

MODERNISM



- ▶ Modernism, is both a philosophical movement and an art movement.
- ▶ Some commentators define modernism as a **mode of thinking**—one or more philosophically defined characteristics, like self-consciousness or self-reference, that run across all the novelties in the arts and other disciplines.
- ▶ It was a break with the past and the concurrent search for new forms of expression.
- ▶ Modernism fostered a period of experimentation in the arts from the late 19th to the mid-20th century, particularly in the years following World War I.
- ▶ In an era characterized by industrialization, rapid social change, and advances in science and the social sciences (e.g., Freudian theory), Modernists felt a growing alienation incompatible with Victorian morality, optimism, and convention. New ideas in psychology, philosophy, and political theory kindled a search for new modes of expression.
- ▶ The movement reflected a desire for the creation of new forms of art, philosophy, and social organization which reflected the newly emerging industrial world, including features such as urbanization, new technologies, and war.
- ▶ Artists attempted to depart from traditional forms of art, which they considered outdated or obsolete.
- ▶ "**Make it new!**" Ezra Pound's three simple words have gone on to become the most famous modernist slogan, as well as its shortest manifesto(a public declaration), more like the touchstone(a criterion by which it is judged) of the movement's approach.
- ▶ Modernist innovations included abstract art, the stream-of-consciousness novel, montage cinema.
- ▶ Many modernists also rejected religious belief.
- ▶ While some scholars see modernism continuing into the 21st century, others see it evolving into late modernism or high modernism.
- ▶ Postmodernism is a departure from modernism and rejects its basic assumptions.

Modernism In Literature

- ▶ The Modernist impulse is fueled in various literatures by industrialization and urbanization and by the search for an authentic response to a much-changed world.
- ▶ Modernism explicitly rejected the ideology of realism.[Realism, sometimes called naturalism, in the arts is generally the attempt to represent subject matter truthfully, without artificiality and avoiding speculative fiction and supernatural elements.] and made use of the works of the past by the employment of reprise, incorporation, rewriting, recapitulation, revision and parody.
- ▶ Although prewar works by Henry James, Joseph Conrad, and other writers are considered Modernist, Modernism as a literary movement is typically associated with the period after World War I.
- ▶ The enormity of the war had undermined humankind's faith in the foundations of Western society and culture, and postwar Modernist literature reflected a sense of disillusionment and fragmentation.
- ▶ Artists of this time didn't take their audience into consideration, they made their works difficult to read and understand-it was a literature dedicated to experimentation and innovation.- dictums like 'make it new', make it different', 'make it difficult.'
- ▶ A primary theme of **T.S. Eliot**'s long poem "The Waste Land"(1922), a seminal Modernist work, is the search for redemption and renewal in a sterile and spiritually empty landscape. With its fragmentary images and obscure allusions, the poem is typical of Modernism in requiring the reader to take an active role in interpreting the text.
- ▶ The publication of the Irish writer James Joyce's *Ulysses* in 1922 was a landmark event in the development of Modernist literature. Dense, lengthy, and controversial, the novel details the events of one day in the life of three Dubliners through a technique known as stream of consciousness, which commonly ignores orderly sentence structure and incorporates fragments of thought in an attempt to capture the flow of characters' mental processes. Portions of the book were considered obscene, and *Ulysses* was banned for many years in English-speaking countries.
- ▶ Other European and American Modernist authors whose works rejected chronological and narrative continuity include Virginia Woolf, Marcel Proust, Gertrude Stein, and William Faulkner.

LITERARY FEATURES

- ▶ Stream of consciousness technique-in novels
- ▶ Was apparently away from a sense of objectivity-traditional elements being pushed out of the literature such as, we do not have fixed point of view in narratives, clear cut moral positions, omniscient external narration
- ▶ Blurring of distinctions between genres- novels became more lyrical and poetic, poems become more documentary and prose-like(continuously challenging the definitions of genres)
- ▶ fragmented forms, discontinuous narrative, random-seeming collage
- ▶ Dominant role played by Fierce form of asceticism (severe self-discipline and avoiding of all forms of indulgence, typically for religious reasons.) – found the overelaborate art forms of the 19th c deeply offensive and repulsive (we cannot see elaborate in 20th c)
- ▶ Dictums which became the reigning force like ‘Decoration is a crime’-‘less is more’-‘a house is a machine for living in’-in modernist architecture
- ▶ Minimalism in literature
- ▶ All these newer tendencies could be captured in one single term-**Avant-garde**- ahead of time, beyond historical limitations- challenge the status quo, challenged middle class values(which was evident in plays of Victorian period- had a particular value system, temperament which enjoyed a certain kind of balance; all these seems to move away from the beginning of 20th c)

WORLD WAR I

World War I, also known as the Great War, began in 1914 after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand (heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire—was shot to death along with his wife, Sophie, by the Serbian nationalist Gavrilo Princip on June 28, 1914.) of Austria.

- ▶ His murder catapulted into a war across Europe that lasted until 1918.
- ▶ During the conflict, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire (the Central Powers) fought against Great Britain, France, Russia, Italy, Romania, Japan and the United States (the Allied Powers).
- ▶ New military technologies and the horrors of trench warfare, World War I saw unprecedented levels of carnage and destruction.
- ▶ By the time the war was over and the Allied Powers claimed victory, more than 16 million people—soldiers and civilians alike—were dead.