

FORMAT FOR TAKING NOTES ON A NOVEL

©David W. Madden
California State University, Sacramento

AUTHOR

TITLE (and subtitle)

EDITION

The edition you read

Date of first publication and date of this edition

Other publishing history (alternate title, serial publication)

SETTING

Locale

Time period

Time span (duration of time in the novel)

Outstanding historical references (events, people)

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

Names, main characteristics, relationships to one another

SUMMARY OF PLOT

Overall summary of what happens

Main conflicts and how these are resolved

MAJOR THEMES

Not subject matter. A theme is an underlying idea.

METHOD OF NARRATION and NARRATIVE POINT OF VIEW

who is telling the story; is the narrator identified; is it a first person narrator (with how much knowledge about characters and events?) or a third person narrator (again, with how much knowledge); is the narrative method a mixed one; does the method of narration stand out or is it subtle and seemingly hidden

DIVISIONS or STRUCTURAL DEVICES

number of chapters, parts, books, divisions, etc.

STYLISTIC FEATURES

humor, satire, irony, symbols, pet phrases, dialogue, scene description, sensory perception, quirks, vivid language, illustrations or maps, etc.

PERSONAL EVALUATION AS OF THIS DATE

Indicate whether this is your first or a subsequent reading, and write a paragraph explaining frankly what you thought of the book. Ask yourself if you would recommend this work and what would be your reasons for your decision.