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M.E.G.-19

The Australian Novel

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By: Kshyama Sagar Meher


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**Sample Preview
of the
Solved
Sample Question
Papers**

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QUESTION PAPER

June – 2023

(Solved)

THE AUSTRALIAN NOVEL

M.E.G.-19

Time: 3 Hours]

[Maximum Marks: 100

Notes: Answer any **five** questions. All questions carry equal marks.

Q. 1. Explain with suitable examples, the significance of the ‘convict novel’ in the history of the nineteenth century Australian novel.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-2, Page No. 10, ‘The Novel in 19th Century Australia’.

Q. 2. Discuss Miles Franklin’s novel ‘My Brilliant Career’ as an early feminist text.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-6, Page No. 40, Unit End Question.

Q. 3. Write an essay on Patrick White’s achievement as a modernist novelist.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-8, Page No. 53, ‘Unit End Question.

Q. 4. Thomas Keneally’s novel ‘Schindler’s Ark’ is a story of the triumph of humanity.” Comment on this statement, giving examples from the text.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-13, Page No. 90, Unit End Question.

Q. 5. Explain how Kim Scott writes against white Australian colonial policies in ‘Benang : From the Heart’.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-19, Page No. 132, Q. No. 6.

Q. 6. Comment on the narrative style of Yasmine Gooneratne’s novel ‘A Change of Skies’.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-22, Page No. 156, Q. No. 3 and Page No. 154, ‘Technique and Style’ and ‘Multiple Narrators’.

Q. 7. Examine how Peter Carey’s novel ‘True History of the Kelly Gang’ engages with the theme of the social outlaw.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-28, Page No. 199, ‘Major Themes of the Novel’ and Chapter-27, Page No. 191, ‘Tropes of the ‘Outlaw Hero’/Social Bandit’.

Q. 8. Write an essay tracing the development of children’s fiction in Australia.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-30, Page No. 219, Q. No. 1.

Q. 9. Write an essay critically assessing Australian fiction by women prior to 1950. Explain how their writings transformed the contours of the Australian novel.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-29, Page No. 211, Q. No. 1.

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QUESTION PAPER

December – 2022

(Solved)

THE AUSTRALIAN NOVEL

M.E.G.-19

Time: 3 Hours]

[Maximum Marks: 100

Notes: Answer any **five** questions. **All** questions carry equal marks.

Q. 1. “Nineteenth century Australian women novelists delineated life in the outback from a perspective quite different from that of the masculinist pioneer.” Discuss this statement with suitable examples.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-3, Page No. 16, ‘Introduction’, ‘Nation Building, Women and Literature in 19th Century Australia’ and Page No. 18, Q. No. 1.

Q. 2. Write an essay on the major Australian writers of fiction during the Federation years. Explain how this writing contributed to the discourse of nationalism.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-4, Page No. 24, ‘Writers of Fiction During the Federation Years’ and ‘Nationalism and the Novel’.

Q. 3. Patrick White’s novel *The Tree of Man* is viewed by many critics as a ‘pioneer novel’. Do you agree with this view ? Give reasons for your answer.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-9, Page No. 56, ‘*The Tree of Man*: A Pioneer Novel’.

Q. 4. Write an essay on the Australian novels that deal with the First and the Second World Wars.

What are the differences in their themes and concerns?

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-11, Page No. 75, Unit End Question.

Q. 5. Kim Scott’s novel *Benang : From the Heart* is a polyphonic text. Comment on this statement.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-19, Page No. 133, Q. No. 2.

Q. 6. Discuss how the novel *A Change of Skies* engages with the themes of identity crisis and cultural assimilation.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-23, Page No. 162, Q. No. 2.

Q. 7. Critically analyse the main themes of the novel *True History of the Kelly Gang* by Peter Carey.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-28, Page No. 199, ‘Major Themes of the Novel’.

Q. 8. Why are the 1980s referred to as a ‘moment of glory’ for women’s writing in Australia?

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-29, Page No. 210, ‘The 80s – A Moment of a Glory’.

Q. 9. Write an essay on the development of fiction for young adults in Australia.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-30, Page No. 218, ‘Young Adult Literature in Australia’.



Sample Preview of The Chapter

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THE AUSTRALIAN NOVEL

BLOCK 1: THE AUSTRALIAN NOVEL: THE BEGINNINGS

The Australian Novel: An Introduction



INTRODUCTION

Since the first novel, written by convict Henry Savery in 1831, the Australian novel has grown in texture. In their writings, contemporary novelists such as Kim Scott, Alexis Wright and Hsu-Ming Teo have demonstrated this. Australia has embraced a multicultural vision for its national life since the mid-20th century, and this is reflected in the incredible body of fiction written by writers from diverse cultural backgrounds who engage with themes of identity. In this chapter, we will examine the Australian novel, focusing on the social and cultural contexts in which it emerged, as well as the key texts. We also investigate the contexts and gradual development of the Australian novel in comparison to English language novels from other parts of the world.

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO AUSTRALIA: THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS

Aboriginal Australia

Australia is a very old continent. It is now a thoroughly modernised, prosperous, industrial nation. Australia, a largely immigrant country of about twenty million people, is divided federally into six states and two territories and is governed by a national government based on British and American constitutional and parliamentary principles and traditions. Billy Griffiths distinguishes three threads in Australia's national story: Indigenous, settler, and multicultural. According to F. G. Clarke, the first Australians have lived on the continent for at least 60,000 to 70,000 years. Griffiths observes that scholars have only recently grasped the breadth and diversity of Indigenous history, and that the antiquity of humanity in Australia is difficult to comprehend. A group of voyagers discovered the continent and explored and colonised every region, transforming the terrain and making the country their own through language, song and story. They used fire to create new ecosystems, dug the ground to encourage crop growth,

and constructed water controls to expand the natural range of their resources.

The Settlement of Australia

In 1788, the first fleet of British settlers arrived on the eastern coast. The Dutch were the first foreign visitors to Australia. Several Dutch navigators sailed to Australia between 1606 and the mid-1700s, the most well-known of whom were Abel Tasman and van Diemen. The first English visitor was William Dampier, who published *A New Voyage Round the World* in 1688 after visiting the North-West coast of Australia. He led another expedition to Australia, and his writings about the new lands he visited sparked further interest in the region, eventually leading to James Cook's explorations in the ship 'Endeavour.' Cook sailed into what was later named 'Botany Bay' on Australia's eastern coast in April 1770. He continued to explore the eastern coast and claimed the entire east coast in the name of the British King in August 1770, naming it New Wales, and later New South Wales. The British government chose Botany Bay as the location for a convict settlement to which overcrowded British prisons could be transported. Captain Arthur Phillip led a fleet of eleven ships carrying convicts, seamen, and officials out of England in 1787. In January 1788, the First Fleet arrived in Botany Bay. A site was chosen, and eventually grants of freehold land were made to individuals, signalling the start of European settlement in Australia. Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland, and Victoria were eventually established as colonies. Australia became a Federation with a Commonwealth Parliament in 1901. Since 1945, nearly 5.7 million people have settled in Australia, and nearly one-quarter of the population was born abroad. The Aboriginal narrative of the continent's history over the last two hundred years (between 1788 and the present) is, of course, very different – it is a narrative of marginalisation, loss, decimation, and humiliation for the Aboriginal people. Forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families was one of the most painful episodes in the history of the Australian Aboriginal people over the previous centuries.

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Governments, European churches, and welfare organisations forcibly removed thousands of children to be raised in institutions, fostered out, or adopted by non-Indigenous families on a national and international scale. They are referred to as the Stolen Generations. It severed important cultural, spiritual, and familial ties, having a long-term and intergenerational impact on the lives and well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission conducted a National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families from 1995 to 1997. The Commission's findings were published in the Bringing Them Home report in April 1997. Prime Minister Kevin Rudd began consulting with Indigenous Australians in 2007 about the format of a national apology. On 13 February, 2008, he offered a formal apology to members of the Stolen Generations on behalf of the Australian parliament.

The Australian Land and its People

The most contentious issue in Aboriginal-settler relations has been land custodianship/ownership. The Aboriginal bond with land is most evident in the extremely close bonding with one's 'country.' Aboriginal people care for their land. Early settlers in Australia were troubled by the newness of the land, its alienness, and apparent resistance to the European cultivation practises imposed on it by them. John Rickard delves into two variants of the settler myth (the "Australian legend" and the "pioneer legend"). These myths essentially idealised the men and women who confronted and attempted to master the environment.

The natural life and landscape were thought to be so unnatural and strange that no one could possibly be inspired to write a poem by them, according to some early writers from the settler community. 'Weird Melancholy,' by Edgar Allan Poe, is an example. Poems have been written about the Australian mountain forests. The early settlers, who followed European conventions in viewing and mapping the land, were unable to recognise the profound significance that the land held for its original inhabitants. According to historian Moran, "by the end of the 19th century, settlers had transformed the Australian landscape, introduced flora and fauna from "home," and displaced indigenous landscapes and meanings built up over thousands of years."

Land rights of Australia's indigenous aboriginal peoples have been a major issue since colonialists began appropriating land under the fiction of "terra nullius." *The Yolngu Bark Petition* (1963), *The Wave Hill Protest* (1966), and the establishment of the Tent Embassy were all part of the modern Land Rights movement in Australia, which began in the 1920s. Such protest movements prompted the establishment of commissions such as the Woodward Commission (1973-74), which resulted in landmark legislation such as the Aboriginal Land Rights Act, (1976), the *Mabo Decision* (1992), the Wik decision, and the recognition of Native Title (Native Title Act, 1993). Native Title is an attempt to recognise indigenous communities' traditional ownership of land.

Australian Identity: For Aboriginal peoples, identity was inextricably linked to country. This close bond with the land was brutally severed when most Aboriginal communities were forced to leave their ancestral lands. Australian national identity has always been a difficult issue for white settler communities. For some, Australian national identity was inextricably linked to British national identity. Others felt that Australian identity needed to be formed in relation to Australian land, and that it needed to be distinguished from British national identity. Australia has become a multicultural country. Until the 1940s, the majority of immigrants were of British and Irish origin. The government attempted to create a white British society and population in Australia through a series of policies and restrictions that lasted until the Second World War. In response to global developments, Australian governments modified the White Australia policy beginning in the mid-1950s and officially abandoned it in 1973. Successive governments "articulated a multicultural vision for Australia" during the 1970s. With the adoption of multiculturalism as a policy, "Australian national identity has become more complicated, even multi-faceted."

THE LITERATURE OF AUSTRALIA

Aboriginal Writing

Although Aboriginal Australians did not have a written literature, they have been telling stories since time immemorial. Their knowledge, ideas, and experiences were passed down through word of mouth in the normal course of social life, supplemented by graphic representations with regionally and socially coded and variable meanings. In 1964, Oodgeroo Noonuccal's (Kath Walker's) first poetry collection, *We are Going*, launched the contemporary phase of Aboriginal writing. The founders of contemporary Aboriginal literature, Oodgeroo, Kevin Gilbert, and Jack Davis, advocated for justice and land rights, challenged racist stereotypes, dismantled exclusionary models of national identity, and corrected biased historical narratives of progress and peaceful settlement. They also emphasised the continuity of the past and present. Thus, Aboriginal writers attempted to deconstruct colonial historians' and governments' versions of Australian history, particularly that of the continent's occupation and settlement. These concerns, which have always dominated all forms of Aboriginal discourse in Australia, can be found in some form or another in Aboriginal literature right up to the second decade of the 21st century. Indigenous writing has evolved from a marginal presence to a vital voice in the mainstream of Australian literature, representing the concerns and aspirations of the Indigenous population. Black Australian literature, which was once considered an exotic curiosity by non-Aboriginal readers, is no longer marginal and has moved from the 'fringe' to a more central position. Shoemaker charts this impressive expansion of Aboriginal writing in his division of Aboriginal literary history from the 1960s into three stages, which he admits are not neat formulations but

THE AUSTRALIAN NOVEL: AN INTRODUCTION / 3

useful indicators of the dramatic changes in the Black literary landscape. In the 1960s, Oodgeroo's poetry, along with works by Kevin Gilbert and Jack Davis, formed the first wave of contemporary Aboriginal writing, a stage marked by political writing that called for justice, freedom, and land. During the 1980s, the focus was more on revisions of the past and the anti-historical in works such as Eric Willmot's *Pemulwuy* (1987), Merritt and Davis' plays; Oodgeroo's performed work in the 'Rainbow Serpent Theatre' at World Expo 88 in Brisbane; and much of the poetry written to protest the 1988 bicentennial. Beginning around 1990, the third wave of contemporary Black Australian writing emphasised the mysterious, supernatural, hyperreal, and strangely humorous, as well as the breaking down of boundaries and forms.

Australian Literature in English

The origins of English literature can be traced back to the time of the first settlers who arrived on the 'First Fleet.' Many of them were eager to write down their impressions of the new land and send them back to England, where their works were eagerly awaited. Writing about the new land in English was particularly difficult. The early settlers were legally British subjects, bound not only by law but also by language and cultural ties to the imperial centre. They had to try to make sense of the new unfamiliar land using English.

THE NOVEL IN AUSTRALIA: AN OVERVIEW

Henry Savery's *Quintus Servinton: A Tale founded on Incidents of Real Occurrence* was the first novel written and published in Australia (1831). It was a happy-ending transportation novel disguised as a fictional autobiography. The convict system and its horrors are covered in Ralph Rashleigh (1845-50) by convict James Tucker, *Moondyne* (1879) by O'Reilly, and *The Broad Arrow* (1859) by Caroline Leakey. The most notable novel about the convict system written in nineteenth-century Australia was Marcus Clarke's *His Natural Life* (1874). There have been several classics written, including Louisa Atkinson's *Gertrude the Emigrant* (1857), Catherine Helen Spence's *Clara Morison* (1854), Caroline Leakey's *The Broad Arrow* (1859), and Rolf Boldrewood's *Robbery Under Arms* (1888).

As Australia approached Federation in the 1890s, fiction writers began to break away from the generic conventions of romance and melodrama, as well as the construction of the reader as essentially a British consumer seeking exotic and colourful tales of the colonies. Writers such as Henry Lawson, Miles Franklin, and Joseph Furphy were more interested in depicting what it meant to be "Australian" from the inside; the Australian landscape and ideas about the Australian "national character" moved to the foreground in fiction around the turn of the century." This increased interest in nationalism at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries resulted in novels such as Joseph Furphy's *Such is Life* and Henry Lawson's *Fiction*.

According to Kerryn Goldsworthy, throughout the twentieth century, Australian fiction writers returned to "the historical novel as a form of nation-building, alternative history writing, expiation of colonial guilts, or comment on their own times." Goldsworthy adds that prior to 1970, writers in historical fiction generally used a simple form of either psychological or social realism and focused on three aspects of 19th-century Australian history: convicts, pioneers, and gold. Henry Handel Richardson's *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony* (1930) and Katherine Susannah Prichard's *Goldfields Trilogy* (*The Roaring Nineties* (1946), *Golden Miles* (1948), and *Winged Seeds* (1949) are two examples of novels dealing with the *Australian Goldfields* (1950).

Goldsworthy recommends M. Barnard Eldershaw's *A House is Built* (1929), Miles Franklin's *All That Swagger* (1936), and Patrick White's *The Tree of Man* (1955) for the pioneer theme (Goldsworthy 108-9). Some of the best Australian novels of the 20th century revolved around the theme of war. *Flesh in Armour* (1932), Martin Boyd's *When Blackbirds Sing* (1962), T. A. G. Hungerford's *The Ridge and the River* (1952), G. R. Turner's *Young Man of Talent* (1959), and David Malouf's *Fly Away Peter* are a few examples (1982). Realism was the preferred mode of fiction in the first half of the 20th century. Patrick White's writing is a watershed moment in the history of Australian literature, particularly the novel.

"The emergence of Patrick White as a powerful canonical agent in the modernisation of Australian literary culture both reflected and added to the momentum for cultural change," writes Brigid Rooney. Patrick White is one of Australia's most distinguished modernist novelists and the country's first Nobel Prize winner in literature. Despite the fact that White was a prolific writer who wrote numerous poems, short stories, plays, and essays, Goldsworthy notes that "his reputation was made by, and rests on, his novels." For three decades, his work dominated Australian literature, and his influence remains broad and deep in the work of contemporary Australian writers."

The Tree of Man (1955), *Voss* (1957), *Riders in the Chariot* (1961), *The Solid Mandala* (1966), *The Vivisector* (1970), and *A Fringe of Leaves* (1971) are among White's acclaimed novels (1976). White is regarded by writer David Malouf as a "practitioner of High Modernism," alongside James Joyce, Gertrude Stein, and William Faulkner. K. Moffat notes in his study of 'The Novel in English in Australasia to 1950' that Australian novelists writing before 1950 "were all of European heritage." However, the contours of the Australian novel have shifted dramatically since the 1950s. Since the 1950s, the Australian novel has evolved to reflect a community that has changed significantly in size, outlook, and ethnic composition. Auto-biographical or fictional accounts of migration experiences have demonstrated the ability to shape public discourse on issues of citizenship and belonging. However, the growing body of contemporary 'multicultural' texts under the umbrella

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of Australian literature offers new perspectives on the country. Women novelists have been writing powerful novels that voiced the concerns of women in the newly established colonies, and later the Australian nation, since the 19th century, almost from the time the novel as a genre took shape in Australia. Though women writers such as Eleanor Dark, Katharine Susannah Prichard, and Jeanne Devanny produced a remarkable body of realist fiction in the twentieth century, they did so within a deeply patriarchal tradition, and it wasn't until the late twentieth century that women's writing became a much stronger presence. The 1980s are often referred to as the "women's decade." Helen Garner, whose debut novel *Monkey Grip* (1977), is widely regarded as the breakthrough novel of second-wave feminism, was among those who emerged in the 1970s and 1980s.

The Aboriginal Novel

Aboriginal writers have experimented with various genres, including the novel. Penny Van Toorn notes in her survey of Australian Aboriginal fiction that many Aboriginal writings resist classification within conventional European genre systems. A number of Aboriginal "fiction" writers, for example, challenge the Western categorical distinction between fact and fiction. They can accomplish this by drawing on their own experiences, writing historical fiction, and confronting readers with the dual vision of what critics commonly refer to as magical realism. These three strategies serve as the foundation for three subgenres of Aboriginal fiction. Van Toorn's first category includes novels such as Monica Clare's *Karobran* (1978), which is based on Clare's childhood in New South Wales, Archie Weller's *Day of the Dog* (1981), John Muk Muk Burke's *Bridge of Triangles* (1994), which is based on his childhood in New South Wales, and Herb Wharton's novel *Unbranded* (1992). Aboriginal novelists concerned with rewriting history challenge the myths of heroic exploration and peaceful settlement that were disseminated for many years through the colonial educational system. *Pemulwuy* (1987) by Eric Willmot and *Bulmurn* (1995) by Richard Wilkes told stories of Aboriginal resistance to white settlement.

OTHER IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

Q. 1. Write the tradition of aboriginal writing in Australia.

Ans. The Australian Aboriginal peoples did not have a written literature, but they have been telling stories since time immemorial. Traditional oral songs and narratives are an embodied and emplaced form of knowledge. Information is stored in people's minds in various narrative forms, which are transmitted from the mouths of the older generation to the ears of the young at the appropriate time. Aboriginal people did not record their knowledge, thoughts, or experiences in writing. They were passed down through word of mouth in the normal course of social life, supplemented by graphic representations with regionally and socially coded and variable meanings. While Australia has a literary tradition of song cycles and other oral expressions of

creativity that is almost as old as the continent itself, Penny Van Toorn notes that the contemporary phase of Aboriginal writing begins with the publication of Oodgeroo Noonuccal's first poetry collection, *We are Going*, in 1964.

Oodgeroo, Kevin Gilbert, and Jack Davis, regarded as the forefathers of contemporary Aboriginal literature, advocated for justice and land rights, challenged racist stereotypes, deconstructed exclusionary models of national identity, and corrected skewed historical narratives of progress and peaceful settlement. They also emphasised the continuity of the past and present. Thus, Aboriginal writers attempted to deconstruct colonial historians' and governments' versions of Australian history, particularly that of the continent's occupation and settlement. These concerns, which have always predominated all forms of Aboriginal discourse in Australia, can be found in some form or another in Aboriginal literature all the way up to the second decade of the 21st century.

Indigenous writing has evolved from a marginal presence to a vital voice in the mainstream of Australian literature, representing the concerns and aspirations of the Indigenous population. As Adam Shoemaker pointed out, there has been a significant shift in the field of indigenous writing. According to Shoemaker, black Australian literature, which was once an exotic curiosity for non-Aboriginal readers, is no longer marginal and has moved from an exploration of the "fringe" to a more central position. Shoemaker attributes the rapid growth and recognition of indigenous writing talent, particularly in the decades since 1980, to institutional factors such as the Australia Council's policies, the establishment of a strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board, the support of the Australian National Playwrights' Conference for indigenous perspectives, and the work of independent indigenous companies such as Brisbane's Kooemba Jdarra Indigenous Performed Arts.

Shoemaker charts this impressive expansion of Aboriginal writing in his division of Aboriginal literary history from the 1960s into three stages, which he admits are not neat formulations but useful indicators of the dramatic changes in the Black literary landscape. In the 1960s, Oodgeroo's poetry, along with works by Kevin Gilbert and Jack Davis, formed the first wave of contemporary Aboriginal writing, a stage marked by political writing that called for justice, freedom, and land. During the 1980s, the focus was more on revisions of the past and the anti-historical in works such as Eric Willmot's *Pemulwuy* (1987), Merritt and Davis' plays; Oodgeroo's performed work in the 'Rainbow Serpent Theatre' at World Expo 88 in Brisbane; and much of the poetry written to protest the 1988 bicentennial. Beginning around 1990, the third wave of contemporary Black Australian writing emphasised the mysterious, supernatural, hyperreal, and strangely humorous, as well as the breaking down of boundaries and forms. Shoemaker emphasises that, despite its experimentation and diversity, this stage