



## TEXTS AND ACTIVITIES

Students are divided into 4 teams. Each team appoint a team leader who is the official mouthpiece of the team and provides the answer after consulting the rest of the students. He/she is equipped with a bell to ring in order to answer first.

They are given a text (whatever may suit the students' needs and interests; in our case the Italian teachers have chosen a fairy tale) to skim and scan; they are also expected to have read other descriptions of main characters from other short stories or novels. Moreover, they are supposed to know the authors of classical books.

Skim and scan:

- the historical novel "The Betrothed" by A. Manzoni: chapters I, III, IV, IX, XII, XX, XXXIII.
- Alessandro Manzoni's short biography
- some information about the novel as a literary genre

ALESSANDRO MANZONI-from Wikipoedia

**Alessandro Francesco Tommaso Antonio Manzoni** (Italian: [ales'sandro man'dzo:ni]; 7 March 1785 – 22 May 1873) was an Italian poet and novelist. He is famous for the novel *The Betrothed* (orig. Italian: *I Promessi Sposi*) (1827), generally ranked among the masterpieces of world literature. The novel is also a symbol of the Italian Risorgimento, both for its patriotic message and because it was a fundamental milestone in the development of the modern, unified Italian language.

Manzoni was born in Milan, Italy, on 7 March 1785. Pietro, his father, aged about fifty, belonged to an old family of Lecco, originally feudal lords of Barzio, in the Valsassina. The poet's maternal grandfather, Cesare Beccaria, was a well-known author and philosopher, and his mother Giulia had literary talent as well. The young Alessandro spent his first two years of life in cascina Costa in Galbiate and he was wet-nursed by Caterina Panzeri, as attested by a memorial plate affixed in the place. In 1792 his parents broke their marriage and his mother began a relationship with the highbrow Carlo Imbonati, moving to England and later to Paris. For this reason, their son was brought up in several religious institutes.

Manzoni was a slow developer, and at the various colleges he attended he was considered a dunce. At fifteen, however, he developed a passion for poetry and wrote two sonnets of considerable merit. Upon the death of his father in 1807, he joined the freethinking household of his mother at Auteuil, and spent two years mixing with the literary set of the so-called "ideologues", philosophers of the 18th-century school, among whom he made many friends, notably Claude Charles Fauriel. There too he imbibed the anti-Catholic creed of Voltaireanism.



In 1806–1807, while at Auteuil, he first appeared before the public as a poet, with two pieces, one entitled *Urania*, in the classical style, of which he became later the most conspicuous adversary, the other an elegy in blank verse, on the death of Count Carlo Imbonati, from whom, through his mother, he inherited considerable property, including the villa of Brusuglio, thenceforward his principal residence.

In 1808, Manzoni married Henriette Blondel, daughter of a Genevese banker. She came from a Calvinist family, but in 1810 she became a Roman Catholic. Her conversion profoundly influenced her husband. That same year he experienced a religious crisis which led him from Jansenism to an austere form of Catholicism. Manzoni's marriage proved a most happy one, and he led for many years a retired domestic life, divided between literature and the picturesque husbandry of Lombardy.

His intellectual energy in this period of his life was devoted to the composition of the *Inni sacri*, a series of sacred lyrics, and of a treatise on Catholic morality, *Osservazioni sulla morale cattolica*, a task undertaken under religious guidance, in reparation for his early lapse from faith. In 1818 he had to sell his paternal inheritance, as his money had been lost to a dishonest agent. His characteristic generosity was shown at this time in his dealings with his peasants, who were heavily indebted to him. He not only cancelled on the spot the record of all sums owed to him, but bade them keep for themselves the whole of the coming maize harvest.

In 1819, Manzoni published his first tragedy, *Il Conte di Carmagnola*, which, boldly violating all classical conventions, excited a lively controversy. It was severely criticized in a *Quarterly Review* article to which Goethe replied in its defence, "one genius," as Count de Gubernatis remarks, "having divined the other." The death of Napoleon in 1821 inspired Manzoni's powerful stanzas *Il Cinque maggio* (*The Fifth of May*), one of the most popular lyrics in the Italian language. The political events of that year, and the imprisonment of many of his friends, weighed much on Manzoni's mind, and the historical studies in which he sought distraction during his subsequent retirement at Brusuglio suggested his great work.

#### *The Betrothed*: 1842's definitive edition

Round the episode of the *Innominato*, historically identified with Bernardino Visconti, the first manuscript of the novel *The Betrothed* (in Italian *I Promessi sposi*) began to grow into shape, and was completed in September 1823. The work was published, after being deeply reshaped by the author and revised by friends in 1825–1827, at the rate of a volume a year; it at once raised its author to the first rank of literary fame. It is generally agreed to be his greatest work, and the paradigm of modern Italian language.

*The Penguin Companion to European Literature* notes that 'the book's real greatness lies in its delineation of character...in the heroine, Lucia, in Padre Cristoforo, the Capuchin friar, and the saintly cardinal of Milan, he has created three living examples of that pure



and wholehearted Christianity which is his ideal. But his psychological penetration extends also to those who fall short of this standard, whether through weakness or perversity, and the novel is rich in pictures of ordinary men and women, seen with a delightful irony and disenchantment which always stops short of cynicism, and which provides a perfect balance for the evangelical fervour of his ideal'.

In 1822, Manzoni published his second tragedy, Adelchi, turning on the overthrow by Charlemagne of the Lombard domination in Italy, and containing many veiled allusions to the existing Austrian rule. With these works Manzoni's literary career was practically closed. But he laboriously revised *The Betrothed* in Tuscan-Italian, and in 1840 republished it in that form, with a historical essay, *Storia della colonna infame*, on details of the 17th century plague in Milan so important in the novel. He also wrote a small treatise on the Italian language.

#### Manzoni's funeral procession in Milan

The death of Manzoni's wife in 1833 was preceded and followed by those of several of his children, and of his mother. In the mid-1830s he attended the "Salotto Maffei", a salon in Milan hosted by Clara Maffei, and in 1837 he married again, to Teresa Borri, widow of Count Stampa. Teresa also died before him, while of nine children born to him in his two marriages all but two pre-deceased him. In 1860 King Victor Emmanuel II named him a senator. The death of his eldest son, Pier Luigi, on 28 April 1873, was the final blow which hastened his end. He was already weakened as he had fallen on 6 January while exiting the San Fedele church, hitting his head on the steps, and he died after 5 months of cerebral meningitis, a complication of the trauma. His funeral was celebrated in the church of San Marco with almost royal pomp. His remains, after they lay in state for some days, were followed to the Cimitero Monumentale in Milan by a vast cortege, including the royal princes and all the great officers of state, but his noblest monument was Giuseppe Verdi's Requiem, written to honour his memory.

His *Osservazioni sulla morale cattolica* was quoted by Pope Pius XI in his encyclical on Christian Education 'Divini Illius Magistri': "20. It is worthy of note how a layman, an excellent writer and at the same time a profound and conscientious thinker, has been able to understand well and express exactly this fundamental Catholic doctrine: The Church does not say that morality belongs purely, in the sense of exclusively, to her; but that it belongs wholly to her. She has never maintained that outside her fold and apart from her teaching, man cannot arrive at any moral truth; she has on the contrary more than once condemned this opinion because it has appeared under more forms than one. She does however say, has said, and will ever say, that because of her institution by Jesus Christ, because of the Holy Ghost sent her in His name by the Father, she alone possesses what she has had immediately from God and can never lose, the whole of moral truth, omnem veritatem, in which all individual moral truths are included, as well those which man may learn by the help of reason, as those which form part of revelation or which may be deduced from it.



## THE NOVEL-

Some **characteristics of the novel** are prose writing, extensive length, fictional stories, diversity of subgenres and character development.

The novel is a fictional literary text characterized by considerable length and complexity.

It usually addresses issues of human experience through a sequence of events that occur to a group of people within a specific context.

This genre encompasses a wide variety of sub-genres that has been expanded over the years and are determined by the themes they address and the narrative techniques they use.

The most important characteristics of the novel

As is usually the case with other themes associated with art and literature, there are great debates about the definitive characteristics of the novel.

However, it is possible to establish some that are common to most experts.

Writing in prose

One of the main features of the novel is its writing in prose, that is to say that it is not written in poetic format. This implies that it lacks metric rhythm, repetition or periodicity.

In some novels lines can be used in verse with different aesthetic purposes. However, in all these cases it can be distinguished that the general style corresponds to prose and that the verse is used only as a narrative resource.

Length

The length of novels is one of the most debated features within the literary field. However, in general, the range is considered to be between 60,000 and 200,000 words.

Extension depends on gender and history. At times, when the plot and character development is brief, a novel can be very short.

However, when the development of situations warrants it, it can reach a large extent.

An example of this is the books of the saga of Harry Potter where each one of the novels was longer than the previous one.

This is because as the plot and the stories of the different characters became more complex, a greater extension was necessary.



The length depends on the sensitivity the author has to determine how necessary it is to develop a theme or a character. There is no standard measure and may vary according to the intentionality of each situation.

#### Innovation

There is no rule that determines this characteristic, however, throughout the history of the humanity, the novels have been representatives of the innovation. That is to say, through them, the transit has been made to new ways of doing literature.

In fact, his name itself speaks of innovation: it comes from the Latin *Novellus* meaning "young and new". Which represents its importance within the vanguard of literature for each new generation.

This can also be seen in its continuous transformation over the centuries, unlike other literary genres that have remained stable over time, especially in the realm of poetry.

#### Fictitious but plausible content

Another fundamental feature of the novel are the themes it addresses. It is considered that these are pieces of fiction, however, his narrative is usually realistic and poses the facts plausibly and coherently.

This realism is given by the characters, their relationships and the coherence between the facts, even if they are fictitious. This implies the existence of a logic underlying the events and the way in which the characters react to them.

Thanks to this logic, the novel can consistently accommodate genres such as fantasy and science fiction. Which, are characterized by convincingly narrating facts that the reader recognizes as unreal.

#### Development of the plot

The plot refers to the events that unfold throughout history. This is determined by a conflict that raises the author and unfolds through different situations that live the characters of the work.

The extension of the novel allows the plot to be developed widely, giving space to complex situations.

In many cases even the central plot is surrounded by other small stories that are interconnected with the main facts.

Novels may have plots of different complexity. This will depend on the number of characters and situations that are intertwined to shape the facts.



In any case, the quality of a novel does not depend on the complexity of its plot. In reality, it depends on the ability of the author to give each fact and each character the necessary depth in the development of it.

### Character development

Thanks to the length and the realistic characteristics of the novel, it is possible that there is also a broad development of the characters.

In some cases this is reflected in the existence of a large number of characters with different incidents within the plot.

However, this possibility also leads to the creation of deep characters to which the author makes known through a Biography details or events that clearly reveal their character.

The depth of character development, however, is always different and depends on the characteristics of each novel.

### Publication Practices

The size and complexity of many novels, makes it necessary to publish independently.

This makes a big difference with other literary formats such as poetry or story, which are usually published within anthologies or collections.

### Diversity of sub-genera

Over time, the novel has been transformed and evolved into new themes, approaches and aesthetic proposals.

For this reason, at present there is a great variety of sub-genera to the point that in some cases it is difficult to classify a novel in only one of them.

Each sub-genre employs different narrative techniques, different styles and tones to develop themes with very different approaches.

For example, historical novels use the narration of real historical facts but nuanced by fictional characters and events. This is done in order to propose a specific position on the events he narrates.

In contrast, the science fiction novel, create future societies based on orders and technologies that do not exist. This with the aim of illustrating characteristics typical of the current society through comparison or hyperbole.





## EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS BASED ON “THE BETROTHED” CHOSEN AND SHARED BY OUR ITALIAN TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

1- Activity one – Answer 10 questions on Manzoni’s “The Betrothed”

- a- What is don Abbondio holding in his hand when the braves stop him?
- b- What’s the name of don Abbondio’s servant?
- c- What’s the name of the friar to whom Agnes and Lucy give the nuts as a present?
- d- What was Friar Christopher’s real name?
- e- What is the name of the Nun from Monza?
- f- What kind of dolls did little Gertude receive as a present?
- g- What is the name of the gardener who was Getrude’s lover?
- h- What does Renzo pick off the floor when he arrives in Milan?
- i- How is the Unnamed’s castle described?
- j- What is the name of don Rodrigo’s bravo who dies of plague?

2 – Activity two - Who is the author?

Answer a few questions about Alessandro Manzoni

- a- When was Alessandro Manzoni born?
- b- What is the title of Manzoni’s first tragedy?
- c- In which year does he finish writing “The Betrothed”?
- d- In which year does he publish “The Betrothed” in Tuscan?
- e- What is the title of the historical essay that Manzoni wrote on the plague in Milan?

3 – Activity 3 - Once upon a time.....the novel

Answer True/false questions about the novel as a literary genre

- a- The novel is a complex literary genre
- b- The protagonists of novels are always historical characters
- c- The novel is a narrative text of a certain length
- d- There are many different kinds of novels
- e- A novel can be published in anthologies
- f- In the novel, the ability of the author is of no importance
- g- Sci-Fi novels are characterized by the description of future worlds
- h- The historical novel is a mixture of history and invention
- i- The character’s psychological introspection is the same in all novels

4 – Activity 4 - From book to character...from character to book

Listen to 10 short passages regarding descriptions about the main characters of well-known novels. Guess the character to whom the passage refers and the book in which the character appears

## QUOTATIONS.

1. *"You are protected, in short, by your ability to love! The only protection that can possibly work against the lure of power like Voldemort's! In spite of all the temptation you have endured, all the suffering, you remain pure of heart, just as pure as you were at the age of eleven, when you stared into a mirror that reflected your heart's desire, and it showed you only the way to thwart Lord Voldemort, and not immortality or riches."*(Harry Potter).
2. *"It wasn't a human. It couldn't be. It was four times as tall as the tallest human. It was so tall its head was higher than the upstairs windows of the houses. Sophie opened her mouth to scream, but no sound came out. Her throat, like her whole body, was frozen with fright."* (BFG).
3. *"She is very fair-skinned, with long, straight, dark brown hair and chocolate brown eyes. Her face is heart-shaped—a wide forehead with a widow's peak, large, wide-spaced eyes, prominent cheekbones, a thin nose and a narrow jaw with a pointed chin. Her lips are a little out of proportion, a bit too full for her jaw line. Her eyebrows are darker than her hair and more straight than they are arched. She's slender but not at all muscular, and weighs about 115 pounds. She has stubby fingernails because she has a nervous habit of biting them."*(Bella Swan).
4. *"But I can assure you," she added, "that Lizzy does not lose much by not suiting his fancy; for he is a most disagreeable, horrid man, not at all worth pleasing. So high and so conceited that there was no enduring him! He walked here, and he walked there, fancying himself so very great! Not handsome enough to dance with! I wish you had been there, my dear, to have given him one of your set-downs. I quite detest the man."*(Mr. Darcy).
5. *"Once again...welcome to my house. Come freely. Go safely; and leave something of the happiness you bring."* (Dracula).
6. *"They tried to find a way home. Suddenly, they came upon a gingerbread house. It was made of gingerbread and candy. The children ran to the house. They were so hungry. They started eating. An old woman came out. "Why, children! How nice to see you."* (Hansel and Gretel)
7. *"It would be an insult to take you to the palace dressed in these old rags."* (Cinderella).
8. *"I have the advantage of knowing your habits, my dear Watson," said he. "When your round is a short one you walk, and when it is a long one you use a handsome. As I perceive that your boots, although used, are by no means dirty, I cannot doubt that you are at present busy enough to justify the hansom."*(Sherlock Holmes).
9. *"The wolf said, "You know, my dear, it isn't safe for a little girl to walk through these woods alone."* (Little Red Riding Hood).
10. *"He thought back on his family with deep emotion and love. His conviction that he would have to disappear was, if possible, even firmer than his sister's. He remained in this state of empty and peaceful reflection until the tower clock struck three in the morning. He still saw that outside the window everything was beginning to grow*





*light. Then, without his consent, his head sank down to the floor, and from his nostrils streamed his last weak breath.” (Gregor Samsa).*

#### 5 – Activity 5 - From book to author

Some titles of famous novels are read out and you have to find out who the author is

- a- DRACULA ( Bram Stocker)
- b- THE METAMORPHOSIS (Franz Kafka)
- c- THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA (Ernest Hemingway)
- d- BFG (Road Dahl)
- e- PRIDE AND PREJUDICE (Jane Austen)
- f- HARRY POTTER (J. K. Rowling)
- g- CINDERELLA (The Brothers Grimm)
- h- THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY (Oscar Wilde)
- i- 1984 (George Orwell)
- j- MOBY DICK (Herman Melville)
- k- THE LITTLE PRINCE (Antoine de Saint-Exupery)
- l- INKHEART (Cornelia Funke)
- m- THE LORD OF THE FLIES (William Golding)
- n- FAHRENHEIT 451 (Ray Bradbury)
- o- THE HOBBIT (J.R.R. Tolkien)
- p- MISS PEREGRINE’S HOME FOR PECULIAR CHILDREN (Ransom Riggs)
- q- ALICE IN WONDERLAND (Lewis Carroll)
- r- THE KITE RUNNER (Khaled Hosseini)
- s- THE LORD OF THE RINGS (J.R.R. Tolkien)
- t- DOCTOR JEKYLL AND MR HYDE (Robert Louis Stevenson)
- u- ROBINSON CRUSOE (Daniel Defoe)

<p><b>Unit 2</b>  <b>Time: 10 h</b>  <b>“Hansel and Gretel”</b></p>  <p>Fratelli Grimm, Fiabe, ed. Mondadori, 2016, pp.663, ISBN978-8804-67205-0</p>	<p><b>Lesson 1 Title “Let’s analyse the text”</b></p> <p>Some relevant passages are abridged from the book and analysed by asking questions about the significant level (i.e. analysing the point of view from which the events are told), the characters and their functions; finally students are invited to “dive” into the text, trying to make up alternative endings or potential narrative solutions.</p>	<p><b>Knowledge:</b> learn about the essential structures of a narrative text.</p> <p><b>Skills:</b> single out the main communicative and expressive functions and purposes of a narrative text</p> <p><b>Competences:</b> read, understand and interpret a written text</p>
	<p><b>Lesson 2 Title “Reading for fun”</b></p> <p>At an early stage students work individually to test their knowledge about the analysis of narrative texts, the psychological-fantasy genre and the author. Later, the teacher groups them into teams formed by 4-5 members in order to play the TV game “Per un pugno di libri”, weekly broadcast on the Italian channel RAI 3. Each team appoints an official spokesperson who, after consulting the other members of the team, will have to answer the questions on authors, on book titles, literary genre, characters and stories</p>	<p><b>Knowledge:</b> learn to read fluently and organise the information properly</p> <p><b>Skills:</b> work in groups, sum up, single out the main information in a text.</p> <p><b>Competences:</b> analysing a passage, making links</p>