

**Introduction to Modernism and
Postmodernism
In Contemporary Literature**

An Introduction to Modernism

...*A Streetcar Named Desire*

But Aren't We Learning About Post-Modern Literature?

- In order to better understand Post-Modern Literature, we will learn what Modern Literature is all about
- It will make much more sense later on, I promise



What Is Modernism?



- Variety of movements that had a desire to break with the past
- An international artistic movement, not time period
- Peak 1914-1930
- Rejected Victorian standards of art

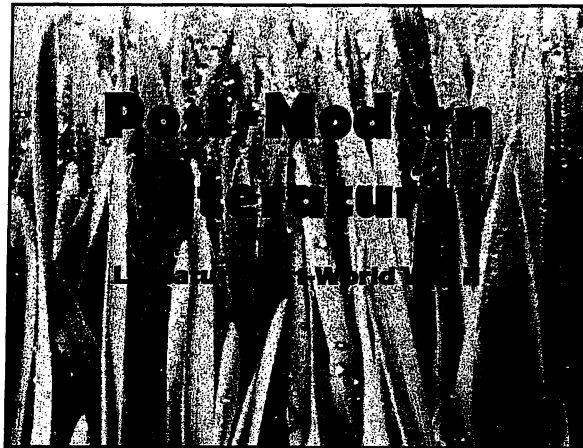
Things to Look for in *A Streetcar Named Desire*

- Knowledge limited to the elite few
- One correct interpretation for everything
- Grand narrative
- Order and rationality
- Followed rules and asked no questions
- Followed classical Greek standards



- You will later be contradicting these Modern literary attributes with the Post-Modern literature that we will explore all year.
- Be sure to keep these notes in a safe place, as you will be expected to refer back to them periodically.





Modern Literature:

Formal Characteristics

Formal characteristics

- Open form
- Free verse in terms of poetry
- Discontinuous narrative
- Classical allusions
- Borrowings from other cultures and languages
- Unconventional use of metaphor
- Fragmentation
- Multiple narrative points of view

Post-Modern Literature

Characteristics

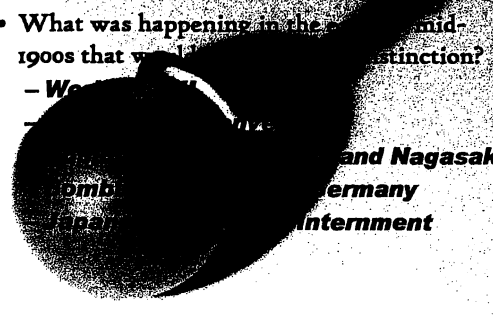
- All of modern characteristics...PLUS!
 - No longer a need to resolve chaos in conflict

Modern vs. Post-Modern

| Modern Literature | Post-Modern Literature |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective or omniscient point of view • Extreme external reality • Conflict must be resolved | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus to internal • Sometimes conflict is unconquerable |


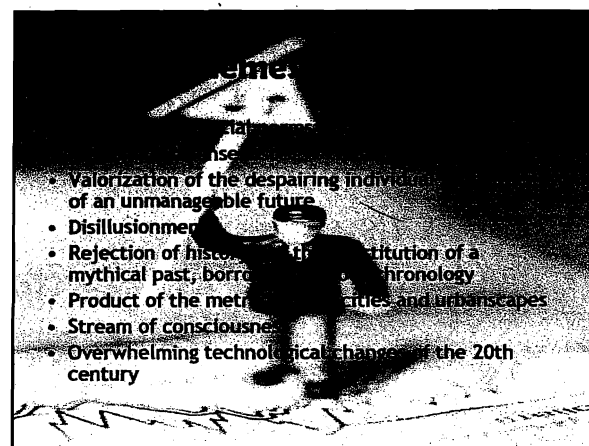
Knee-Jerk Reaction?

- What was happening in the early mid-1900s that would cause this reaction?
- World War I
- World War II
- Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki
- Bombing of Germany
- Japanese Internment




MORE Common Threads in Post-Modern Literature

- Temporal distortion
 - Fragmentation and non-linear narratives
 - Example: Abe Lincoln using the telephone.
- Technology present and used
 - The end of the Industrial Age and move into the Information Age
- Paranoia
 - Chaos and overall sense of lack of order

Name: _____ Period: _____

IDENTIFYING POST-MODERNISM

Class: _____

| CHARACTERISTIC OF PO-MO LITERATURE | EXAMPLE FROM CLIPS |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Lack of Closure | |
| 2. Flashback | |
| 3. Paranoia/Fragmentation | |
| 4. Multiple Perspectives | |
| 5. Blending of Genres/Pastiche | |

Did I Miss Anything?

Tom Wayman

Nothing. When we realized you weren't here
we sat with our hands folded on our desks
in silence, for the full two hours

Everything. I gave an exam worth
40 percent of the grade for this term
and assigned some reading due today
on which I'm about to hand out a quiz
worth 50 percent

Nothing. None of the content of this course
has value or meaning
Take as many days off as you like:
any activities we undertake as a class
I assure you will not matter either to you or me
and are without purpose

Everything. A few minutes after we began last time
a shaft of light suddenly descended and an angel
or other heavenly being appeared
and revealed to us what each woman or man must do
to attain divine wisdom in this life and
the hereafter
This is the last time the class will meet
before we disperse to bring the good news to all people
on earth.

Nothing. When you are not present
how could something significant occur?

Everything. Contained in this classroom
is a microcosm of human experience
assembled for you to query and examine and ponder
This is not the only place such an opportunity has been
gathered

but it was one place

And you weren't here

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