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BA English Honours | Semester VI | ENG6CJ304

Narrative Constructs in Non-Fiction

Module 2: Non-Fiction and Journalism: Sports, Travel, and Agrarian Crisis • Comprehensive Notes

Chapter 2: Literary Journalism and Socio-Political Reportage

Literary journalism—frequently designated as creative non-fiction or narrative journalism—marries the rigorous factual accuracy of investigative reporting with the stylistic sophistication, narrative pacing, and character development of prose fiction. Far from sterile daily wire bulletins, literary journalism exposes the deep cultural currents, economic structures, and human dramas shaping contemporary society.

2.1 Myth, Nationhood, and Athletic Destiny: Sid Lowe on Lionel Messi

Sid Lowe's celebrated *Guardian* sports feature (18 December 2022)—"Messi emulates Maradona in fairytale ending to a story like no other"—demonstrates how sports journalism elevates athletic victory into national myth-making.

Reporting on Argentina's dramatic 2022 World Cup triumph in Qatar, Lowe constructs an epic narrative arc comparing Lionel Messi's quiet, disciplined genius with Diego Maradona's mythic, rebellious shadow. Lowe analyzes how the collective emotional weight of 45 million Argentinians, enduring severe economic inflation and social precarity, found cathartic redemption in football, demonstrating that modern sports journalism is cultural sociology written at fever pitch.

2.2 Spatial Poetics and Urban Transmutation: Jan Morris's "The Fourth Dimension"

Legendary Welsh travel writer Jan Morris is renowned for her lyrical, historical, and deeply impressionistic portraits of global cities. In "The Fourth Dimension," Morris explores how cities are experienced across the fourth dimension of **time**.

A city is never merely a collection of brick, asphalt, and concrete; it is a palimpsest where past imperial glories, forgotten revolutions, and future anxieties coexist within the daily rhythm of streets. Morris's prose illustrates how creative travel writing transforms physical urban geography into a meditation on human transience and historical memory.

2.3 The Vanishing World of Subaltern India: P. Sainath's "Desperate Peoples"

Magsaysay Award-winning investigative journalist P. Sainath is India's foremost chronicler of rural distress and agrarian crisis. In his *Frontline* investigative essay "Desperate Peoples: The Vanishing World of India's Tribes" (August 2010), Sainath delivers an unsparing indictment of neoliberal economic development.

Sainath documents how mega-dam projects, open-cast corporate mining, and ruthless deforestation have forcibly displaced indigenous Adivasi communities, driving them into bonded migrant labor and cultural extinction. Sainath shatters the elite media narrative of "India Shining," demanding that journalism serve as a voice for the voiceless and hold state and corporate power accountable.

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Advanced Critical Theory, Hermeneutics & Literary Praxis

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1. Hermeneutic Paradigms and Textual Mechanics

Critical inquiry into Module 2: Non-Fiction and Journalism: Sports, Travel, and Agrarian Crisis reveals how textual forms construct meaning through complex aesthetic strategies and structural choices:

- **Structuralism and Semiotic Deconstruction:** The organization of signs, tropes, and syntactical structures establishes narrative authority while simultaneously revealing internal fissures. Binary oppositions embedded within the discourse—such as center versus margin, tradition versus modernity, and subjective interiority versus objective reality—are systematically problematized through textual slippages and ambiguous signifiers.
- **Postcolonial and Subaltern Interventions:** Interrogating power dynamics, linguistic hegemony, and epistemic violence within the literature demonstrates how marginalized voices negotiate, resist, or appropriate dominant canonical modes. The representation of colonial encounters, diaspora, and regional identity operates not merely as a passive backdrop but as an active agent reshaping literary genres.
- **Feminist, Queer, and Intersectional Critique:** Analyzing the construction of gender roles, patriarchal surveillance, and non-normative subjectivities provides crucial insights into how bodily experience, domesticity, and public agency are mediated across divergent historical moments and cultural landscapes.
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2. Historiographical Context and Reception Theory

Every literary text and cultural artifact is firmly situated within specific historical material conditions. Understanding Module 2: Non-Fiction and Journalism: Sports, Travel, and Agrarian Crisis requires examining how contemporaneous social movements, intellectual revolutions, and material shifts in print and digital publishing influenced textual production. Furthermore, Hans-Robert Jauss's concept of the "horizon of expectations" demonstrates that textual reception is never static; each successive generation of readers reinterprets these works through evolving ethical, philosophical, and cultural frameworks.

3. Comparative Aesthetic and Thematic Matrix

The following analytical matrix summarizes key comparative dimensions across traditional interpretive paradigms and modern critical frameworks relevant to Module 2:

Critical Dimension	Traditional / Formalist Reading	Contemporary Critical Synthesis	Pedagogic & Interpretive Significance
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