

# The Nobel Prize for Literature 2022

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**In news–** Celebrated French memoirist Annie Ernaux was awarded the 2022 Nobel Prize in Literature recently.

## **Annie Ernaux & her work-**

- She has been awarded the Nobel prize “for the courage and clinical acuity with which she uncovers the roots, estrangements and collective restraints of personal memory”.
- In her books spanning over six decades, Ernaux has **chronicled events in her life ranging from growing up as the daughter of grocers to getting an abortion** before it was legalised in France. Through these, she has also captured the anxieties and prevailing issues of her generation.
- **Her win has now put the spotlight on memoirs as a literary genre.**
- Ernaux has long been celebrated for her simple, yet **effective prose detailing** with depth the various events in her life that shaped it.
- What sets her apart from most memoirists is her approach to exploring her own memories: she is acutely aware that they are not infallible, and thus, she distrusts her memory at every step, forever questioning and never settling on one truth.
- An understanding of the role played by the historical and socio-political environment of the times she writes about is also central to her work.
- In this sense, her writings are more comparable to that of an archaeologist than a novelist– for her, fragments and relics of personal memory are crucial to piecing together the history of an individual, and through that,

a society.

### Note:

Ernaux is the 16th French writer – the first Frenchwoman – and the 17th female author, to receive the literature prize.

### What is a memoir?

- A memoir is **most easily defined as a non-fiction first-person narrative derived from the writer's own memories and knowledge.**
- It is generally supposed **to recount a 'slice of life' and not an entire lifetime.**
- Ideally, this slice would be about a particular aspect of or event in the author's life that acts as the overarching theme in the narrative.

### Difference between autobiography & memoir-

- Though the terms are often used interchangeably, **a memoir and an autobiography are distinctly different, but with a lot of overlap** – both deal with facts, memories and personal knowledge of the author.
- However, **one basic difference is that an autobiography covers the entire span of the author's life** till the time of writing, whereas a memoir, as mentioned above, is supposed to be a 'slice of life'.
- Another major difference is that an **autobiography is usually written by an already famous or noteworthy person. A memoir, on the other hand, can be written by anyone with a story to tell.**
- For example, Frank McCourt, an Irish-American teacher in New York City, wrote about his impoverished childhood in *Angela's Ashes*, for which he later won the Pulitzer Prize in 1997.
- Another difference is the **style of writing usually seen in these genres. Autobiographies tend to highlight facts and the role played by the author in important**

### **historical events.**

- Memoirs, meanwhile, place greater emphasis on the author's interior journey, and are more introspective in nature.
- Lastly, **an autobiography is more often than not written in chronological order.**
- Memoirs tend to have non-linear narration, with episodes from different parts of the author's life woven in together.