IB Paper Two Prompts
These questions appeared in past IB Paper Two exams.

The questions relevant to our study are about the novel or the short story genres.

May 2011 Prose the Novel and Short Story
A. In what ways and for what reasons do the works of prose fiction you have studied seek to represent thought or interior consciousness? In your answer you should refer to at least two of the works you have studied
B. “Fiction is an essentially rhetorical art – that is to say the novelist or short story writer persuades us to share a certain view of the world for the duration of the reading experience.” To what extent do you agree with this statement? In your answer you should refer to at least two of the works in your study
A. Authors are aware of the power of their works to shock the reader. Referring to at least two of the works in your study, explore some of the methods they have employed to do this.
B. In what ways and to what effects do at least two of the works you have studied make use of one or more aspects of the natural world as a significant motif?
C. Texts frequently present two (or more) realities, which are often very different. Referring to at least two of the works you have studied, show to what extent and in what ways writers have made use of the interest and tension this creates.
D. “A writer is always being asked ‘For whom do you write?’.” Discuss the author’s sense of his or her audience in at least two of the works you have studied.

May 2010 – Prose the Novel and Short Story
A. “Where other people exist genuine individuality is never possible.” To what extent does this statement reflect the experiences of the central characters and the problems encountered by them in at least two works of prose fiction you have read (and studied this year)
B. Discuss the ways in which at least two writers you have studied (this year) have sought to undermine or interfere with the “voices” of their characters in order to persuade, manipulate or instruct their audience.
A. Compare the presentation and significance of older people in at least two works you have studied.
B. “With the exception, perhaps of music and dance, in all kinds of art it is possible to distinguish the content from the form.” In what ways do at least two works you have studied (this year) make use of this relationship between content and form?
C. Discuss the role of education and/or learning (in the widest sense) in at least two works you have studied (this year).
D. Literature often deals with the themes of coincidence, chance, or accident. To what extent, and in what ways, have at least two works you have studied dealt with all of any of these ideas.

May 2009 – Prose: The Novel (and short story)
A. Authors use the portrayal of characters who are somehow trapped or imprisoned as a means to criticize society. Referring closely to at least two of the works in your study, show to what extent and in what ways this statement is true.
B. Analyze the extent to which the reliability of the narrator can affect the reader’s understanding of events in at least two of the works you have studied.
A. Writers of literature rarely offer answers that resolve issues they raise. To what extent and in what ways does this statement apply to at least two of the works you have studied.
B. In what ways is the literature you have studied concerned with gaining, maintaining, or losing a paradise of some kind? Refer closely in your answer to at least two works.

C. Poetry can be prosaic and prose can be poetic. Explore this statement in relation to the varieties of language used in at least two of the works studied.

D. “There is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so.” To what extent do at least two of the works you have studied present concepts of good and bad as a matter of perception?

May 2008 - Prose: The Novel (and short story)

A. Discuss the ways in which at least two novels you have studied demonstrate that the search for identity can be a conscious or an unconscious process.

B. “Defiance becomes our duty in the face of injustice.” Referring to at least two works you have studied, explore the ways in which the writers have attempted to persuade us to accept or challenge this view.

A. “Why won’t writers allow children simply to be children?” Discuss the presentation and significance of children, or the state of childhood, in at least two works you have studied in the light of this complaint.

B. It is said that writers are the conscience of the world. In what ways have at least two of the works you have studied encouraged you to appreciate or question this assertion?

C. “Art is a lie that makes us realize the truth.” Discuss at least two works you have studied in light of this statement, and say how far you would agree with it.

D. “Although doubt is not a pleasant condition, certainty is an absurd one.” In the light of this statement, explore the impressions of doubt and/or certainty conveyed in at least two works you have studied.

November 2008 - Prose: The Novel (and short story)

A. The trusted friend and betraying ally are recurring elements in fiction. In what ways and to what extent have at least two writers in your study made some use of such characterizations?

B. “For a piece of fiction to have value, it must make some social or political statement.” To what extent is this assertion true, based on at least two works you have read and studied?

A. The description of people or places or events in literary works is likely to be more than decoration. Compare several instances in at least two of the works you have studied where description has had a crucial effect on the work.

B. The courage to think or act or speak differently from others is often at the heart of literature. In what ways have at least two writers you have studied presented such choices?

C. Literature frequently “challenges the barriers that prejudice erects.” How convincingly have at least two writers in your study presented such barriers and with what effect have they been opposed?

D. “In literature, names are never wasted.” In at least two works you have studied, discuss the ways writers use names in their works to achieve their larger purpose.

2007 – Prose: The Novel (and short story)

A. “The art of the storyteller is to hold the attention of the reader.” With reference to two or three works you have studied, discuss ways in which the writers have employed techniques that hold your attention.

B. Literature is often about crossing boundaries, both physically and mentally. In what ways, and to what extent, does the crossing of boundaries contribute to two or three works you have studied?
A. Some writers present a world view that is pessimistic and disorderly, while others present a world of hope and possibility. How, and to what extent, do your writers reflect these views in two or three works you have studied?
B. “It is the role of literature to challenge and confront the conventional values of society.” In what ways, and to what extent, have conventional values been challenged in two or three works you have studied?
C. “Memory feeds imagination.” To what effect has memory been used in two or three works you have studied?
D. “It is impossible for literature to be completely objective.” How, and to what extent, does this statement apply to two or three works you have studied?

2006 – Prose: the Novel (and short story)
A. “My own preference is for a story that is a kaleidoscopic, with a number of different voices rather than one character speaking for the entire novel or short story.” Focusing on single and/or multiple voices, discuss the effects of viewpoint in the two or three novels or short stories you have read.
B. “The characters of a novel can only be individualized if they are set in a background of particularized time and place.” How important is the setting of a particular time and/or place to the development of the characters? Refer in detail to at least two novels or short stories.
A. “Art is on the side of the oppressed.” Evaluate the means by which two or three works in your study either confirm or raise questions about the validity of this assertion.
B. “Works of literature are often layered, and many require close attention to discover their depth and complexity.” With respect to two or three of the works you have studied, show how valid this view is.
C. “A writer conveys not only experiences but a whole world in which these are possible.” With respect to two or three works you have studied, discuss whether the author has created a coherent, imagined “world.”
D. In what ways and to what effect have writers in your study made use of illustrative elements such as anecdotes, analogies, allusions, and the like in their works?

2005 Prose: The Novel (and short story)
A. How far, and in what ways, do writers present issues of self awareness and/or self deception in two or three novels or short stories you have studied?
B. Symbols and/or motifs are an essential element of many novels and short stories. How have either or both of these devices been used, and in your opinion, how successfully, in two or three of the works you have studied
A. Using two or three of the works you have studied, discuss how and to what extent the writers have shown the pervasive influence of the past.
B. If one of the roles of literature is to provide insight into human nature, by what techniques and to what degree did your texts offer you such insight? Discuss with references to two or three works you have studied.
C. A writer may speak in his or her own voice or take on the voice of a character or persona. Comparing two or three works you have studied in the light of this statement, discuss what effects those choices have on each work as a whole.
D. “In the end is my beginning.” This is a statement made by an author to describe how he organizes his works. What do you understand by the sentence, and how does it cast light on the literary strategies employed in two or three works you have studied?

2004 Prose: The Novel and Short Story
A. Compare the ways in which writers of two or three novels or short stories in your study have sought to make their portrayal of characters and/or situations credible.
B. With close reference to two or three novels or short stories in your study, compare the ways in which writers have used narrative strategies and with what effect.
A. “Some writers succeed in hypnotizing the reader; others compel the reader to think.” Compare and contrast two or three works of literature in your study in the light of this statement.
B. “In literature the concept of 'home' is often used to locate the thoughts, memories and dreams of humankind.” In the light of this quotation, explore the ways in which “home” is used in any two or three works of literature you have studied.
C. Compare the ways in which writers have explored the relationship between experience and understanding. Refer in detail to any two or three works of literature in your study.
D. Consider the use made of music or musical elements in any two or three works of literature you have studied.
2003 Prose: Novel (or short story)
A. “Not rounding off, but opening out.” Comment upon the way the writers of the novel and short story deal with the ending in relation to the whole. In your answer you should refer to two or three novels or short stories you have studied.
B. To what extent would you agree that plot should be valued more highly than style in the novel and short story? In your answer refer to two or three novels that you have studied.
A. In what ways does the concept “freedom of choice” inform your reading in any two or three works you have studied?
B. To what extent have you found it possible, in your consideration of literary works, to separate the individual from his or her public role? Refer to 2 or 3 works.
C. “Fact versus fantasy: this is a clash that can have comic or tragic results.” Bearing this statement in mind, explore the results of using realism and fantasy in 2-3 works you have studied.
D. Compare how writers in your study have explored the themes of judgment and punishment, or disguise and deceit, or love and friendship, and with what effect.
2002 Prose: The Novel (and Short story)
A. In novels and short stories, characters tend to have both an “inner life” and a “public life.” Both of these may be part of the fiction, if not equally so in every work. Choose examples from your reading to discuss how and how effectively these two aspects of human existences are presented.
B. A story has to be told by somebody. Compare in detail your impressions of the “story-tellers” in two or three novels or short stories that you have studied. Was the “story-teller” the same as the writer (implicitly or explicitly) or not? How does this question influence your reading?
A. To read work which was produced in a culture other than your own has difficulties, but cultural differences between audience and text may be productive. How far do you agree?
B. Literature admits conflicts between good and good, as well as between good and evil. Which two or three works would you choose to discuss to illustrate this generalization and why might both types of conflict be important?
C. How far has your study of two or three works of literature suggested that the idea of the writer’s “intention” is beset with difficulties or is a useful approach, or is it both?
2001 Prose: The Novel (and Short story)
A. Compare uses and/or abuses of power as a theme in novels or short stories you have read. Say what this theme and its presentation contribute to each work you discuss.
B. Say what the titles of some individual works you have studied indicated to you at the outset. In what ways were your first impressions reinforced or altered as you read and explored each work?
A. With specific reference to two or three works you have read, including drama if appropriate, compare the effects of an identified or unidentified narrative voice.
B. “Realism is as contrived a way of writing as any of the methods of writing against which it is defined.” With specific reference to two or three works which you have read say how far you would agree with this proposition.
C. Compare the subject matter and style of two or three works you have read, which highlight regional locality, saying in each case what is gained by this local focus.
D. “Reading against the grain is a phrase often used to describe reading that identifies but refuses to accept unspoken or implicit assumptions that lie deep within texts.” In what ways could you read two or three texts “against the grain” and with what validity?

2000
A. The actions of people in relation to “taboos” or forbidden behavior often generate some of the tension of novels. Show how in different or similar ways novels in your study have employed this and other sources of tension to ensure the engagement of the reader.
B. Art lives in the realm of ambiguity and it is art only as long as the ambiguity is sustained.” To what extent have novelists employed ambiguity in various aspects of novels in your study and what is your estimate of the effect of ambiguity in these works?

1997
A. “The novel has always been an international form, hard to contain within territorial boundaries . . . it has become increasingly a medium of global expression.” From your own reading of chosen novels, how far do you agree with this view of the novel?
B. Some readers perceive and enjoy a “dialogue between the reader and the novelist.” Have you found any such “dialogue” in the novels you have studied, and to what effect?

1996
A. To what extent do the novels you have studied support the view that “indirect ways of arriving at knowledge always provoke the most curiosity in the reader”?
B. While the novel that celebrates, or simply records, human experience will remain as fresh as point [sic], the didactic novel will have become as flat as ditchwater, but it will have done more work in the world.” How far do you think the works you have studied bear out this assertion?

1995
A. Examine the ways in which your novels have chosen to present their characters’ thought processes, making clear what you think each author’s presentation contributes to the effect of the novel.
B. Discuss the interplay between setting and action as part of the meaning of the novels you have read.

1994
A. “Nearly all novels are feeble at the end . . . .” To what extent, and for what reasons, would you defend the works you have studied against this charge?
B. How far do you think that the way in which a writer chooses to tell a story gives indications of his/her attitude to the issues raised in the work? In your answer, refer to works by three writers.
A. Compare the part played by major characters with the part played by minor characters in two novels by different authors, saying why you think each writer has adopted the arrangement in that particular work.

B. How far has the presentation of the narratives you have studied departed from the chronological? Looking at two or three works, consider how appropriate the sequence of the narrative is to what each work is about.

1992
A. “Some novelists invite the reader to experience the fictional world from inside the consciousness of one or more of the characters; other novelists remain omniscient. Neither method is better in itself; the sole concern is how well the narrative method fulfills the author’s particular purposes.” Discuss either or both of these kinds of narrative techniques in relation to their appropriateness in two or three of the novels you have studied.

B. “A novel’s setting, its home ground, often plays a more active part in the plot than is at first apparent.” How far do you think this remark applies to two or three of the novels you have studied?