isolation , serving as a backdrop for resilience and reflection.
Home	Stands for family, belonging, and conflict , embodying both intimacy and generational tensions.

Box 3.3: Symbolic use of place in Arabic novels

Pilot questions 3.3

1. What is the importance of setting in Arabic novels?
2. Fill in the blank: In Arabic novels, rural settings often reflect tradition, agricultural life, and _____ values.
3. How do writers create atmosphere and mood in Arabic novels?
4. Fill in the blank: Atmosphere refers to the overall _____ or mood created in a novel.
5. What symbolic meanings are often attached to places in Arabic fiction?
6. Fill in the blank: In Arabic novels, the desert often symbolises endurance, spirituality, or _____.

3.4 Themes And Style

3.4.1 Recurring themes in Arabic novels: identity, modernity, nationalism, and social reform

Themes are the central ideas explored in a novel. In Arabic literature, recurring themes often reflect the lived realities and aspirations of Arab societies. **Identity** explores the tension between tradition and modernity, as characters navigate cultural and personal belonging. **Modernity** highlights the challenges of urbanisation, education, and social change. **Nationalism** captures struggles for independence and unity, while **social reform** addresses issues such as poverty, inequality, and gender roles. These themes ensure that Arabic novels remain deeply connected to the historical and cultural experiences of their readers.



Fill in the blank: In Arabic novels, nationalism often captures struggles for independence and _____.

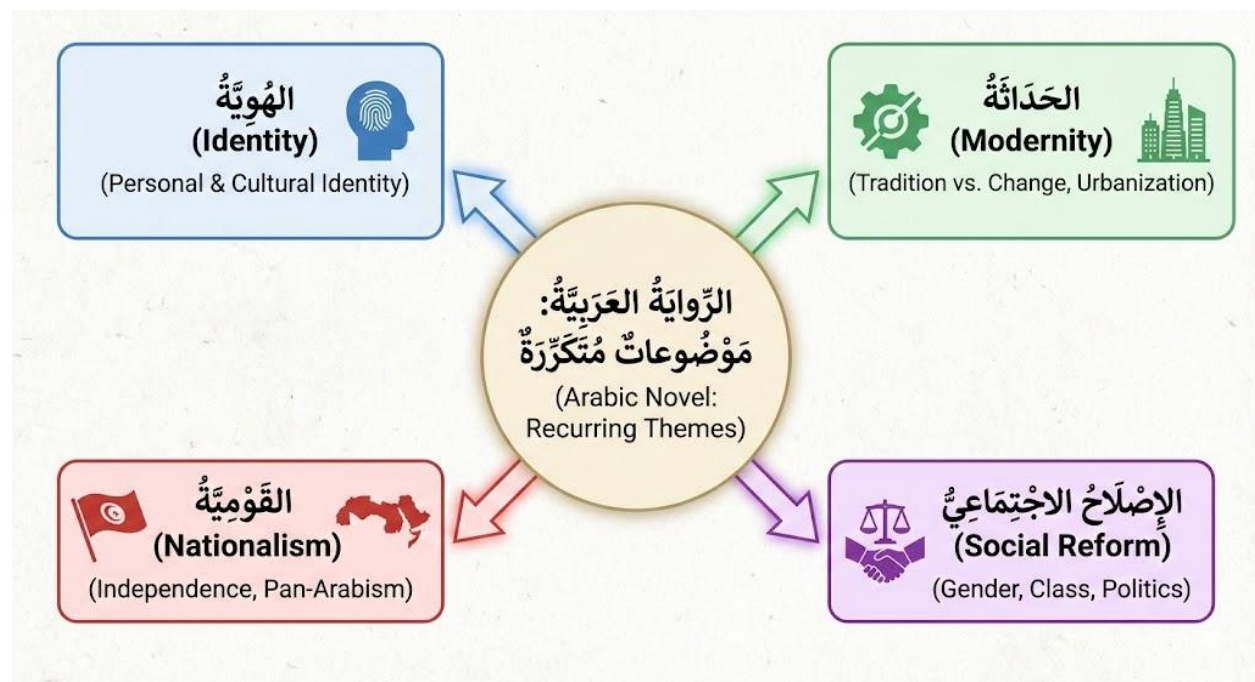


Figure 3.4: Recurring themes in Arabic novels

3.4.2 Literary style: realism, romanticism, and experimental approaches

Literary style refers to the way a novel is written, including its tone, structure, and artistic choices. In Arabic novels, three major styles are prominent:

- **Realism:** Focuses on everyday life and social realities, often portraying characters and settings with accuracy and detail.
- **Romanticism:** Emphasises emotion, imagination, and idealised love, sometimes drawing on traditional poetic influences.
- **Experimental approaches:** Challenge conventional forms, using fragmented narratives, symbolism, or stream-of-consciousness techniques.

These styles reflect the diversity of Arabic literature, allowing writers to express both personal creativity and collective concerns.



Fill in the blank: Realism in Arabic novels focuses on everyday life and _____ realities.

Style	Explanation
Realism	Focuses on everyday life and social realities , portraying ordinary characters and authentic settings.
Romanticism	Emphasises emotion, imagination, and idealised love , often contrasting reality with aspiration.
Experimental Approaches	Employs fragmented narratives, symbolism, and stream-of-consciousness , challenging traditional storytelling forms.

Box 3.4: Literary styles in Arabic novels

3.4.3 Language and imagery: role of Arabic prose in shaping the novel's artistic quality

The **language** of Arabic novels is a defining feature of their artistry. Writers often employ rich **imagery**, drawing on the poetic traditions of Arabic literature to create vivid scenes and emotional depth. Prose style varies from simple and direct to highly ornate, depending on the author's purpose. Imagery may be used symbolically, linking everyday objects to broader cultural or philosophical meanings. By carefully shaping language and imagery, Arabic novelists elevate their works beyond storytelling, making them enduring contributions to world literature.

Fill in the blank: In Arabic novels, imagery may be used symbolically, linking everyday objects to broader _____ meanings.





Plate 3.4: Language and imagery in Arabic novels

Pilot questions 3.4

1. What are the recurring themes in Arabic novels?
2. Fill in the blank: In Arabic novels, nationalism often captures struggles for independence and _____.
3. What are the three major literary styles found in Arabic novels?
4. Fill in the blank: Realism in Arabic novels focuses on everyday life and _____ realities.
5. How do Arabic novelists use language and imagery to shape artistic quality?
6. Fill in the blank: In Arabic novels, imagery may be used symbolically, linking everyday objects to broader _____ meanings.



Series Summary

This Series has focused on the core components of the Arabic novel, showing how plot, characterisation, setting, and style work together to create meaning and artistic impact. Its purpose was to help you recognise and evaluate the essential building blocks of narrative, so that you can analyse Arabic novels with greater clarity and confidence. By engaging with this material, you have seen how these components reflect Arab cultural, social, and historical realities, making the novel a powerful medium of expression.

We began with plot and narrative structure, examining how conflict, resolution, and techniques such as linear narration and flashback shape the story. We then moved on to characterisation and perspective, considering the roles of protagonists, antagonists, and supporting figures, as well as the influence of narrative voice. Following that, we explored setting and atmosphere, highlighting the importance of place, mood, and symbolic environments in Arabic fiction. Finally, we studied themes and style, focusing on recurring concerns such as identity, nationalism, and social reform, alongside literary styles and the role of language and imagery. In line with the Series Learning Outcomes, you should now be able to define and explain these components, analyse their functions, and evaluate how they contribute to the artistic quality of Arabic novels.

Glossary of Terms

- **Action:** A method of characterisation where a character's behaviour and decisions reveal their personality and values.
- **Antagonist:** The character or force that opposes the protagonist, often representing conflict or societal pressures in Arabic novels.
- **Atmosphere:** The overall feeling or mood created in a novel through language, imagery, and setting.
- **Characterisation:** The process by which authors create and develop characters using description, dialogue, and action.
- **Conflict:** The struggle between opposing forces in a novel that drives the plot forward.



- **Dialogue:** Conversations between characters that reveal personality, values, and relationships.
- **Episodic narration:** A narrative technique where the story unfolds in loosely connected episodes rather than a continuous sequence.
- **Flashback (al-istirjāʿ):** A narrative technique that inserts past events into the story to explain motivations or provide context.
- **Identity:** A recurring theme in Arabic novels, exploring cultural belonging and the tension between tradition and modernity.
- **Imagery:** Descriptive language that creates vivid pictures in the reader's mind, often used symbolically in Arabic novels.
- **Linear narration:** A narrative technique where events are presented in chronological order.
- **Modernity:** A theme in Arabic novels reflecting social change, urbanisation, and the challenges of adapting to new realities.
- **Narrative perspective:** The point of view from which a story is told, such as first-person, third-person, or omniscient narration.
- **Nationalism:** A theme in Arabic novels that highlights struggles for independence, unity, and cultural identity.
- **Omniscient narration:** A narrative perspective where the narrator knows everything about the characters and events, offering a comprehensive view.
- **Plot:** The organised sequence of events that forms the backbone of a novel, including conflict, climax, and resolution.
- **Protagonist:** The main character whose journey drives the plot of the novel.
- **Realism:** A literary style that focuses on everyday life and social realities, portraying characters and settings with accuracy.



- **Resolution:** The stage in a novel where conflict is addressed or resolved, often through reconciliation, transformation, or tragedy.
- **Romanticism:** A literary style that emphasises emotion, imagination, and idealised love, sometimes influenced by Arabic poetic traditions.
- **Setting:** The time and place in which a story unfolds, shaping the narrative and reflecting cultural contexts.
- **Social reform:** A recurring theme in Arabic novels addressing issues such as poverty, inequality, education, and gender roles.
- **Supporting figures:** Secondary characters who enrich the story by providing context, contrast, or additional perspectives.



Concept Check Questions [Series 3]

Objective questions

1. Who is the main character whose journey drives the plot of a novel? (Linked to SLO 3.4)
2. Fill in the blank: A flashback is a technique where _____ events are inserted into the narrative. (Linked to SLO 3.2)
3. Which literary style in Arabic novels focuses on everyday life and social realities? (Linked to SLO 3.11)
4. Fill in the blank: In Arabic novels, rural settings often reflect tradition, agricultural life, and _____ values. (Linked to SLO 3.7)
5. Which narrative perspective provides a comprehensive view of the story? (Linked to SLO 3.6)

Short-answer questions

6. Define plot in the context of Arabic novels. (Linked to SLO 3.1)
7. Explain how conflict and resolution shape the narrative in Arabic novels. (Linked to SLO 3.3)
8. Identify three methods of characterisation used in Arabic novels. (Linked to SLO 3.5)
9. Describe how atmosphere and mood are created in Arabic novels. (Linked to SLO 3.8)
10. List two recurring themes commonly found in Arabic novels. (Linked to SLO 3.10)

Long-answer questions

11. Analyse the role of narrative techniques such as linear narration, episodic narration, and flashback in shaping Arabic novels. (Linked to SLO 3.2)
 - *Basic response:* Based on Series-only knowledge.



- *Value-added response*: For outstanding learners who go beyond the basics.
12. Evaluate the symbolic use of place and environment in Arabic fiction, with examples from urban, rural, desert, and home settings. (Linked to SLO 3.9)
- *Basic response*: Based on Series-only knowledge.
 - *Value-added response*: For outstanding learners who go beyond the basics.
13. Discuss the contributions of literary styles such as realism, romanticism, and experimental approaches to the artistic quality of Arabic novels. (Linked to SLO 3.11)
- *Basic response*: Based on Series-only knowledge.
 - *Value-added response*: For outstanding learners who go beyond the basics.
14. Explain how Arabic prose, language, and imagery enhance the artistic quality of novels, making them enduring contributions to literature. (Linked to SLO 3.12)
- *Basic response*: Based on Series-only knowledge.
 - *Value-added response*: For outstanding learners who go beyond the basics.

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 3]

Objective questions

1. Protagonist
2. Past
3. Realism
4. Community
5. Omniscient narration

Short-answer questions

6. Plot is the organised sequence of events that forms the backbone of a novel, guiding the reader through conflict, climax, and resolution.



7. Conflict drives the plot by presenting struggles, while resolution addresses or resolves these struggles, giving the story meaning and closure.
8. Direct description, dialogue, and action.
9. Atmosphere and mood are created through descriptive language, imagery, and the interaction between characters and their environment.
10. Identity and nationalism (others include modernity and social reform).

Long-answer questions

11. *Basic response:* Linear narration presents events chronologically, episodic narration unfolds in loosely connected episodes, and flashback inserts past events to explain motivations.
Value-added response: Outstanding learners may add that these techniques allow Arabic novelists to experiment with time, perspective, and cultural context, enriching narrative depth and reader engagement.
12. *Basic response:* Urban settings symbolise modernity, rural settings reflect tradition, deserts symbolise endurance or isolation, and homes embody family and belonging.
Value-added response: Learners may extend this by noting how symbolic settings highlight broader cultural tensions, such as modernisation versus tradition, or colonialism versus independence.
13. *Basic response:* Realism depicts everyday life accurately, romanticism emphasises emotion and imagination, and experimental styles challenge conventional forms.
Value-added response: Outstanding learners may add that these styles reflect the diversity of Arabic literature, with realism grounding novels in social realities, romanticism drawing on poetic traditions, and experimental styles pushing boundaries of narrative art.
14. *Basic response:* Arabic prose and imagery enrich novels by creating vivid scenes and symbolic meanings, elevating them beyond simple storytelling.
Value-added response: Learners may extend this by noting how poetic imagery connects



novels to classical Arabic traditions, while innovative prose styles make them significant contributions to world literature.



Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 3]

Part 3.1

1. The organised sequence of events that forms the backbone of a novel.
2. Events.
3. Linear narration, episodic narration, and flashback.
4. Past.
5. They drive the plot forward by presenting struggles and resolving them meaningfully.
6. Modernity.

Part 3.2

1. Protagonist, antagonist, and supporting figures.
2. Journey.
3. Direct description, dialogue, and action.
4. Relationships.
5. First-person, third-person, and omniscient narration.
6. Comprehensive.

Part 3.3

1. It shapes the narrative and reflects cultural, social, and historical contexts.
2. Community.
3. Through descriptive language, imagery, and the interaction between characters and their environment.



4. Feeling.
5. Cities symbolise modernity, villages represent tradition, deserts symbolise endurance or isolation, and homes embody family or conflict.
6. Isolation.

Part 3.4

1. Identity, modernity, nationalism, and social reform.
2. Unity.
3. Realism, romanticism, and experimental approaches.
4. Social.
5. By using rich prose and imagery to create vivid scenes and symbolic meanings.
6. Philosophical.



General References

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- Badawi, M. M. (1992). *Modern Arabic literature*. Cambridge University Press.
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- Kilpatrick, H. (1992). *The modern Egyptian novel: A study in narrative form*. Ithaca Press.
- Somekh, S. (1997). *Genre and theme in the modern Arabic novel*. Ithaca Press.

Illustrations

- *Figure 3.1: Stages of plot development in Arabic novels*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate a diagram showing stages of plot development in Arabic novels: exposition, conflict, climax, resolution.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic novel plot structure stages OER”
- *Box 3.1: Narrative techniques in Arabic novels*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate a text box listing narrative techniques in Arabic novels: linear, episodic, flashback.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic novel narrative techniques linear episodic flashback OER”
- *Plate 3.1: Conflict and resolution in Arabic novels*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.



- Prompt: “Generate an image of an Arabic novel cover symbolising conflict and resolution, such as tradition versus modernity.”
- Suggested OER search string: “Arabic novel conflict resolution tradition modernity OER”
- *Figure 3.2: Types of characters in Arabic novels*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate a diagram showing protagonist, antagonist, and supporting figures in Arabic novels.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic novel character types protagonist antagonist supporting OER”
- *Box 3.2: Methods of characterisation in Arabic novels*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate a text box listing methods of characterisation in Arabic novels: direct description, dialogue, action.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic novel methods of characterisation OER”
- *Plate 3.2: Narrative perspectives in Arabic novels*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate an image of an Arabic novel page showing narrative perspective, such as first-person or omniscient narration.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic novel narrative perspective first-person third-person omniscient OER”
- *Figure 3.3: Types of settings in Arabic novels*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate a diagram showing types of settings in Arabic novels: urban, rural, historical, cultural.”



- Suggested OER search string: “Arabic novel settings urban rural historical cultural OER”
- *Plate 3.3: Atmosphere and mood in Arabic novels*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate an image of an Arabic novel scene showing atmosphere, such as a Cairo street or desert landscape.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic novel atmosphere mood Cairo desert OER”
- *Box 3.3: Symbolic use of place in Arabic novels*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate a text box listing symbolic uses of place in Arabic novels: city, village, desert, home.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “symbolic use of place Arabic novel OER”
- *Figure 3.4: Recurring themes in Arabic novels*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate a diagram showing recurring themes in Arabic novels: identity, modernity, nationalism, social reform.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “recurring themes Arabic novel identity modernity nationalism reform OER”
- *Box 3.4: Literary styles in Arabic novels*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate a text box listing literary styles in Arabic novels: realism, romanticism, experimental approaches.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “literary styles Arabic novel realism romanticism experimental OER”



- *Plate 3.4: Language and imagery in Arabic novels*

- Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
- Prompt: “Generate an image of an Arabic novel page showing poetic imagery in prose, with ornate Arabic script.”
- Suggested OER search string: “Arabic novel language imagery prose OER”



Series 4: Study And Analysis Of A Selected Arabic Novel

Part 4.1 Background And Context Of The Selected Novel

- 4.1.1 Author's biography and intellectual background
- 4.1.2 Historical, cultural, and social context of the novel
- 4.1.3 Publication history and reception in Arabic literary circles

Part 4.2 Plot And Narrative Structure

- 4.2.1 Overview of the storyline and major events
- 4.2.2 Narrative techniques employed (linear, episodic, flashback)
- 4.2.3 Conflict and resolution within the novel

Part 4.3 Characterisation And Themes

- 4.3.1 Analysis of major characters (protagonist, antagonist, supporting figures)
- 4.3.2 Recurring themes such as identity, modernity, nationalism, and social reform
- 4.3.3 Symbolic use of setting and atmosphere in relation to characters and themes

Part 4.4 Literary Style And Critical Perspectives

- 4.4.1 Language and imagery in the novel's prose
- 4.4.2 Literary style: realism, romanticism, or experimental approaches
- 4.4.3 Critical interpretations and scholarly perspectives on the novel

Introduction

In the last Series, we examined the core components of the Arabic novel, focusing on plot, characterisation, setting, themes, and style. Having gained this foundation, we are now ready to apply these concepts to the close study of a selected Arabic novel. This Series is important



because it allows you to see how the theoretical elements we have discussed come alive in a complete literary work, offering both artistic enjoyment and critical insight into Arab society and culture.

The aim of this Series is to guide you through a structured study and analysis of one chosen Arabic novel, enabling you to evaluate its narrative techniques, characters, themes, and style. By the end of the Series, you should be able to demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the novel and engage with scholarly perspectives on its significance.

We shall commence this Series by exploring the background and context of the selected novel, including the author's biography, historical setting, and its reception. Next, we will analyse the plot and narrative structure, paying attention to major events, techniques, and the role of conflict and resolution. Following that, we will move on to characterisation and themes, examining the protagonist, antagonist, supporting figures, and recurring ideas such as identity and nationalism. Finally, we will wrap up by studying the novel's literary style and critical perspectives, highlighting its language, imagery, and scholarly interpretations.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 4.1** describe the author's biography and intellectual background of the selected Arabic novel,
- **SLO 4.2** explain the historical, cultural, and social context in which the novel was written,
- **SLO 4.3** outline the publication history and reception of the novel within Arabic literary circles,
- **SLO 4.4** summarise the storyline and major events of the novel,
- **SLO 4.5** analyse the narrative techniques employed, including linear narration, episodic narration, and flashback,
- **SLO 4.6** evaluate the role of conflict and resolution in shaping the novel's plot,



- **SLO 4.7** examine the major characters, including the protagonist, antagonist, and supporting figures,
- **SLO 4.8** identify recurring themes such as identity, modernity, nationalism, and social reform in the novel,
- **SLO 4.9** interpret the symbolic use of setting and atmosphere in relation to characters and themes,
- **SLO 4.10** analyse the language and imagery used in the novel's prose,
- **SLO 4.11** distinguish the literary style of the novel, whether realism, romanticism, or experimental approaches, and
- **SLO 4.12** evaluate critical interpretations and scholarly perspectives on the novel.

4.1 Background And Context Of The Selected Novel

4.1.1 Author's biography and intellectual background

When studying an Arabic novel, it is important to begin with the **author's biography**, which refers to the life history and intellectual development of the writer. The author's personal experiences, education, and cultural environment often shape the themes and style of their work. For example, Najīb Maḥfūz's upbringing in Cairo influenced his detailed depictions of Egyptian urban life, while Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal's Western education shaped his interest in realism and social reform. Understanding the intellectual background of the author helps us to connect the novel to broader literary and cultural movements.

Fill in the blank: An author's _____ often shapes the themes and style of their work.



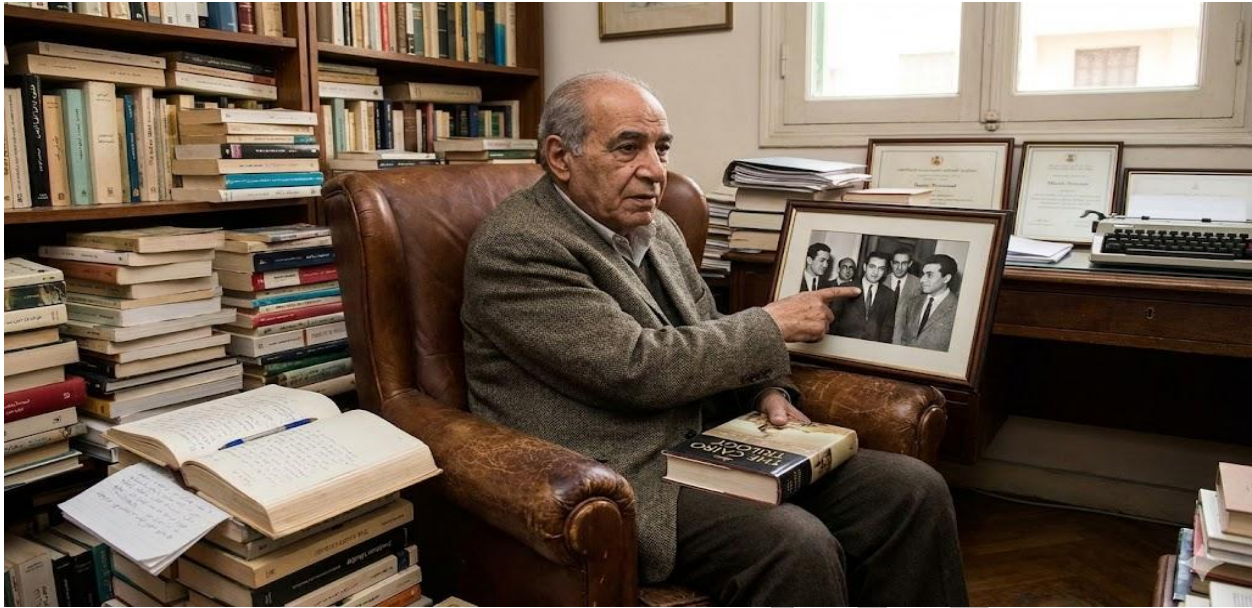


Plate 4.1: Author's biography and intellectual background

4.1.2 Historical, cultural, and social context of the novel

The **context** of a novel refers to the historical, cultural, and social circumstances in which it was written. Arabic novels often reflect significant events such as colonialism, independence movements, or social reforms. Cultural traditions, religious values, and societal norms also influence the narrative. For instance, novels written in the early 20th century frequently addressed the tension between tradition and modernity, while later works explored themes of nationalism and identity. By situating the novel within its context, learners can appreciate how literature mirrors and critiques Arab society.

Fill in the blank: Arabic novels written in the early 20th century often addressed the tension between tradition and _____.



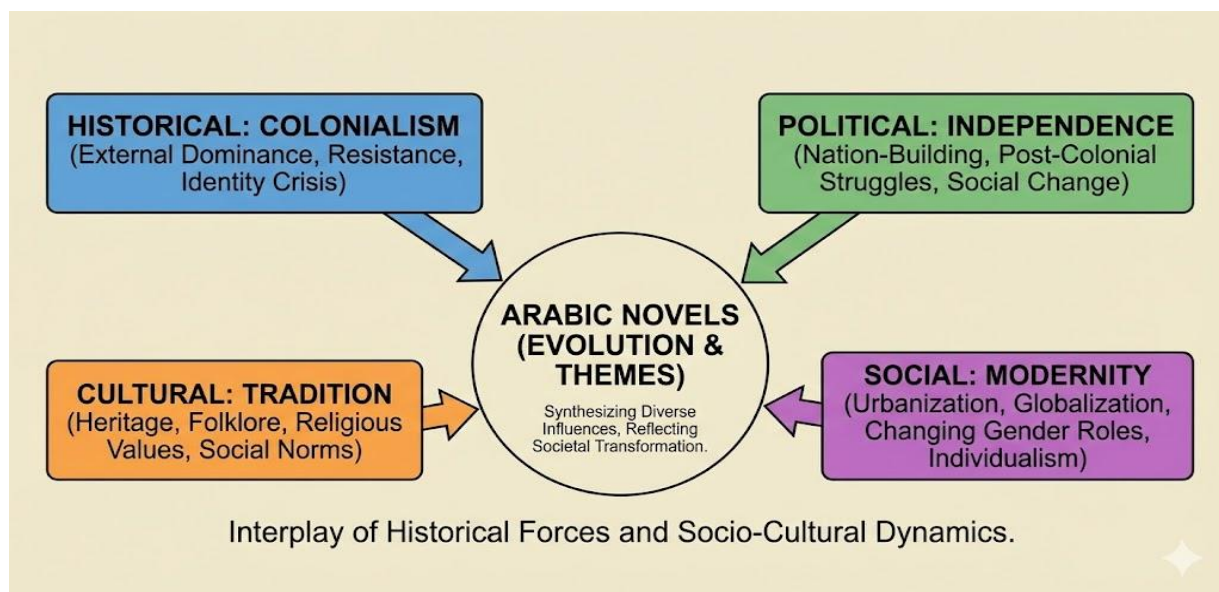


Figure 4.1: Contextual influences on Arabic novels

4.1.3 Publication history and reception in Arabic literary circles

The **publication history** of a novel refers to when and how it was first published, while **reception** refers to how readers and critics responded to it. In Arabic literature, many novels were first published in newspapers or journals before being released as books. Reception often varied, with some works praised for their innovation and others criticised for challenging social norms. For example, Haykal's *Zaynab* was groundbreaking as the first modern Arabic novel, yet it sparked debates about realism and tradition. Studying publication history and reception allows learners to see how the novel contributed to the Arabic literary canon.

Fill in the blank: Many Arabic novels were first published in _____ or journals before being released as books.

Stage / Institution	Explanation
Newspapers and Journals	Early novels were serialized in print, reaching a wide audience and fostering literary engagement.



Books	Later published as standalone volumes, giving the novel permanence and broader circulation.
Cultural Debates	Reception was shaped by discussions on identity, reform, and modernisation within Arab society.
Literary Criticism	Critics analysed narrative techniques, themes, and social impact, legitimising the novel as a serious genre.

Box 4.1: Publication and reception of Arabic novels

Pilot questions 4.1

1. What is meant by an author's biography and intellectual background?
2. Fill in the blank: An author's _____ often shapes the themes and style of their work.
3. What historical, cultural, and social contexts influenced Arabic novels in the early 20th century?
4. Fill in the blank: Arabic novels written in the early 20th century often addressed the tension between tradition and _____.
5. How were many Arabic novels first published before being released as books?
6. Fill in the blank: Many Arabic novels were first published in _____ or journals before being released as books.

4.2 Plot And Narrative Structure

4.2.1 Overview of the storyline and major events

The **storyline** of a novel refers to the sequence of events that unfold from beginning to end. In Arabic novels, the storyline often reflects social realities, cultural tensions, and historical moments. For example, Najīb Maḥfūz's *Cairo Trilogy* traces the life of a family across generations, while Haykal's *Zaynab* focuses on rural Egyptian life and the challenges of



modernity. Major events in the storyline usually revolve around conflict, turning points, and resolutions that highlight the author's message.

Fill in the blank: The storyline of a novel refers to the sequence of _____ that unfold from beginning to end.



Figure 4.2: Progression of storyline in Arabic novels

4.2.2 Narrative techniques employed (linear, episodic, flashback)

Narrative techniques are the methods used by authors to present the storyline. In Arabic novels, common techniques include:

- **Linear narration:** Events are presented in chronological order, often used in realist novels.
- **Episodic narration:** The story unfolds in loosely connected episodes, echoing earlier Arabic prose traditions.
- **Flashback (al-istirjāʿ):** Past events are inserted into the narrative to explain motivations or provide historical context.



These techniques allow authors to experiment with time and perspective, enriching the narrative and engaging readers more deeply.

Fill in the blank: Linear narration presents events in _____ order.

Technique	Explanation
Linear Narration	Events unfold in a chronological sequence , maintaining clarity and continuity in storytelling.
Episodic Narration	Story is presented through loosely connected episodes , often reflecting oral traditions and diverse perspectives.
Flashback	Past events are inserted into the narrative , enriching character development and deepening thematic context.

Box 4.2: Narrative techniques in Arabic novels

4.2.3 Conflict and resolution within the novel

Conflict is the struggle between opposing forces that drives the plot forward. In Arabic novels, conflict often reflects tensions such as tradition versus modernity, colonialism versus independence, or personal desires versus societal expectations. **Resolution** is the stage where the conflict is addressed, either through reconciliation, transformation, or tragedy. Together, conflict and resolution give the plot its dynamic quality, ensuring that the narrative evolves meaningfully.

Fill in the blank: In Arabic novels, conflict often reflects tensions such as tradition versus _____.



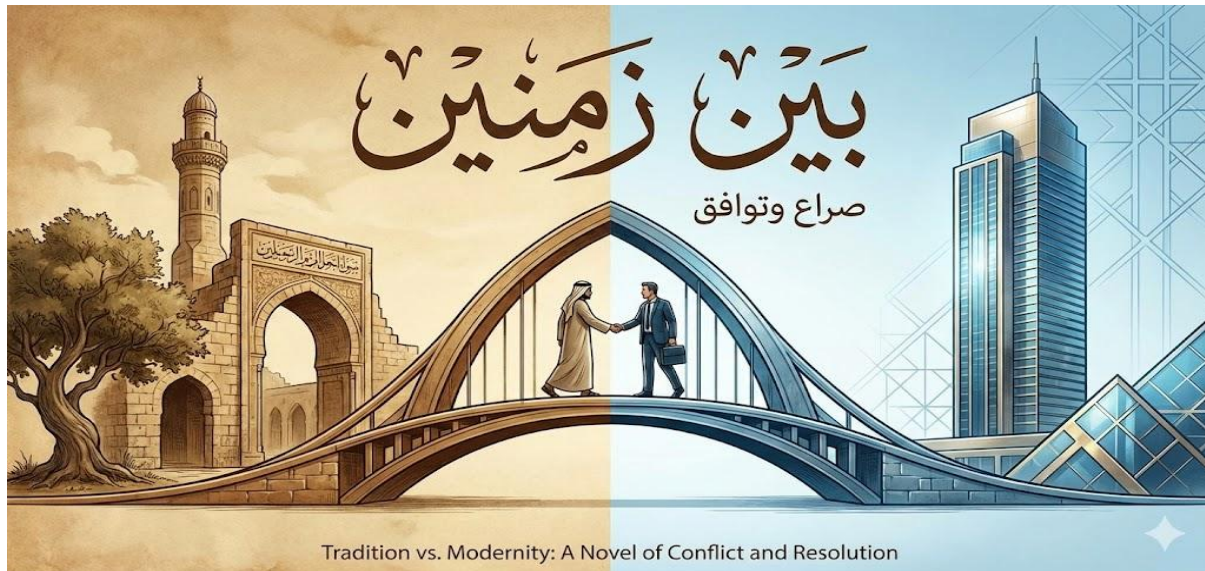


Plate 4.2: Conflict and resolution in Arabic novels

Pilot questions 4.2

1. What is meant by the storyline of a novel?
2. Fill in the blank: The storyline of a novel refers to the sequence of _____ that unfold from beginning to end.
3. What are the three main narrative techniques used in Arabic novels?
4. Fill in the blank: Linear narration presents events in _____ order.
5. How do conflict and resolution shape the plot of Arabic novels?
6. Fill in the blank: In Arabic novels, conflict often reflects tensions such as tradition versus _____.

4.3 Characterisation And Themes

4.3.1 Analysis of major characters (protagonist, antagonist, supporting figures)

In Arabic novels, **characterisation** is central to the narrative, as characters embody social values, cultural tensions, and personal struggles. The **protagonist** is the main character whose



journey drives the plot, often representing the voice of change or resistance. The **antagonist** stands in opposition, symbolising obstacles such as tradition, authority, or colonial power.

Supporting figures enrich the story by providing contrast, context, or alternative perspectives. Analysing these characters helps us to see how the novel reflects the complexity of Arab societies.

Fill in the blank: The protagonist is the main character whose _____ drives the plot.

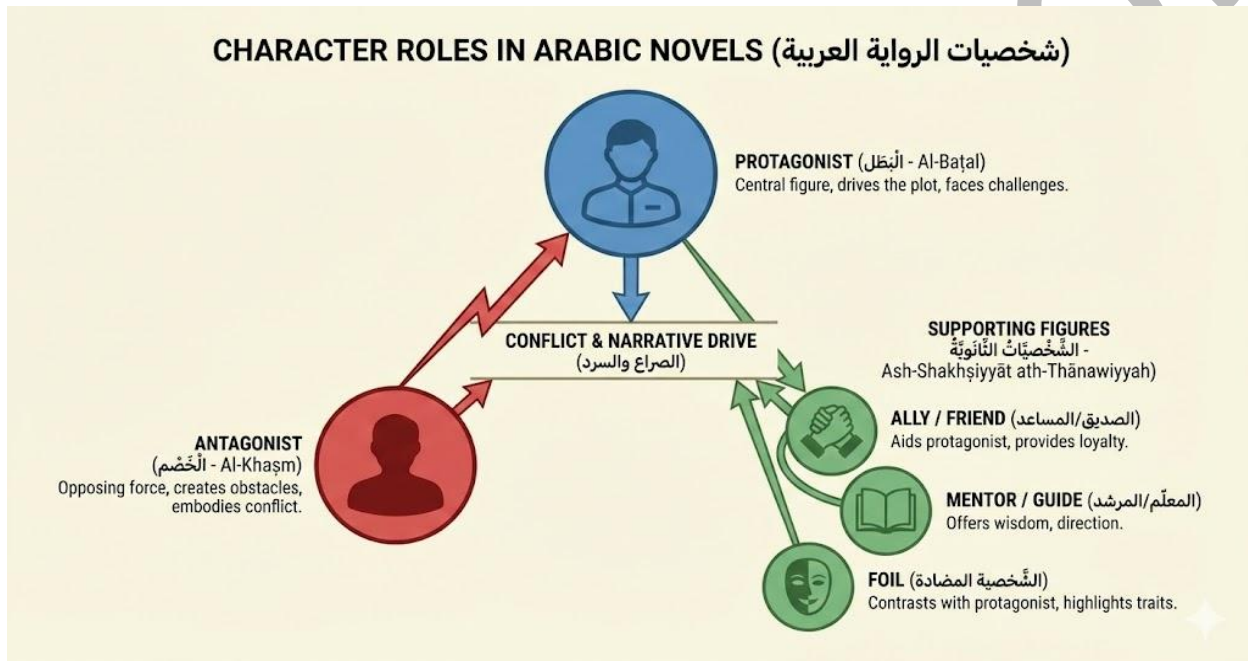


Figure 4.3: Major characters in Arabic novels

4.3.2 Recurring themes such as identity, modernity, nationalism, and social reform

Themes are the central ideas explored in a novel. In Arabic literature, recurring themes often mirror the historical and cultural experiences of Arab societies. **Identity** explores the tension between tradition and modernity. **Modernity** highlights challenges of urbanisation, education, and social change. **Nationalism** reflects struggles for independence and unity, while **social reform** addresses issues such as poverty, inequality, and gender roles. These themes ensure that Arabic novels remain deeply connected to the lived realities of their readers.

Fill in the blank: In Arabic novels, nationalism often reflects struggles for independence and



Theme	Explanation
Identity	Explores the tension between tradition and modernity , reflecting cultural and personal struggles.
Modernity	Addresses urbanisation, education, and social change , capturing the transformation of Arab societies.
Nationalism	Expresses aspirations for independence and unity , often tied to anti-colonial movements and political awakening.
Social Reform	Highlights issues of poverty, inequality, and gender roles , advocating for progress and justice.

Box 4.3: Recurring themes in Arabic novels

4.3.3 Symbolic use of setting and atmosphere in relation to characters and themes

The **symbolic use of setting** adds deeper meaning to the novel. Cities may symbolise modernity and progress, villages may represent tradition and continuity, deserts often symbolise endurance or isolation, and homes embody family, belonging, or conflict. Atmosphere, created through descriptive language and imagery, reinforces these symbolic meanings and connects them to characters and themes. For example, a bustling urban street may highlight modernity and social tension, while a quiet rural scene may emphasise tradition and community.

Fill in the blank: In Arabic novels, the desert often symbolises endurance, spirituality, or

_____.





Plate 4.3: Symbolic use of setting in Arabic novels

Pilot questions 4.3

1. Who are the three main types of characters in Arabic novels?
2. Fill in the blank: The protagonist is the main character whose _____ drives the plot.
3. What recurring themes are commonly found in Arabic novels?
4. Fill in the blank: In Arabic novels, nationalism often reflects struggles for independence and _____.
5. How is setting used symbolically in Arabic novels?
6. Fill in the blank: In Arabic novels, the desert often symbolises endurance, spirituality, or _____.

4.4 Literary Style And Critical Perspectives

4.4.1 Language and imagery in the novel's prose

The **language** of Arabic novels is a defining feature of their artistry. Writers often employ rich **imagery**, drawing on classical Arabic poetic traditions to create vivid scenes and emotional depth. Prose may range from simple and direct to highly ornate, depending on the author's



er _____



...romanticism, or experi

4.4.2 Literary style: realism, romanticism, or experimental approaches

Literary style refers to the way a novel is written, including tone, structure, and artistic choices.

In Arabic novels, three major styles are prominent:

- **Realism:** Focuses on everyday life and social realities, portraying characters and settings with accuracy.
- **Romanticism:** Emphasises emotion, imagination, and idealised love, often influenced by Arabic poetic traditions.
- **Experimental approaches:** Challenge conventional forms, using fragmented narratives, symbolism, or stream-of-consciousness techniques.



Studying the style of the selected novel helps you to understand how the author's artistic choices shape meaning and impact.

Fill in the blank: Realism in Arabic novels focuses on everyday life and _____ realities.

Style	Explanation
Realism	Focuses on everyday life and social realities , portraying ordinary characters and authentic settings.
Romanticism	Emphasises emotion, imagination, and idealised love , often contrasting reality with aspiration.
Experimental Approaches	Employs fragmented narratives, symbolism, and stream-of-consciousness , challenging traditional storytelling forms.

Box 4.4: Literary styles in Arabic novels

4.4.3 Critical interpretations and scholarly perspectives on the novel

Critical interpretations are scholarly analyses that evaluate the themes, style, and cultural significance of a novel. In Arabic literature, critics often debate how novels reflect identity, nationalism, or modernity. Some scholars praise works for their realism and social critique, while others highlight their experimental techniques or symbolic depth. Engaging with these perspectives allows learners to situate the selected novel within the broader Arabic literary canon and to appreciate its contribution to world literature.

Fill in the blank: Critical interpretations of Arabic novels often debate how they reflect identity, nationalism, or _____.



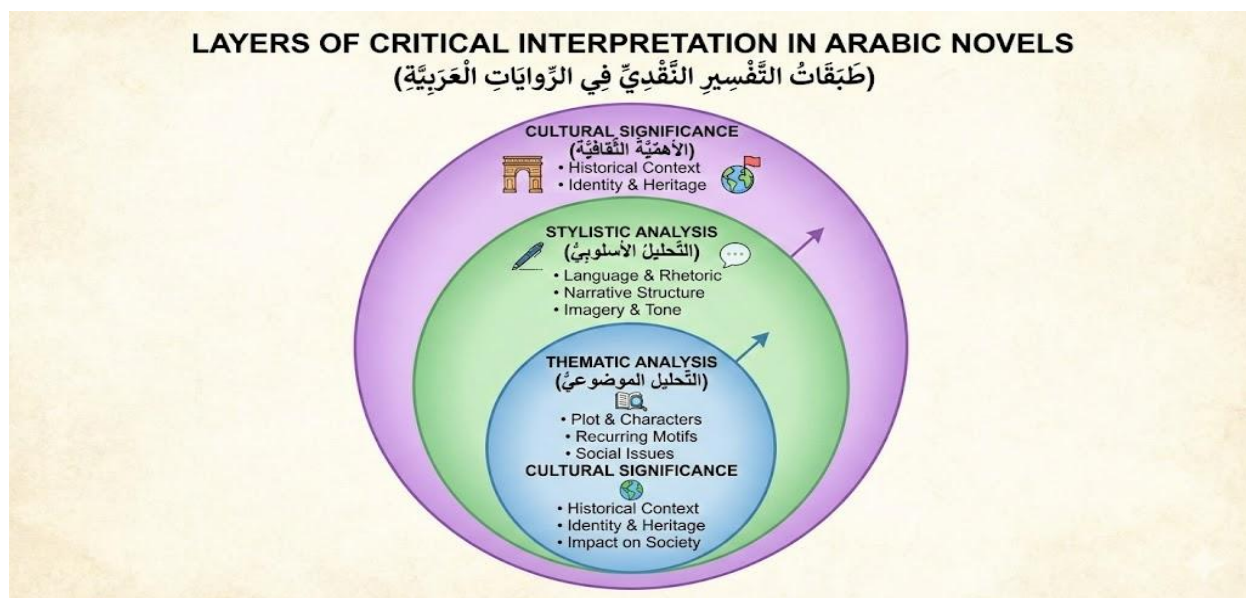


Figure 4.4: Layers of critical interpretation in Arabic novels

Pilot questions 4.4

1. How do Arabic novelists use language and imagery to enhance prose?
2. Fill in the blank: Imagery in Arabic novels often links everyday objects to broader _____ meanings.
3. What are the three major literary styles found in Arabic novels?
4. Fill in the blank: Realism in Arabic novels focuses on everyday life and _____ realities.
5. What do critical interpretations and scholarly perspectives contribute to the study of Arabic novels?
6. Fill in the blank: Critical interpretations of Arabic novels often debate how they reflect identity, nationalism, or _____.

Series Summary



This Series has guided you through the study and analysis of a selected Arabic novel, building on the foundation of narrative components explored earlier. Its purpose was to help you apply theoretical knowledge to a complete literary work, showing how plot, characterisation, setting, themes, and style interact to create meaning. By situating the novel within its historical, cultural, and social context, you have seen how Arabic literature reflects and critiques the realities of Arab societies.

We began with the author's biography and intellectual background, followed by the historical and cultural context, publication history, and reception. We then examined the plot and narrative structure, considering major events, techniques, and the role of conflict and resolution. Next, we analysed characterisation and themes, focusing on protagonists, antagonists, supporting figures, and recurring ideas such as identity and nationalism, alongside the symbolic use of setting. Finally, we explored literary style and critical perspectives, highlighting language, imagery, and scholarly interpretations. In line with the Series Learning Outcomes, you should now be able to describe the background of the novel, analyse its plot and characters, identify its themes, interpret its symbolic settings, and evaluate its style and critical reception.

Glossary of Terms

- **Antagonist:** The character or force that opposes the protagonist, often symbolising obstacles such as tradition, authority, or colonial power in Arabic novels.
- **Atmosphere:** The overall feeling or mood created in a novel through descriptive language, imagery, and setting.
- **Author's biography:** The life history and intellectual background of a novelist, which often influences the themes and style of their work.
- **Characterisation:** The process by which authors create and develop characters using description, dialogue, and action.
- **Conflict:** The struggle between opposing forces in a novel that drives the plot forward.



- **Context:** The historical, cultural, and social circumstances in which a novel is written, shaping its themes and narrative.
- **Dialogue:** Conversations between characters that reveal personality, values, and relationships.
- **Episodic narration:** A narrative technique where the story unfolds in loosely connected episodes rather than a continuous sequence.
- **Flashback (al-istirjāʿ):** A narrative technique that inserts past events into the story to explain motivations or provide context.
- **Imagery:** Descriptive language that creates vivid pictures in the reader's mind, often used symbolically in Arabic novels.
- **Linear narration:** A narrative technique where events are presented in chronological order.
- **Literary style:** The way a novel is written, including tone, structure, and artistic choices such as realism, romanticism, or experimental approaches.
- **Nationalism:** A recurring theme in Arabic novels that highlights struggles for independence, unity, and cultural identity.
- **Narrative perspective:** The point of view from which a story is told, such as first-person, third-person, or omniscient narration.
- **Omniscient narration:** A narrative perspective where the narrator knows everything about the characters and events, offering a comprehensive view.
- **Plot:** The organised sequence of events that forms the backbone of a novel, including conflict, climax, and resolution.
- **Protagonist:** The main character whose journey drives the plot of the novel.
- **Publication history:** The record of when and how a novel was first published, often beginning in newspapers or journals before book release.



- **Realism:** A literary style that focuses on everyday life and social realities, portraying characters and settings with accuracy.
- **Reception:** The response of readers and critics to a novel, including praise, criticism, or debate about its themes and style.
- **Resolution:** The stage in a novel where conflict is addressed or resolved, often through reconciliation, transformation, or tragedy.
- **Romanticism:** A literary style that emphasises emotion, imagination, and idealised love, sometimes influenced by Arabic poetic traditions.
- **Setting:** The time and place in which a story unfolds, shaping the narrative and reflecting cultural contexts.
- **Social reform:** A recurring theme in Arabic novels addressing issues such as poverty, inequality, education, and gender roles.
- **Storyline:** The sequence of events that unfolds from beginning to end in a novel.
- **Supporting figures:** Secondary characters who enrich the story by providing contrast, context, or alternative perspectives.
- **Themes:** The central ideas explored in a novel, often reflecting cultural, social, or political concerns.

Concept Check Questions [Series 4]

Objective questions

1. Who is the main character whose journey drives the plot of a novel? (Linked to SLO 4.7)
2. Fill in the blank: Linear narration presents events in _____ order. (Linked to SLO 4.5)
3. Which literary style in Arabic novels focuses on everyday life and social realities? (Linked to SLO 4.11)



4. Fill in the blank: Many Arabic novels were first published in _____ or journals before being released as books. (Linked to SLO 4.3)
5. Which narrative perspective provides a comprehensive view of the story? (Linked to SLO 4.6)

Short-answer questions

6. Describe the importance of an author's biography and intellectual background in relation to Arabic novels. (Linked to SLO 4.1)
7. Explain how historical, cultural, and social contexts influence Arabic novels. (Linked to SLO 4.2)
8. Summarise the storyline and major events of the selected novel. (Linked to SLO 4.4)
9. Identify three recurring themes commonly found in Arabic novels. (Linked to SLO 4.8)
10. Interpret the symbolic use of setting in Arabic novels, giving one example. (Linked to SLO 4.9)

Long-answer questions

11. Analyse the narrative techniques employed in Arabic novels, including linear narration, episodic narration, and flashback. (Linked to SLO 4.5)
 - *Basic response*: Based on Series-only knowledge.
 - *Value-added response*: For outstanding learners who go beyond the basics.
12. Evaluate the role of conflict and resolution in shaping the plot of Arabic novels. (Linked to SLO 4.6)
 - *Basic response*: Based on Series-only knowledge.
 - *Value-added response*: For outstanding learners who go beyond the basics.
13. Discuss the contributions of literary styles such as realism, romanticism, and experimental approaches to the artistic quality of Arabic novels. (Linked to SLO 4.11)
 - *Basic response*: Based on Series-only knowledge.



- *Value-added response*: For outstanding learners who go beyond the basics.
14. Examine how Arabic prose, language, and imagery enhance the artistic quality of novels, making them enduring contributions to literature. (Linked to SLO 4.10)
- *Basic response*: Based on Series-only knowledge.
 - *Value-added response*: For outstanding learners who go beyond the basics.
15. Evaluate critical interpretations and scholarly perspectives on the selected Arabic novel, highlighting their contribution to understanding its significance. (Linked to SLO 4.12)
- *Basic response*: Based on Series-only knowledge.
 - *Value-added response*: For outstanding learners who go beyond the basics.

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 4]

Objective questions

1. Protagonist
2. Chronological
3. Realism
4. Newspapers
5. Omniscient narration

Short-answer questions

6. An author's biography and intellectual background provide insight into the themes and style of their work, linking personal experiences to literary choices.
7. Historical, cultural, and social contexts shape the themes and narratives of Arabic novels, reflecting issues such as colonialism, independence, and modernisation.



8. The storyline is the sequence of events in the novel, including introduction, rising action, climax, and resolution.
9. Identity, modernity, and nationalism (others include social reform).
10. Symbolic settings add deeper meaning, for example, the desert symbolises endurance or isolation.

Long-answer questions

11. *Basic response:* Linear narration presents events chronologically, episodic narration unfolds in loosely connected episodes, and flashback inserts past events to explain motivations.

Value-added response: Outstanding learners may add that these techniques allow Arabic novelists to experiment with time and perspective, enriching narrative depth and cultural resonance.

12. *Basic response:* Conflict drives the plot by presenting struggles, while resolution addresses or resolves these struggles, giving the story closure.

Value-added response: Learners may extend this by noting how conflicts often reflect broader societal tensions, such as tradition versus modernity, and resolutions highlight cultural transformation.

13. *Basic response:* Realism depicts everyday life accurately, romanticism emphasises emotion and imagination, and experimental styles challenge conventional forms.

Value-added response: Outstanding learners may add that these styles reflect the diversity of Arabic literature, with realism grounding novels in social realities, romanticism drawing on poetic traditions, and experimental styles pushing boundaries of narrative art.

14. *Basic response:* Arabic prose and imagery enrich novels by creating vivid scenes and symbolic meanings.

Value-added response: Learners may extend this by noting how poetic imagery connects



novels to classical Arabic traditions, while innovative prose styles make them significant contributions to world literature.

15. *Basic response:* Critical interpretations provide scholarly analysis of themes, style, and cultural significance.

Value-added response: Outstanding learners may add that engaging with diverse perspectives situates the novel within the Arabic literary canon and highlights its relevance to global literature.



Part 4.1

1. The author's life history and intellectual background.
2. Biography.
3. Colonialism, independence movements, and social reforms.
4. Modernity.
5. Newspapers or journals.
6. Newspapers.

Part 4.2

1. The sequence of events in a novel.
2. Events.
3. Linear narration, episodic narration, and flashback.
4. Chronological.
5. By presenting struggles and resolving them meaningfully.
6. Modernity.

Part 4.3

1. Protagonist, antagonist, and supporting figures.
2. Journey.
3. Identity, modernity, and nationalism (others include social reform).
4. Unity.



5. By adding deeper meaning, such as cities symbolising modernity or deserts symbolising endurance.
6. Isolation.

Part 4.4

1. By using rich prose and imagery to create vivid scenes and symbolic meanings.
2. Cultural.
3. Realism, romanticism, and experimental approaches.
4. Social.
5. They provide scholarly analysis of themes, style, and cultural significance.
6. Modernity.

References and Attributions [Series 4]

General References

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- Badawi, M. M. (1992). *Modern Arabic literature*. Cambridge University Press.
- El-Enany, R. (1993). *Naguib Mahfouz: The pursuit of meaning*. Routledge.
- Kilpatrick, H. (1992). *The modern Egyptian novel: A study in narrative form*. Ithaca Press.
- Somekh, S. (1997). *Genre and theme in the modern Arabic novel*. Ithaca Press.

Illustrations



- *Plate 4.1: Author's biography and intellectual background*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: "Generate an image of an Arabic novelist with books, symbolising biography and intellectual background."
 - Suggested OER search string: "Arabic novelist biography intellectual background Najib Mahfouz Muhammad Husayn Haykal OER"
- *Figure 4.1: Contextual influences on Arabic novels*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: "Generate a diagram showing historical, cultural, and social influences on Arabic novels: colonialism, independence, tradition, modernity."
 - Suggested OER search string: "Arabic novel historical cultural social context OER"
- *Box 4.1: Publication and reception of Arabic novels*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: "Generate a text box listing publication and reception of Arabic novels: newspapers, journals, books, literary criticism."
 - Suggested OER search string: "Arabic novel publication history reception OER"
- *Figure 4.2: Progression of storyline in Arabic novels*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: "Generate a diagram showing progression of storyline in Arabic novels: introduction, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution."
 - Suggested OER search string: "Arabic novel storyline progression OER"
- *Box 4.2: Narrative techniques in Arabic novels*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.



- Prompt: “Generate a text box listing narrative techniques in Arabic novels: linear, episodic, flashback.”
- Suggested OER search string: “Arabic novel narrative techniques OER”
- *Plate 4.2: Conflict and resolution in Arabic novels*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate an image of an Arabic novel cover symbolising conflict and resolution, such as tradition versus modernity.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic novel conflict resolution tradition modernity OER”
- *Figure 4.3: Major characters in Arabic novels*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate a diagram showing protagonist, antagonist, and supporting figures in Arabic novels.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic novel character analysis protagonist antagonist supporting OER”
- *Box 4.3: Recurring themes in Arabic novels*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate a text box listing recurring themes in Arabic novels: identity, modernity, nationalism, social reform.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “recurring themes Arabic novel identity modernity nationalism reform OER”
- *Plate 4.3: Symbolic use of setting in Arabic novels*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate an image of an Arabic novel scene showing symbolic use of setting, such as desert, city, or village.”



- Suggested OER search string: “symbolic use of setting Arabic novel desert city village OER”
- *Plate 4.4: Language and imagery in Arabic novels*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate an image of an Arabic novel page showing ornate prose and imagery, with Arabic script.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic novel language imagery prose OER”
- *Box 4.4: Literary styles in Arabic novels*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate a text box listing literary styles in Arabic novels: realism, romanticism, experimental approaches.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “literary styles Arabic novel realism romanticism experimental OER”
- *Figure 4.4: Layers of critical interpretation in Arabic novels*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate a diagram showing layers of critical interpretation in Arabic novels: thematic analysis, stylistic analysis, cultural significance.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “critical interpretation Arabic novel scholarly perspectives OER”



Course code: ARA 314

Course title: The Novel I

Course credit load: 2 Units

Series 5: Application Of Narrative Elements In Arabic Novel Analysis

Part 5.1 Applying Plot And Structure In Novel Analysis

- 5.1.1 Identifying plot stages in selected Arabic novels
- 5.1.2 Analysing conflict and resolution in narrative progression
- 5.1.3 Evaluating narrative techniques (linear, episodic, flashback) in context

Part 5.2 Characterisation And Thematic Application

- 5.2.1 Analysing protagonists, antagonists, and supporting figures in selected novels
- 5.2.2 Applying methods of characterisation (description, dialogue, action) to textual analysis
- 5.2.3 Connecting characters to recurring themes such as identity, modernity, nationalism, and social reform

Part 5.3 Symbolism Of Setting And Atmosphere

- 5.3.1 Interpreting symbolic use of urban, rural, desert, and home settings
- 5.3.2 Relating atmosphere and mood to character development and thematic depth
- 5.3.3 Evaluating how setting reinforces cultural and historical context in Arabic novels

Part 5.4 Literary Style And Critical Application

- 5.4.1 Analysing prose, language, and imagery in selected Arabic novels
- 5.4.2 Distinguishing between realism, romanticism, and experimental approaches in applied analysis
- 5.4.3 Applying critical perspectives to evaluate the artistic quality and cultural significance of Arabic novels



Introduction

In the last Series, we explored the study and analysis of a selected Arabic novel, focusing on its background, plot, characters, themes, and literary style. Building on that foundation, this Series moves a step further by guiding you to apply narrative elements directly in the analysis of Arabic novels. This practical approach is essential because it transforms theoretical knowledge into analytical skills, enabling you to engage critically with texts and appreciate their artistic and cultural significance.

The aim of this Series is to equip you with the ability to apply narrative elements such as plot, characterisation, setting, and style in structured literary analysis. By the end of the Series, you should be able to demonstrate how these elements function within Arabic novels and use them to produce insightful evaluations.

We shall commence this Series by applying plot and structure in novel analysis, identifying stages of the storyline and evaluating narrative techniques. Next, we will move on to characterisation and thematic application, where you will analyse protagonists, antagonists, and supporting figures while connecting them to recurring themes. Following that, we will continue with symbolism of setting and atmosphere, interpreting how places such as cities, villages, and deserts reinforce meaning. Finally, we will wrap up by examining literary style and critical application, distinguishing between realism, romanticism, and experimental approaches, and applying scholarly perspectives to evaluate the artistic quality of Arabic novels.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 5.1** identify the stages of plot development in selected Arabic novels,
- **SLO 5.2** analyse how conflict and resolution shape narrative progression,
- **SLO 5.3** evaluate the use of narrative techniques such as linear narration, episodic narration, and flashback in applied analysis,



- **SLO 5.4** examine the roles of protagonists, antagonists, and supporting figures in Arabic novels,
- **SLO 5.5** apply methods of characterisation, including description, dialogue, and action, to textual analysis,
- **SLO 5.6** connect characters to recurring themes such as identity, modernity, nationalism, and social reform,
- **SLO 5.7** interpret the symbolic use of urban, rural, desert, and home settings in Arabic novels,
- **SLO 5.8** relate atmosphere and mood to character development and thematic depth,
- **SLO 5.9** evaluate how setting reinforces cultural and historical context in Arabic novels,
- **SLO 5.10** analyse the prose, language, and imagery used in selected Arabic novels,
- **SLO 5.11** distinguish between realism, romanticism, and experimental approaches in applied analysis, and
- **SLO 5.12** apply critical perspectives to evaluate the artistic quality and cultural significance of Arabic novels.

5.1 Applying Plot And Structure In Novel Analysis

5.1.1 Identifying plot stages in selected Arabic novels

The **plot** is the organised sequence of events that forms the backbone of a novel. In Arabic literature, plot stages often follow a familiar progression: introduction, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. These stages help readers trace the development of conflict and its eventual outcome. For example, in Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal's *Zaynab*, the introduction presents rural Egyptian life, the rising action develops the tension between tradition and personal desire, the climax reveals the protagonist's struggle, and the resolution reflects the consequences of societal expectations.



Fill in the blank: The _____ is the organised sequence of events that forms the backbone of a novel.



Figure 5.1: Stages of plot development in Arabic novels

5.1.2 Analysing conflict and resolution in narrative progression

Conflict is the struggle between opposing forces that drives the plot forward, while **resolution** is the stage where the conflict is addressed or concluded. In Arabic novels, conflict often reflects tensions such as tradition versus modernity, colonialism versus independence, or personal desires versus societal norms. Resolution may take the form of reconciliation, transformation, or tragedy, depending on the author's purpose. Analysing conflict and resolution allows learners to see how narrative progression mirrors the challenges faced by Arab societies.

Fill in the blank: In Arabic novels, conflict often reflects tensions such as tradition versus _____.





Plate 5.1: Conflict and resolution in Arabic novels

5.1.3 Evaluating narrative techniques (linear, episodic, flashback) in context

Narrative techniques are the methods authors use to present the storyline. In Arabic novels, three common techniques are:

- **Linear narration:** Events are presented in chronological order, often used in realist novels.
- **Episodic narration:** The story unfolds in loosely connected episodes, echoing earlier Arabic prose traditions.
- **Flashback (al-istirjāʿ):** Past events are inserted into the narrative to explain motivations or provide historical context.

Evaluating these techniques in context helps learners appreciate how Arabic novelists experiment with time and perspective. For instance, Najīb Maḥfūz often used flashbacks to enrich character development and highlight historical memory.

Fill in the blank: Episodic narration unfolds in loosely connected _____.



Technique	Explanation
Linear Narration	Events unfold in a chronological sequence , maintaining clarity and continuity in storytelling.
Episodic Narration	Story is presented through loosely connected episodes , often reflecting oral traditions and diverse perspectives.
Flashback	Past events are inserted into the narrative , enriching character development and deepening thematic context.

Box 5.1: Narrative techniques in Arabic novels

Pilot questions 5.1

1. What is meant by the plot of a novel?
2. Fill in the blank: The _____ is the organised sequence of events that forms the backbone of a novel.
3. How do conflict and resolution shape narrative progression in Arabic novels?
4. Fill in the blank: In Arabic novels, conflict often reflects tensions such as tradition versus _____.
5. What are the three main narrative techniques used in Arabic novels?
6. Fill in the blank: Episodic narration unfolds in loosely connected _____.

5.2 Characterisation And Thematic Application

5.2.1 Analysing protagonists, antagonists, and supporting figures in selected novels

In Arabic novels, **characterisation** refers to the way authors create and develop characters to embody social values, cultural tensions, and personal struggles. The **protagonist** is the central



figure whose journey drives the plot, often symbolising change or resistance. The **antagonist** represents opposition, such as tradition, authority, or colonial power. **Supporting figures** enrich the narrative by providing contrast, context, or alternative perspectives. Analysing these roles helps us understand how Arabic novels reflect the complexity of Arab societies.

Fill in the blank: The protagonist is the central figure whose _____ drives the plot.

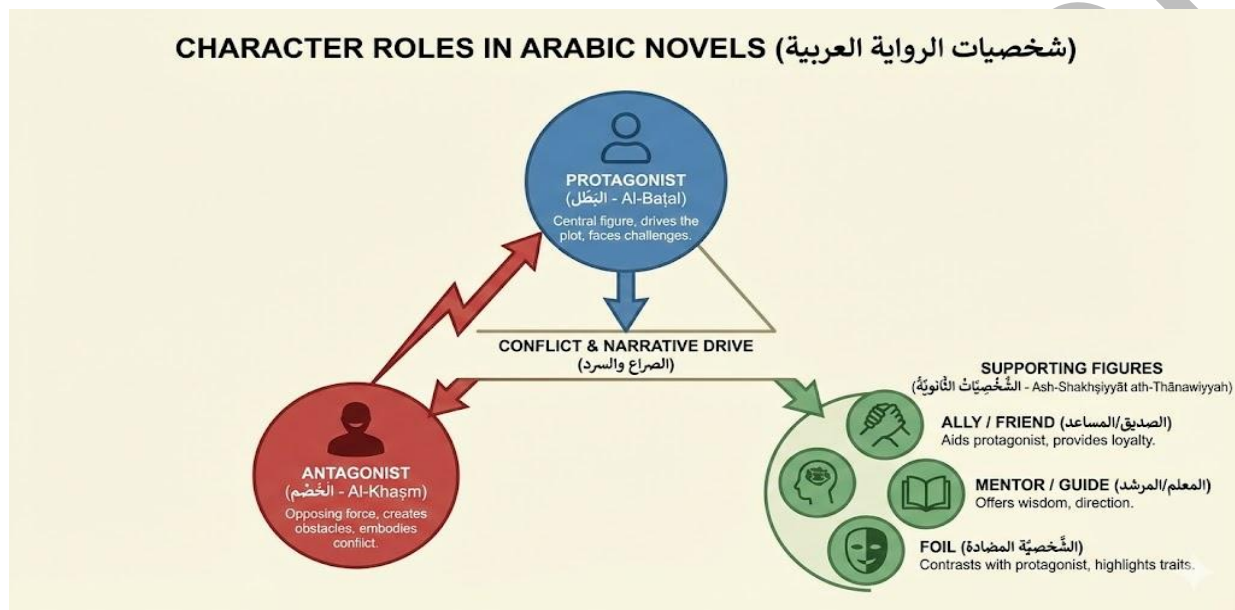


Figure 5.2: Major characters in Arabic novels

5.2.2 Applying methods of characterisation (description, dialogue, action) to textual analysis

Authors use specific **methods of characterisation** to bring characters to life:

- **Description:** Direct portrayal of physical appearance, personality, or background.
- **Dialogue:** Conversations that reveal values, emotions, and relationships.
- **Action:** Behaviour and decisions that demonstrate character traits and motivations.

By applying these methods in analysis, learners can trace how characters evolve and how their traits reinforce the novel's themes. For example, in Najīb Maḥfūẓ's works, dialogue often reveals generational conflict, while actions highlight the tension between tradition and modernity.



Fill in the blank: Dialogue in Arabic novels often reveals values, emotions, and _____.

Method	Explanation
Description	Portrays physical appearance and personal traits , often through the narrator's direct commentary.
Dialogue	Reveals values, emotions, and relationships through conversations between characters.
Action	Shows motivations and decisions by depicting behaviour, choices, and consequences within the narrative.

Box 5.2: Methods of characterisation in Arabic novels

5.2.3 Connecting characters to recurring themes such as identity, modernity, nationalism, and social reform

Characters in Arabic novels are often linked to **themes**, which are the central ideas explored in the narrative. A protagonist may embody the struggle for **identity**, balancing tradition and modernity. An antagonist may represent resistance to **social reform** or opposition to **nationalism**. Supporting figures may highlight alternative perspectives on **modernity**, such as education or urbanisation. Connecting characters to themes allows learners to see how individual journeys reflect broader cultural and political realities.

Fill in the blank: In Arabic novels, nationalism often reflects struggles for independence and _____.





Plate 5.2: Characters and themes in Arabic novels

Pilot questions 5.2

1. Who are the three main types of characters in Arabic novels?
2. Fill in the blank: The protagonist is the central figure whose _____ drives the plot.
3. What are the three main methods of characterisation used in Arabic novels?
4. Fill in the blank: Dialogue in Arabic novels often reveals values, emotions, and _____.
5. How are characters connected to recurring themes in Arabic novels?
6. Fill in the blank: In Arabic novels, nationalism often reflects struggles for independence and _____.

5.3 Symbolism Of Setting And Atmosphere

5.3.1 Interpreting symbolic use of urban, rural, desert, and home settings

In Arabic novels, the **setting** refers to the time and place in which the story unfolds, but it often carries symbolic meaning beyond its physical description. **Urban settings** such as Cairo or Damascus may symbolise modernity, social change, and political tension. **Rural settings** often



represent tradition, continuity, and community life. The **desert** is frequently used as a symbol of endurance, spirituality, or isolation, while the **home** can embody family, belonging, or conflict. Interpreting these symbolic uses allows learners to see how authors embed cultural and historical significance into the spaces their characters inhabit.

Fill in the blank: In Arabic novels, the desert often symbolises endurance, spirituality, or _____.

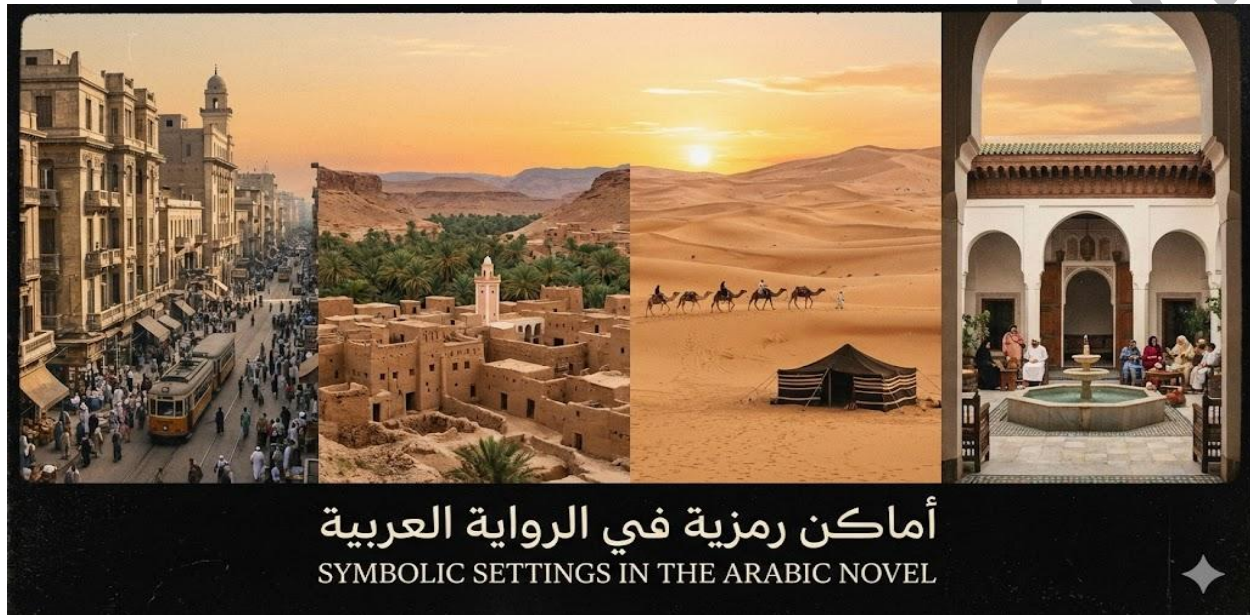


Plate 5.3: Symbolic settings in Arabic novels

5.3.2 Relating atmosphere and mood to character development and thematic depth

Atmosphere is the emotional tone or mood created by descriptive language and imagery in a novel. It shapes how readers perceive events and characters. For example, a bustling urban street may create an atmosphere of tension and modernity, while a quiet rural scene may evoke peace and tradition. Atmosphere often reinforces themes such as identity, nationalism, or social reform by aligning the emotional environment with the struggles of characters. Relating atmosphere to character development helps learners understand how mood influences the way themes are experienced in Arabic novels.



Fill in the blank: Atmosphere in a novel is the emotional _____ created by descriptive language and imagery.

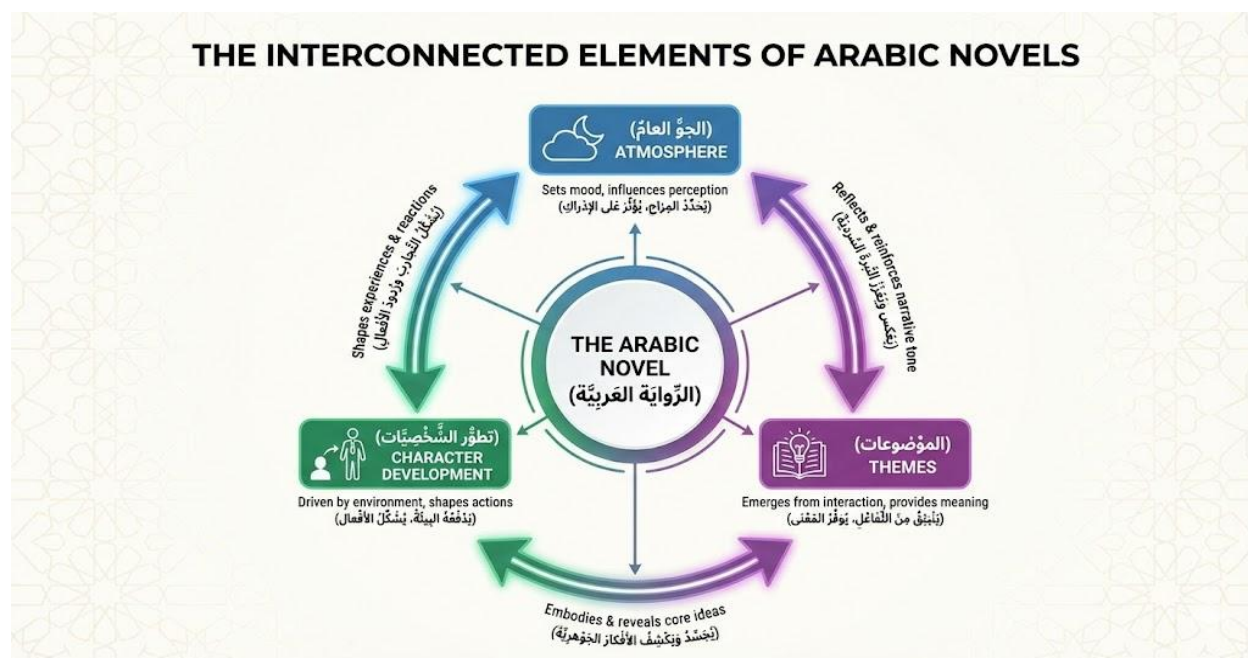


Figure 5.3: Atmosphere and thematic depth in Arabic novels

5.3.3 Evaluating how setting reinforces cultural and historical context in Arabic novels

The **cultural and historical context** of Arabic novels is often reinforced through setting. Cities may highlight colonial legacies, political struggles, or modernisation, while villages may emphasise agricultural traditions and communal values. Deserts can symbolise both hardship and resilience, reflecting the historical importance of nomadic life. Homes often serve as microcosms of society, where generational conflicts and social reforms are played out. Evaluating how setting reinforces context allows learners to appreciate the novel as a reflection of Arab history and culture.

Fill in the blank: Homes in Arabic novels often serve as microcosms of _____.

Setting	Symbolic Meaning



Urban Settings	Represent modernity, political tension, and social change , often reflecting the rise of cities like Cairo or Beirut.
Rural Settings	Symbolise tradition, community life, and continuity , portraying agricultural rhythms and village bonds.
Desert	Evokes endurance, spirituality, and isolation , serving as a backdrop for resilience, reflection, and cultural heritage.
Home	Stands for family, belonging, and conflict , acting as a microcosm of wider societal struggles and generational shifts.

Box 5.3: Setting and cultural context in Arabic novels

Pilot questions 5.3

1. What symbolic meanings are often attached to urban, rural, desert, and home settings in Arabic novels?
2. Fill in the blank: In Arabic novels, the desert often symbolises endurance, spirituality, or _____.
3. How does atmosphere contribute to character development and thematic depth?
4. Fill in the blank: Atmosphere in a novel is the emotional _____ created by descriptive language and imagery.
5. How does setting reinforce cultural and historical context in Arabic novels?
6. Fill in the blank: Homes in Arabic novels often serve as microcosms of _____.

5.4 Literary Style And Critical Application



5.4.1 Analysing prose, language, and imagery in selected Arabic novels

The **prose** of Arabic novels is not only a medium of storytelling but also a reflection of cultural and artistic traditions. Writers often employ **language** that ranges from simple and direct to ornate and poetic, depending on the intended effect. **Imagery** is used to create vivid pictures in the reader's mind, often drawing on classical Arabic poetic heritage. For example, Najīb Maḥfūz's novels use everyday language to portray realism, while other authors employ symbolic imagery to highlight philosophical or spiritual themes. Analysing prose, language, and imagery allows learners to appreciate how Arabic novels achieve artistic depth.

Fill in the blank: Imagery in Arabic novels is often drawn from classical _____ poetic heritage.



Plate 5.4: Prose and imagery in Arabic novels

5.4.2 Distinguishing between realism, romanticism, and experimental approaches in applied analysis

Literary style refers to the artistic choices made by authors in shaping their novels. In Arabic literature, three major styles are prominent:



- **Realism:** Focuses on everyday life and social realities, portraying characters and settings with accuracy.
- **Romanticism:** Emphasises emotion, imagination, and idealised love, often influenced by Arabic poetic traditions.
- **Experimental approaches:** Challenge conventional forms, using fragmented narratives, symbolism, or stream-of-consciousness techniques.

Distinguishing between these styles in applied analysis helps learners recognise how authors position their works within broader literary movements and cultural debates.

Fill in the blank: Realism in Arabic novels focuses on everyday life and _____ realities.

Style	Explanation
Realism	Focuses on everyday life and social realities , portraying ordinary characters and authentic settings.
Romanticism	Emphasises emotion, imagination, and idealised love , often contrasting reality with aspiration.
Experimental Approaches	Employs fragmented narratives, symbolism, and stream-of-consciousness , challenging traditional storytelling forms.

Box 5.4: Literary styles in Arabic novels

5.4.3 Applying critical perspectives to evaluate the artistic quality and cultural significance of Arabic novels

Critical perspectives are scholarly interpretations that assess the themes, style, and cultural importance of a novel. In Arabic literature, critics often debate how novels reflect identity, nationalism, modernity, or social reform. Some highlight the artistic quality of realist works, while others emphasise the symbolic depth of experimental novels. Applying critical perspectives enables learners to evaluate not only the aesthetic qualities of a novel but also its contribution to the Arabic literary canon and its relevance to world literature.



Fill in the blank: Critical perspectives in Arabic literature often debate how novels reflect identity, nationalism, or _____.

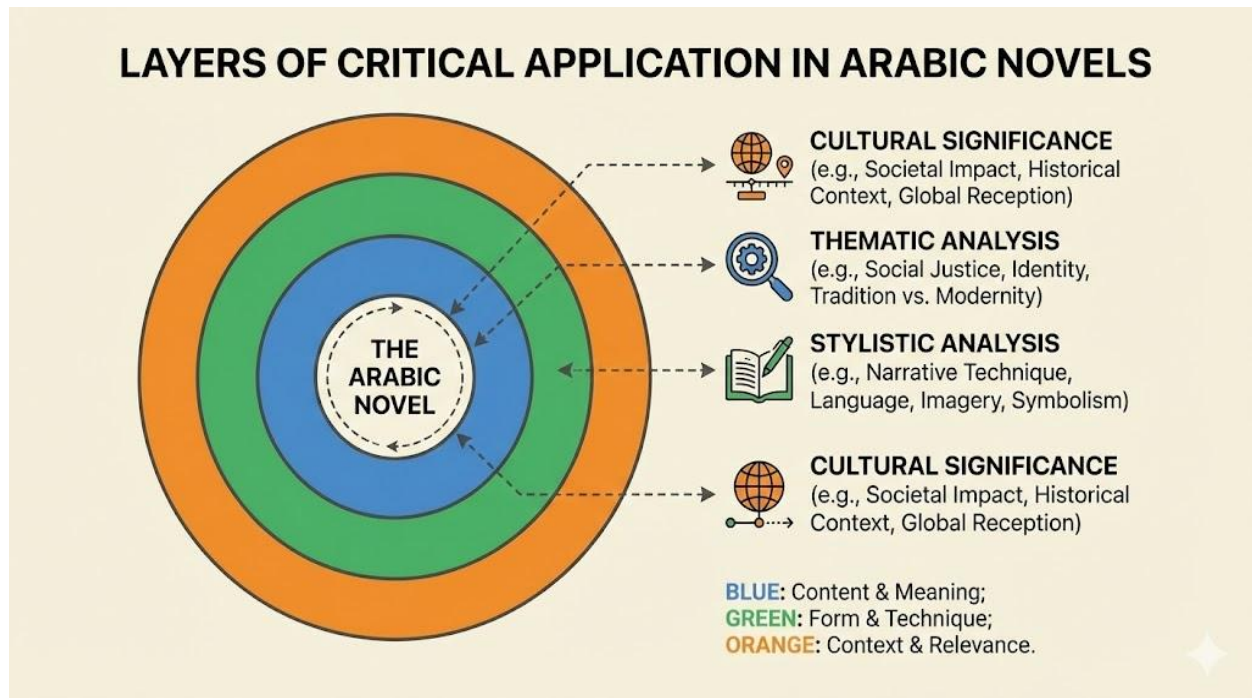


Figure 5.4: Critical perspectives in Arabic novel analysis

Pilot questions 5.4

1. How do prose, language, and imagery contribute to the artistic quality of Arabic novels?
2. Fill in the blank: Imagery in Arabic novels is often drawn from classical _____ poetic heritage.
3. What are the three major literary styles found in Arabic novels?
4. Fill in the blank: Realism in Arabic novels focuses on everyday life and _____ realities.
5. What role do critical perspectives play in evaluating Arabic novels?
6. Fill in the blank: Critical perspectives in Arabic literature often debate how novels reflect identity, nationalism, or _____.



Series Summary

This Series has focused on the practical application of narrative elements in Arabic novel analysis, building on the theoretical foundations established earlier. Its purpose was to help you move beyond description into structured evaluation, showing how plot, characterisation, setting, and style can be applied to deepen understanding of Arabic literature. By working through these Parts, you have seen how narrative elements are not isolated techniques but interconnected features that reflect cultural, historical, and social realities.

We began by applying plot and structure, identifying stages of development and examining conflict and resolution alongside narrative techniques. We then moved to characterisation and thematic application, analysing protagonists, antagonists, and supporting figures while connecting them to recurring themes such as identity and nationalism. Following that, we explored symbolism of setting and atmosphere, interpreting how urban, rural, desert, and home environments reinforce meaning and context. Finally, we examined literary style and critical application, distinguishing between realism, romanticism, and experimental approaches, and applying scholarly perspectives to evaluate artistic quality. In line with the Series Learning Outcomes, you should now be able to analyse plot stages, apply methods of characterisation, interpret symbolic settings, evaluate atmosphere, and critically assess style and perspectives in Arabic novels.

Glossary of Terms

- **Action:** A method of characterisation where a character's behaviour and decisions reveal their traits and motivations.
- **Antagonist:** The character or force that opposes the protagonist, often symbolising obstacles such as tradition, authority, or colonial power.
- **Atmosphere:** The emotional tone or mood created in a novel through descriptive language and imagery, shaping how readers perceive events and characters.
- **Characterisation:** The process by which authors create and develop characters using description, dialogue, and action.



- **Conflict:** The struggle between opposing forces in a novel that drives the plot forward.
- **Description:** A method of characterisation that portrays a character's physical appearance, personality, or background.
- **Dialogue:** Conversations between characters that reveal values, emotions, and relationships.
- **Episodic narration:** A narrative technique where the story unfolds in loosely connected episodes rather than a continuous sequence.
- **Flashback (al-istirjāʿ):** A narrative technique that inserts past events into the story to explain motivations or provide context.
- **Imagery:** Descriptive language that creates vivid pictures in the reader's mind, often used symbolically in Arabic novels.
- **Linear narration:** A narrative technique where events are presented in chronological order.
- **Literary style:** The artistic choices made by authors in shaping their novels, including tone, structure, and approaches such as realism, romanticism, or experimental forms.
- **Nationalism:** A recurring theme in Arabic novels that highlights struggles for independence, unity, and cultural identity.
- **Plot:** The organised sequence of events that forms the backbone of a novel, including introduction, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution.
- **Prose:** Written language in its ordinary form, used in novels to convey narrative, description, and imagery.
- **Protagonist:** The main character whose journey drives the plot of the novel.
- **Realism:** A literary style that focuses on everyday life and social realities, portraying characters and settings with accuracy.
- **Resolution:** The stage in a novel where conflict is addressed or concluded, often through reconciliation, transformation, or tragedy.



- **Romanticism:** A literary style that emphasises emotion, imagination, and idealised love, often influenced by Arabic poetic traditions.
- **Setting:** The time and place in which a story unfolds, often carrying symbolic meaning in Arabic novels.
- **Social reform:** A recurring theme in Arabic novels addressing issues such as poverty, inequality, education, and gender roles.
- **Supporting figures:** Secondary characters who enrich the story by providing contrast, context, or alternative perspectives.
- **Themes:** The central ideas explored in a novel, often reflecting cultural, social, or political concerns.

Concept Check Questions [Series 5]

Objective questions

1. What is the organised sequence of events that forms the backbone of a novel? (Linked to SLO 5.1)
2. Fill in the blank: In Arabic novels, conflict often reflects tensions such as tradition versus _____. (Linked to SLO 5.2)
3. Which narrative technique presents events in chronological order? (Linked to SLO 5.3)
4. Fill in the blank: The protagonist is the central figure whose _____ drives the plot. (Linked to SLO 5.4)
5. Which literary style focuses on everyday life and social realities? (Linked to SLO 5.11)

Short-answer questions

6. Explain how resolution contributes to narrative progression in Arabic novels. (Linked to SLO 5.2)



7. Describe one method of characterisation and give an example from an Arabic novel. (Linked to SLO 5.5)
8. Identify two recurring themes commonly found in Arabic novels. (Linked to SLO 5.6)
9. How does atmosphere influence character development and thematic depth? (Linked to SLO 5.8)
10. Summarise the symbolic meaning of the desert in Arabic novels. (Linked to SLO 5.7)

Long-answer questions

11. Analyse the stages of plot development in Arabic novels, using examples to illustrate each stage. (Linked to SLO 5.1)
 - *Basic response*: Based on Series-only knowledge.
 - *Value-added response*: For outstanding learners who go beyond the basics.
12. Evaluate the role of protagonists, antagonists, and supporting figures in shaping themes such as identity and nationalism. (Linked to SLO 5.4, SLO 5.6)
 - *Basic response*: Based on Series-only knowledge.
 - *Value-added response*: For outstanding learners who go beyond the basics.
13. Discuss the symbolic use of urban, rural, desert, and home settings in Arabic novels, and explain how they reinforce cultural and historical context. (Linked to SLO 5.7, SLO 5.9)
 - *Basic response*: Based on Series-only knowledge.
 - *Value-added response*: For outstanding learners who go beyond the basics.
14. Distinguish between realism, romanticism, and experimental approaches in Arabic novels, highlighting their contribution to literary style. (Linked to SLO 5.11)
 - *Basic response*: Based on Series-only knowledge.
 - *Value-added response*: For outstanding learners who go beyond the basics.



15. Apply critical perspectives to evaluate the artistic quality and cultural significance of a selected Arabic novel. (Linked to SLO 5.12)

- *Basic response*: Based on Series-only knowledge.
- *Value-added response*: For outstanding learners who go beyond the basics.

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 5]

Objective questions

1. Plot
2. Modernity
3. Linear narration
4. Journey
5. Realism

Short-answer questions

6. Resolution provides closure by addressing the conflict, either through reconciliation, transformation, or tragedy, ensuring the narrative reaches a meaningful conclusion.
7. Dialogue is a method of characterisation; for example, in Najīb Maḥfūz's novels, conversations often reveal generational conflict.
8. Identity and nationalism (others include modernity and social reform).
9. Atmosphere shapes how readers perceive characters and themes, aligning emotional tone with the struggles and development of characters.
10. The desert symbolises endurance, spirituality, or isolation, reflecting its cultural and historical significance in Arab societies.



Long-answer questions

11. *Basic response:* Plot stages include introduction, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. Each stage builds the narrative and leads to closure.
Value-added response: Learners may add examples such as Haykal's *Zaynab*, where rural life sets the introduction, personal struggle forms the rising action, and societal expectations shape the resolution.
12. *Basic response:* Protagonists drive the plot, antagonists create opposition, and supporting figures provide contrast. Together, they shape themes like identity and nationalism.
Value-added response: Learners may extend this by noting how protagonists embody modernity, antagonists resist reform, and supporting figures highlight alternative perspectives, reflecting broader cultural tensions.
13. *Basic response:* Urban settings symbolise modernity, rural settings tradition, deserts endurance, and homes family or conflict. These reinforce cultural and historical context.
Value-added response: Learners may add that cities highlight colonial legacies, villages emphasise communal values, deserts reflect nomadic resilience, and homes act as microcosms of society.
14. *Basic response:* Realism depicts everyday life, romanticism emphasises emotion and imagination, and experimental approaches challenge conventional forms.
Value-added response: Learners may extend this by explaining how realism grounds novels in social critique, romanticism draws on poetic traditions, and experimental styles push narrative boundaries.
15. *Basic response:* Critical perspectives assess themes, style, and cultural significance, situating novels within Arabic literature.
Value-added response: Learners may add that diverse scholarly interpretations highlight the global relevance of Arabic novels, showing their contribution to world literature.



Part 5.1

1. The plot of a novel is the organised sequence of events that forms its backbone.
2. Plot.
3. Conflict and resolution shape narrative progression by driving the story forward and providing closure.
4. Modernity.
5. Linear narration, episodic narration, and flashback.
6. Episodes.

Part 5.2

1. Protagonist, antagonist, and supporting figures.
2. Journey.
3. Description, dialogue, and action.
4. Relationships.
5. Characters embody and reflect themes such as identity, modernity, nationalism, and social reform.
6. Unity.

Part 5.3

1. Urban settings symbolise modernity, rural settings tradition, deserts endurance or isolation, and homes family or conflict.
2. Isolation.
3. Atmosphere contributes by shaping how readers perceive characters and aligning mood with thematic depth.
4. Mood.



5. Setting reinforces cultural and historical context by reflecting colonial legacies, communal values, nomadic resilience, and family dynamics.
6. Society.

Part 5.4

1. Prose, language, and imagery enrich novels by creating vivid scenes and symbolic meanings.
2. Arabic.
3. Realism, romanticism, and experimental approaches.
4. Social.
5. Critical perspectives provide scholarly analysis of themes, style, and cultural significance.
6. Modernity.



General References

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- Kilpatrick, H. (1992). *The modern Egyptian novel: A study in narrative form*. Ithaca Press.
- Somekh, S. (1997). *Genre and theme in the modern Arabic novel*. Ithaca Press.

Illustrations

- *Figure 5.1: Stages of plot development in Arabic novels*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate a diagram showing stages of plot development in Arabic novels: introduction, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic novel plot stages introduction climax resolution OER”
- *Plate 5.1: Conflict and resolution in Arabic novels*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate an image of an Arabic novel cover symbolising conflict and resolution, such as tradition versus modernity.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic novel conflict resolution tradition modernity OER”
- *Box 5.1: Narrative techniques in Arabic novels*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.



- Prompt: “Generate a text box listing narrative techniques in Arabic novels: linear narration, episodic narration, flashback.”
- Suggested OER search string: “Arabic novel narrative techniques linear episodic flashback OER”
- *Figure 5.2: Major characters in Arabic novels*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate a diagram showing protagonist, antagonist, and supporting figures in Arabic novels.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic novel character analysis protagonist antagonist supporting OER”
- *Box 5.2: Methods of characterisation in Arabic novels*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate a text box listing methods of characterisation in Arabic novels: description, dialogue, action.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic novel methods of characterisation description dialogue action OER”
- *Plate 5.2: Characters and themes in Arabic novels*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate an image of an Arabic novel scene showing characters symbolising themes such as identity, modernity, or nationalism.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic novel characters themes identity modernity nationalism OER”
- *Plate 5.3: Symbolic settings in Arabic novels*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.



- Prompt: “Generate an image showing symbolic settings in Arabic novels: city, village, desert, home.”
- Suggested OER search string: “Arabic novel symbolic settings city village desert home OER”
- *Figure 5.3: Atmosphere and thematic depth in Arabic novels*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate a diagram showing the relationship between atmosphere, character development, and themes in Arabic novels.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic novel atmosphere character development themes OER”
- *Box 5.3: Setting and cultural context in Arabic novels*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate a text box listing how settings reinforce cultural and historical context in Arabic novels.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic novel setting cultural historical context OER”
- *Plate 5.4: Prose and imagery in Arabic novels*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate an image of an Arabic novel page showing ornate prose and symbolic imagery, with Arabic script.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic novel prose imagery language OER”
- *Box 5.4: Literary styles in Arabic novels*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate a text box listing literary styles in Arabic novels: realism, romanticism, experimental approaches.”



- Suggested OER search string: “literary styles Arabic novel realism romanticism experimental OER”
- *Figure 5.4: Critical perspectives in Arabic novel analysis*
 - Attribution: AI-generated using Copilot graphic art tool.
 - Prompt: “Generate a diagram showing layers of critical application in Arabic novels: thematic analysis, stylistic analysis, cultural significance.”
 - Suggested OER search string: “critical perspectives Arabic novel analysis OER”

