

Modernism – Influences & Important Contributions

What could economic crisis, decolonization and world wars do to supreme nations? In general, one would say it would devastate the culture, heritage and progress of those nations to an almost irretrievable level. Such was the case for the British and Americans during the late 19th century and early part of 20th century; where everything felt to go against the nations. However, there was one thing amidst the chaos that helped the nations hold their pride, that is, modernism. It is a periodic movement in English literature that served the nations in utter distress and helped to break the shackles of traditionalism completely.

Influences that spurred Modernism

The poets, critics, prose writers, etc. embraced the declining conditions and experimented on literature to produce works that are imitative to the age and reflected the inner consciousness of the people.

The most important influence that can be singled out is the World War I [1914-1918], which led people to wonder about the existence of humanity and the value of life in the broader sense.

There was an increase of interest in social sciences with the popularity of Sigmund Freud and his psychoanalysis theories.

Urbanization that led to change of lifestyle, growing hatred towards machines, decolonization from many countries that once were under the control the British Empire, etc. were the social influences that led to modernism.

As a result the literature of the period was intentionally sporadic, first person in narrative, aimed towards criticizing mankind's decline and experimental. Hence the themes were cynical, morbid or absurd.

Important contributions of the period

S. No	Name	Important Works	Notable aspects
1	F. Scott Fitzgerald	The Great Gatsby	
2	George Orwell	Animal Farm Nineteen Eighty-Four	
3	E. M. Forster	A Room with a View Howards End A Passage to India	
4	Eugene O'Neill	Anna Christie	

Classical Arts Universe

		Beyond Horizon	
		Strange Interlude	
		The Hairy Ape	
5	Robert Frost	Mountain Interval	Poetry collection
		New Hampshire	Poetry collection
6	W. H. Auden	Funeral Blues	
		September 1, 1939	
		The Shield of Achilles	
7	Ernest Hemingway	For Whom the Bell Tolls	
		The Old Man and the Sea	
8	Ezra Pound	Ripostes	
		Hugh Selwyn Mauberley	
9	Samuel Beckett	Waiting for Godot	
10	Herman Hesse	Siddhartha	
		Demian	
		Steppenwolf	
		The Glass Bead Game	
11	James Joyce	Ulysses	
		Dubliners	
		A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man	
		Dubliners	Short Story Collection
12	Rainer Maria Rilke	Duino Elegies	
		Sonnets to Orpheus	
13	Franz Kafka	The Metamorphosis	
		The Trial	
14	D. H. Lawrence	Sons and Lovers	
		The Rainbow	
15	Wallace Stevens	The Auroras of Autumn	
		Harmonium	
		The Man with the Blue Guitar	
16	Joseph Conrad	The Nigger of the Narcissus	
		Heart of Darkness	
		Lord Jim	
17	T. S. Eliot	The Waste Land	
		Murder in the Cathedral	

Classical Arts Universe

18	William Faulkner	The Sound and the Fury	
		Absalom, Absalom!	
19	William Carlos Williams	The Red Wheelbarrow	
		Spring and All	
		Paterson	
20	Virginia Woolf	Mrs Dalloway	
		To The Lighthouse	
		The Waves	
21	W. B. Yeats	The Wanderings of Oisín and Other Poems	
		Words for Music Perhaps and Other Poems	
		The Countess Kathleen	
		Deirdre	

The names mentioned here played a significant role in popularizing Modernism as a movement. However, there are so many others who have contributed to the movement and had significant influence on the society.