After reading the story try to ask yourself the following questions:

- Who are the main characters of the story?
- What are the main events/conflicts of the story?
- What roles do the main characters play in the main events/conflicts of the story?
- Is there a moral to the story? If yes, what do you think it is?
- From whose point of view is the story told?
- What is the main tone of the story?
- What is the most relevant imagery in the story?
Analysing Fiction
a checklist of literary terms

- **Vocabulary** The author's choice of individual words - which may be drawn from various registers such as colloquial, literary, technical, slang, journalism, and may vary from simple and direct to complex and sophisticated.

- **Grammar** The relationships of the words in sentences, which might include such items as the use of adjectives for description, of verbs to denote action, switching between tenses to move between present and past, or any use of unusual combinations of words or phrases to create special effects.

- **Syntax** The arrangement and logical coherence of words in a sentence. The possibilities for re-arrangement are often used for emphasis or dramatic effect.
Analysing Fiction:
a checklist of literary terms

• **Literary devices** The devices commonly used in literature to give added depth to a work. For example, imagery, point of view, symbolism, allusions.

• **Tone** The author's attitude to the subject as revealed in the style and the manner of the writing. This might be for instance serious, comic, or ironic.

• **Narrator** The person telling the story. This may be the author, assuming a full knowledge of characters and their feelings: this is an omniscient narrator. It might alternatively be a fictional character invented by the author. There may also be multiple narrators. You should always be prepared to make a clear distinction between Author, Narrator, and Character - even though in some texts these may be (or appear to be) the same.
Analysing Fiction: a checklist of literary terms

- **Narrative** The story which is being told: that is, the history of the events, characters, or whatever matters the narrator wishes to relate to the reader.

- **Characterisation** The means by which characters are depicted or created - commonly by accounts of their physical appearance, psychological characteristics, direct speech, and the opinions of the narrator or other characters about them.

- **Point of view** The literary strategy by which an author presents the events of a narrative from the perspective of a particular person - which may be the narrator or may be a fictional character. The point of view may be consistent, or it may switch between narrator and character(s). It should not be confused with the mere opinion of a character or the narrator.
Analysing Fiction: a checklist of literary terms

- **Theme** The underlying topic or issue, often of a general or abstract nature, as distinct from the overt subject with which the work deals. It should be possible to express theme in a single word or short phrase - such as 'death', 'education', or 'coming of age'.

- **Genre** The literary category or type (for instance, short story, novella, or novel) to which the work belongs and with whose conventions it might be compared. We become aware of genre through cultural experience and know for instance that in detective stories murder mysteries are solved; in fairy stories beautiful girls marry the prince; and in some modern short stories not much happens.

- **Cultural context** The historical and cultural context and the circumstances in which the work was produced, which might have some bearing on its possible meanings. A text produced under conditions of strict censorship might conceal its meanings beneath symbolism or allegory.
Analysis of Prose in Fiction

Someone is always speaking in a novel -- whether it is a narrator who is not a character within the fiction, or a character within the narrative. Consequently both the particular ideas, attitudes, feelings, perspectives of that speaker, and the concerns and attitudes of the novel as a whole, will be presented through the prose. The analytical reader needs to understand what information is conveyed and how it is conveyed.
Analysis of Prose in Fiction

Some things to look for:
A. **prose**: the language; sentence structure; imagery and setting; discourse features.

B. **characterization**

C. **genre and tradition**
Analysis of Prose in Fiction

The language:

• What kind of language is used? Here are some possibilities:
• Is the language
  – abstract or concrete language?
  – language of emotions or of reason?
  – language of control or language of openness?
Analysis of Prose in Fiction

• What are the connotations of the language? How much language is connotative? What areas of experience, feeling, and meaning are evoked?

• How forceful is the language (see also imagery and sentence structure)?

• what aspects of feeling are supported or created by the sound of the language? Alliteration, musicality, smoothness, abruptness, etc.
Analysis of Prose in Fiction

**Imagery and setting:** Images and use of setting can tell you a great deal about a character, a narrator, a fictional work:

- Imagery as figurative language: what sort of metaphors, similes and analogies does the speaker use, and what does that tell you about their outlook and sensibility?

- Images as motifs: are their recurring images? What ideas or feelings are aroused by them, what people or events are brought to mind by them?

- Imagery as setting: How is the setting used? To create a sense of realism? To create mood? To represent or create a sense of states of mind or feelings? To stand for other things (i.e. symbolic or allegorical?)
Analysis of Prose in Fiction

Discourse features

• how long does the person speak?
• are the sentences logically joined or disjointed, rational or otherwise ordered, or disorderly?
• what tone or attitude does the talk seem to have?
• does the speaker avoid saying things, deliberately or unconsciously withhold information, communicate by indirection?
• to what extent and to what end does the speaker use rhetorical devices such as irony?
Analysis of Prose in Fiction

B. Characterization
What ideas are expressed in the passage, and what do they tell you about the speaker?

What feelings does the speaker express? What does that tell you about them? Are their feelings consistent?

Does the character belong to a particular character type or represent a certain idea, value, quality or attitude?

What is the social status of the character, and how can you tell from how they speak and what they speak about?

What is the sensibility of the speaker? Is the person ironic, witty, alert to the good or attuned to evil in others, optimistic or pessimistic, romantic or not romantic (cynical, or realistic?).

How much control over and awareness of her emotions, her thoughts, her language does the speaker have?
Analysis of Prose in Fiction

C. Genre & Tradition:

• Different traditions and genres tend to use language and characters and setting and plot differently, and this may show in individual passages.

• Is it a satire, a comedy, a tragedy, a romance? Is it a novel of social comment, an exploration of an idea? (There are more kinds.) Is it in a certain sub-genre like a detective novel, science fiction, etc.? Is it an allegory or a satire, is it realistic or more symbolic? How does this genre, sub-genre or tradition tend to use setting, characters, language, mood or tone? Does this one fit in?