You are just going to encounter a piece of prose as you browse through the next few lines. Yes, prose is any written matter that is expressed in ordinary language as opposed to poetry that uses rhymes, meters, and imagery to convey ideas and emotions. Derived from the Latin word ‘prôsa’, prose literally transforms into ‘straight-forward’. Hence, you would always find prose articles to be descriptive, narrative, or explanatory. Any spoken and writing language that is expressed in a sentence without any regular rhythmic pattern is termed as prose. Say, for instance, any article that you find in a magazine is a prose narrative. Further, the latest science fiction you read is a prose. In fact, prose can be a novel, essay, short story, drama, fable, fiction, folk tale, legend, biography, hagiography, literature, myth, saga, theme, or tragedy. Learn about some of these kinds of prose writing in detail by navigating through the following lines.

**Different Types Of Prose Writing**

**Short Story**
A prose narrative limited to a certain word limit is defined as a short story. It generally includes descriptions, dialogues, and commentaries. However, one characteristic that distinguishes a short story from the other kinds of prose is the concentration on a compact narrative with detailed character drawing. In general, short stories are believed to have existed decades back, even before the art of writing was known to man. The oldest recorded example of a short story is considered to be the Egyptian tale of “The Two Brothers” dated around 3200 BC.

**Novel**
Similar to a short story, a novel includes uncertain information since it centers on different types and possibilities. However, the length of a novel is highly undecided due to the numerous characters and situations included in it. In short, a novel is a comprehensive narrative on a large scale, in particular. Just like short stories, novels, too, have known to exist ever since literature came into existence. Amongst all the prose kinds, the novel dominates the industry, both in terms of quality and quantity. However, considering its quantity, its only rival is the magazine short story.
**Fable**

A fable is a short allegorical tale emphasizing on a moral or any principle of behavior. The characters of fables are usually animals that portray like human beings, though they keep their animal traits intact. The moral of these fables is highlighted towards the end of the story in the form of a proverb and is generally enacted. The oldest fables describe stories of why crows are black, or why different animals display different characteristics, such as a sly fox, a dignified lion, and so on. The earliest fables came from Greece and India, while the oldest Western fables were those of Aesop.

**Fairy Tale**

Stories of kings, princesses, poor farmers, and queens are not new to any one of us. They are generally guided by supernatural or magical events that fascinate us to get engrossed in them. These short stories are nothing but fairy tales. They are distinguished by generalized characters without being individualized or localized; thus, the names ‘a king’, ‘a queen’, ‘a poor farmer’, and ‘a princess’. Fairy tales begin with misfortunes graduating towards undergoing adventures and solving mysteries, and ending in a happily-ever-after mode, thereby rewarding the virtue. These stories often revolve around charms, magic, disguise, and spells. Hans Christian Andersen (Danish), Basile (Italian), the Grimm Brothers (German), Perrault (French), and Kightley and Croker (English) are known to create some of the most famous collections of fairy tales.

**Tale**

A tale is a kind of prose narrative that describes strange and wonderful events in the form of somewhat bare summary. However, the main character is not focused on or given due importance. In fact, the goal or purpose of the tale is highlighted and given front seat rather than the main protagonist himself. For example, in the tale English folk of ‘Jack and the Beanstalk’, the beanstalk and the giant are highlighted instead of Jack’s personality.


The novel can be defined as an extended work of prose fiction. It derives from the Italian novella (‘little new thing’), which was a short piece of prose. The novel has become an increasingly popular form of fiction since the early eighteenth century, though prose narratives were written long before then. The term denotes a prose narrative about characters and their actions in what is recognisably everyday life. This differentiates it from its immediate
predecessor, the romance, which describes unrealistic adventures of supernatural heroes. The novel has developed various sub-genres:

In the **epistolary novel** the narrative is conveyed entirely by an exchange of letters. (e.g. Samuel Richardson, *Pamela.*)

A **picaresque novel** is an early form of the novel, some call it a precursor of the novel. It presents the adventures of a lighthearted rascal (picaro=rogue). It is usually episodic in structure, the episodes often arranged as a journey. The narrative focuses on one character who has to deal with tyrannical masters and unlucky fates but who usually manages to escape these miserable situations by using her/his wit. The form of the picaresque narrative emerged in sixteenth-century Spain. Examples are: Cervantes, *Don Quixote*; and in the English tradition: Thomas Nash, *The Unfortunate Traveler*; Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*; Daniel Defoe, *Moll Flanders*.

The **historical novel** takes its setting and some of the (chief) characters and events from history. It develops these elements with attention to the known facts and makes the historical events and issues important to the central narrative. (e.g. Walter Scott, *Ivanhoe*; Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*)

The **bildungsroman** (novel of education) is a type of novel originating in Germany which presents the development of a character mostly from childhood to maturity. This process typically contains conflicts and struggles, which are ideally overcome in the end so that the protagonist can become a valid and valuable member of society. Examples are J.W. Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister*; Henry Fielding, *Tom Jones*; Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield*; James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

The **gothic novel** became very popular from the second half of the eighteenth century onwards. With the aim to evoke chilling terror by exploiting mystery and a variety of horrors, the gothic novel is usually set in desolate landscapes, ruined abbeys, or medieval castles with dungeons, winding staircases and sliding panels. Heroes and heroines find themselves in gloomy atmospheres where they are confronted with supernatural forces, demonic powers and wicked tyrants. Examples are Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*; Ann Radcliffe, *Mysteries of Udolpho*; William Faulkner, *Absalom! Absalom!*

The **social novel**, also called industrial novel or Condition of England novel, became particularly popular between 1830 and 1850 and is associated with the development of nineteenth-century realism. As its name indicates, the social novel gives a portrait of society, especially of lower parts of society, dealing with and criticising the living conditions created by industrial development or by a particular legal situation (the poor laws for instance). Well-known

**Science fiction** is a type of prose narrative of varying length, from short-story to novel. Its topics include quests for other worlds, the influence of alien beings on Earth or alternate realities; they can be utopian, dystopian or set in the past. Common to all types of science fiction is the interest in scientific change and development and concern for social, climatic, geological or ecological change (e.g. Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*; H.G. Wells, *The Time Machine*; Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*; George Orwell, *1984*; Anthony Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange*).

**Metafiction** is a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality. It concentrates on the phenomenological characteristics of fiction, and investigates into the quintessential nature of literary art by reflecting the process of narrating. (e.g. Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*; John Fowles, *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*; Doris Lessing, *The Golden Notebook*)

A **romance** is a fictional narrative in prose or verse that represents a chivalric theme or relates improbable adventures of idealised characters in some remote or enchanted setting. It typically deploys monodimensional or static characters who are sharply discriminated as heroes or villains, masters or victims. The protagonist is often solitary and isolated from a social context, the plot emphasises adventure, and is often cast in the form of a quest for an ideal or the pursuit of an enemy. Examples: Anonymous, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*; Sir Philip Sidney, *Arcadia*; Percy B. Shelley, *Queen Mab*; Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*.

A **short-story** is a piece of prose fiction marked by relative shortness and density, organised into a plot and with some kind of dénouement at the end. The plot may be comic, tragic, romantic, or satiric. It may be written in the mode of fantasy, realism or naturalism.