

LITERARY
MOVEMENTS

of the 20th century...

Modernism

- * A literary movement of the early and mid 20th century.
- * The writings explored the motifs of isolation and alienation, and the concept of man's struggle to maintain his dignity in the modern world.
- * The writers of this movement were greatly affected by WWI. This was reflected in the sense of loss, disillusionment and despair that permeated their works.
- * Many incorporated the psychoanalytic theories of Freud and Jung in their writings.

Modernism, continued...

- * A popular technique employed by Modernist writers was Stream of Consciousness (a literary genre that reveals a character's thoughts and feelings as they develop by means of a long soliloquy).
- * Modernist thinkers and writers recognized that the world was becoming more complex and the old "final authorities" (God, government, science, and reason) were subject to intense scrutiny.
- * These writers viewed their art as being a restorative force in an uncertain and disintegrating modern world filled with alienation, suffering and loss, therefore even while they depicted disorder in their works, they injected their "own order" through patterns of allusion and symbols.
- * They had an interest in repressed subconscious material.

Modernism, cont.

- * Modernists embraced disruption, rejecting or moving beyond simple Realism in literature and art, and rejecting or dramatically altering tonality in music.
- * Modernism, saw traditional forms and traditional social arrangements as hindering progress, and therefore the artist was recast as a revolutionary, overthrowing rather than enlightening, whose role was to find meaning in this “messy” world.
- * Many felt, after the Great War, that “traditional” American values of their youth were a sham, given the senseless of the war and its devaluation of human life. They were called The Lost Generation.

Before we move onto the art of the Modernist movement...Remember, during the Realist movement in literature, the art and music during that time period was Impressionism. Impressionist artists focused on ordinary subject matter, human perception and experience, unusual visual angles and visible brush strokes.

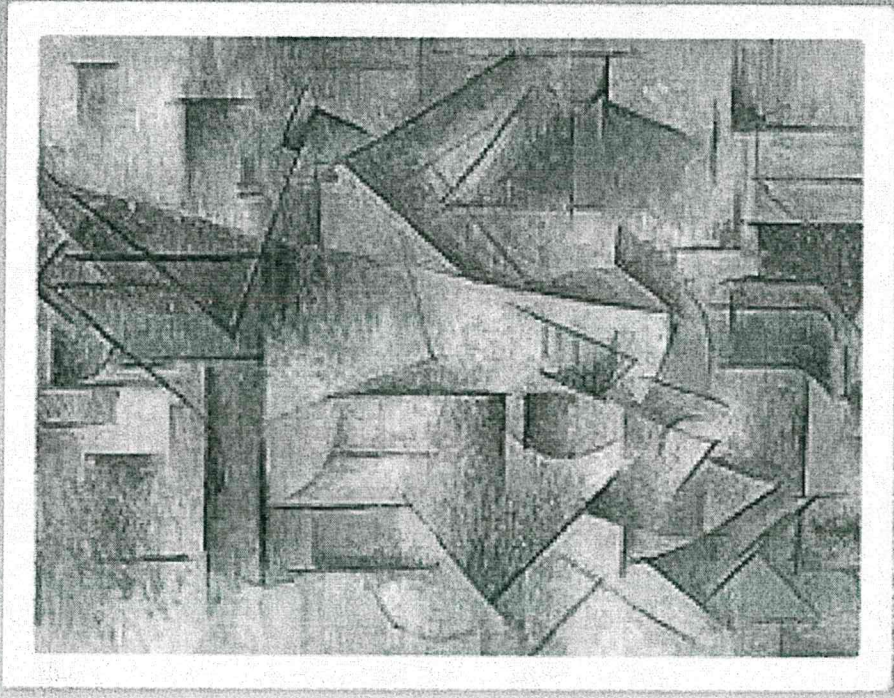
Do you see elements of
Realism in Eduard
Manet's "Plum"?



Now we can move onto
Modernist art...

Le guitariste, 1910, Pablo Picasso

- 1) Examine this painting using the acronym on the sheet you were given.
- 2) How does this painting embody the ideas central to the Modernist movement. Explain.



Postmodernism

- * Postmodernism literally means “after the Modernist movement,” and refers to the radically experimental works of literature and art produced after WWII.
- * The Postmodern movement was influenced by the Western European “disillusionment” induced by WWII, and the subsequent feeling that life is “without meaning or purpose,” and that we cling to illusions of security to conceal and forget the void over which our lives are perched.
- * Postmodern works embody extreme complexity, contradiction, ambiguity, and diversity.
- * They experiment with new literary devices, and styles while preserving the spirit and themes of the Modernists.

Postmodernism, cont.

- * Postmodernism continues the spirit of experimentation championed by Modernist writers. Postmodernists rely heavily on fragmentation, paradox, questionable narrators and irony. They push the boundaries not only of cohesion but coherence.
- * While Modernist writers strive to find meaning in this world, Postmodernists often make fun of this “pointless” quest for meaning.
- * They, unlike Modernists, have made a concerted effort to appeal to popular culture as a way to reject the Modernist tendency toward elitest “high art.”

Postmodernism, cont.

- * They celebrated the flow of the subconscious (like the Modernists' Stream of Consciousness), and the role that "chance" played in art and writing.
- * Postmodern writers are best known for using a technique called Pastiche (to combine or paste together multiple elements). For example William S. Burroughs combines science fiction, detective fiction, and westerns in to create his own unique style.
- * Postmodernists reject the idea of a system of order in this world. They believe there is no reason for anything and a search for reason is fruitless and absurd. While Modernists searched for reason in a chaotic world, Postmodernists mock that search.

Similarities of Modernism and Postmodernism

- * Both break from the 19th century Realism.
- * Both turn from external to internal realities.
- * Both were inspired by war and the suffering, loss, alienation, and doubt this causes.
- * Both were inspired by the confusion and chaos of “contemporary” 20th century life.
- * Both use the technique of Stream of Consciousness
- * Both use fragmentation but the Modernists see this type of broken narration, pastiche, etc...as an existential crisis that must be solved, and the writer will solve it in the course of the work, while Postmodernists see this chaos as insurmountable, and the writer is in no position to solve anything. There may be multiple meanings or no meanings.

Now for Postmodern art:

Techno Buddha

Nam June Paik

- 1) Examine this art using the acronym on the sheet you were given.
- 2) How does this conceptual art embody the ideas central to the Postmodern movement. Explain.

