



# **NARAJOLE RAJ COLLEGE**

**(NAAC Accredited B Grade Govt. – Aided College)**

*NARAJOLE: PASCHIM MEDINIPUR: PIN-721211*

**Department of English**

Semester – VI

Paper – DSE-3

Name of Teacher – Tanmay Kumar Goswami

## **SENSATIONAL NOVEL & THE WOMAN IN WHITE AS SENSATIONAL NOVEL**

Sensational novel is also known as sensational fiction. This new literary genre was produced in Britain in 1860 - 1870. It may be considered as the formulated piece of melodramatic novel. It is also modeled upon Gothic novels which deals with criminal stories generally. In short it may be defined as the novel of electrifying, suspenseful, horrific plot with the themes of intrigue, jealousy, murder, adultery and emotional breakdown. In this kind of novel romance and realism are woven in an balanced and effective way which is capable of arousing a sensation among the readers. Though realism and romance are very contradictory in nature but they are combined in this sensational novel very well. As the result of the industrial revolution identity crisis was very common problem which was embodied in this new genre very well. **The Woman in White** is a perfect example of this type. This novel reflects all the very features of a sensational novel successfully.

The plot of the novel **The Woman in White** is very electrifying, suspenseful and horrific. We see in the plot Percival did intrigue against Laura and Anne Catherick. In his conspiracy he took Count Fosco and Eleanor to plot the plan. They planned to kill Laura in London. For this purpose they convinced Laura that her half sister Marion is very ill and she is in London now. So Laura became agreed to go there to meet her sister without knowing the truth. The readers are very anxious to see the next. They murdered Anne Catherick in an accident and put her identity on Laura and send her in an asylum. It creates suspense for the reader. Readers are very eager to know what waiting for the victim is. Again Marian went to meet Anne Catherick in the asylum where she saw that Laura was there in place of Anne. She became very much shocked to see this. At last giving some money to the nurse in confidentially managed to escape from asylum. It was full of suspense when they were escaping. They faced many difficulties on the way of



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their journey. Then by chance they met Walter Hartright.

On the other hand there have many horrific incidents in the main plot. Percival made a horrible plan to kill Laura in London. On this purpose he planned to take her with them. As Laura was very ill and they could do nothing they did the same with Anne Catherick. How critical criminal they were. They designed the plot to eliminate Anne and put her identity on Laura. This is a horrible incident. If we see the early part of the novel Walter met a stranger women on his way to London. That woman was mysterious. She appeared in white dress and looked very normal. She requested Walter for help as she had lost the way of London. Walter called in a cab and helped her. Just then two policemen came there and asked for a woman in white who had escaped from asylum. Walter was surprised to know this. Now he could feel well that the policemen were searching for that very woman whom he had helped just few moments ago. It was a very mysterious incident. In this way the plot creates many mysterious and suspenseful incident again and again.

Further it is considered as sensational novel for its themes of murder, intrigue, adultery, mistaken identity, kidnap and love and hatred which are employed very well. These are the sole themes of sensational novel. In the novel villain Percival with his friend and advisor Count Fosco and his wife murdered Anne Catherick who resembles Laura Fairlie. Percival was badly in need of some money for which he committed this murder. By this same incident he destroyed the identity of Laura. So he got all the properties of Laura. Again in the novel we see the murder of Count Fosco who was a member of secret Italian society. He was murdered as he did betray the other members of the society. There have multiple murder incidents in the novel. These make the novel a sensational novel successfully.

Intrigue is also another important theme of this novel. Percival arranged for this intrigue. He made a will of the family that after the death of Laura, his wife all her property he will get by law easily. For this purpose he convinced Laura to go London



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with them to meet her sister Marian which was false. Percival and his friend planned to kill Laura there. But unfortunately Laura was very ill and they could do nothing there. On the way back they killed Anne Catherick and put her identity to Laura. Thus Laura was send to asylum in the name of Anne. This complicated intrigue was structured by Percival and his friend. This is the soul of the plot. Before it Percival is an illegitimate son of his father. But with the help of his friend he made the false documents of his mother's marriage. At the same time he also made his birth certificate falsely. With this he proved himself as heir of his father and became the owner of Blackwater house at Hampshire.

Limitless aggression for money is another important theme of the novel. At the very beginning of the novel Walter Hartright came to Limmeridge house for money as a drawing teacher. Then we see Percival to make false marriage certificate and birth certificate for property of his illegitimate father. Again he plotted to marry Laura Fairlie for her property only. Though there was no love or affection for Laura but he created a continuous pressure on Laura to do so. He made will by which after death of Laura he will get all her fortunes. He did it to murder Laura but ultimately he destroyed her identity and possessed all her property. So it is clear that all the unfair activities which Percival committed only for monetary purpose. Every moment in every activities his greediness for money is reflected which is the theme to make this novel a sensational one. Adultery is another theme of this novel. It is found in the character of Mr. Fairlie. They had a school near the Limmeridge house of this Fairlie family. In this school Mrs. Catherick was an employee. But an illegitimate relationship was formed between Mr. Fairlie and Mrs. Catherick and it is a resulted as the birth of Anne Catherick who resembled very much with Laura Fairlie. Mrs. Fairlie also loved this girl very much. That is why again Percival only for the purpose of money married Laura Fairlie whereas there have no love at all. It may be one type of adultery which Percival did. Percival is also the result of some adultery. He is actually illegitimate son of his father. That is why he had to



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make false documents of his mother's marriage and his birth certificate. In this way there have multiple adultrys in the novel which led this sensational novel.

At last nor less important the theme of emotional breakdown is there in the novel. Marian came to know from Sir Percival Glyde and Count Fosco wife Eleanor that her half sister died in London of some serious illness. But she did not believe this. She went to asylum to meet Anne Catherick to know the truth. But she saw their Laura who had been there with the identity of Anne losing her actual identity. Laura emotionally broke down with this intrigue. She again and again tried hard to tell the others that she was Laura but in vain. Marian also terribly was shocked to see this.

The last but most important theme was identity crisis. The main protagonist of the novel suffers from the Identity crisis which was the result of the industrial revolution of the Great Britain in that time. This novel reflects this theme with the protagonist Laura Fairlie. Percival plotted to kill Anne and put her identity on Laura. She was admitted to the asylum in the name of Anne. In this way Laura lost her identity. She could manage to escape from asylum but it was her problem to restore identity. Last part of the novel deals only with the theme of restoring her identity as Laura. Walter with the help of his friend Pesca who was an Italian language teacher got Count Fosco and collected his confession which restored Laura's identity. So we see the theme of Identity crisis in the novel and it played an important role to make this novel a sensational novel.

Now considering all the important characteristics of a sensational novel we may conclude that this novel is a perfect piece of this genre reflecting all the very points of a sensational novel clearly.