The Regional Novel
The regional novel is a genre of fiction that is set in a recognisable region.

It describes features distinguishing the life, social relations, customs, language, dialect or other aspects of the culture of that area and its people.

Fiction with a strong sense of geography, topography or landscape is also covered by this definition.

Regional culture may be used to illustrate an aspect of life in general, or the effects of the environment on the people living in it.
Characteristics of a regional novel include:

• Detailed description of a place, setting or region, usually rural, bearing an approximation to a real place.
• Characters usually of middle-class origin.
• Dialogue with some striving for realism.
Local colour fiction focuses on specific features – characters, dialects, customs, history, and topography – of a particular region.

There is often nostalgia and sentimentality in the writing as the region reflects the author’s close association.
Notable examples of this genre are:

- Sir Walter Scott’s *Waverly Novels*,
- Thomas Hardy’s *Wessex Novels*
- William Faulkner’s novels set in *Yoknapatawpha County*
- In India, Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao have also contributed greatly to this sub-genre.
The regional novel is clearly a product of the 19th century. The great Victorian writer **Thomas Hardy** created a setting for his regional novels in the area of Wessex. Over the years his perception and representation of nature and the landscape changed. There is an evolution, moving from the pastoral to a more realistic depiction of rural English society.
The regional novel is a derivative of the social novel.

It demonstrates how environment influences its inhabitants.

The concept of a ‘region’ has political and social overtones.

In this manner, Scott’s writing about Scotland may be seen as regional writing, even though Scotland is never described as a ‘region’ despite it being distinct from the rest of Britain.
Regional writers are generally associated with rural regions.

Authors who concentrate on a major urban centres are rarely described as ‘regionalists’.

Some authors wrote both ‘regional’ and ‘mainstream’ literature during their careers.

Other authors rejected the term considering it limiting to the description of their work.
R. K. Narayan’s novels were born out of his own “regional” experience.

Though he wrote in English, it has flavours of Tamil, his mother tongue.

Most of his works are set in the fictional town of Malgudi.
Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* (1938), was his first novel. It was also the first major work of Indian writing in English with a distinct Indian flavour.

Rao uses English in a characteristic manner to provide it with a *Kannada* rhythm.

“There is no village in India, however mean, that has not a rich *sthala-purana*, or legendary history, of its own. Some god or godlike hero has passed by the village - Rama might have rested under this pipal-tree, Sita might have dried her clothes, after her bath, on this yellow stone, or the Mahatma himself, on one of his many pilgrimages through the country, might have slept in this hut, the low one, by the village gate.”

Introduction to *Kanthapura*
Mulk Raj Anand was committed to representing the lives of ordinary Indians, championing Indian folktales and other art forms, and fighting for the cause of Indian independence.

Anand found his subject matter and his purpose within Indian life.

Contemporary social problems, like discrimination, untouchability and religion were presented in his novels.