

**POSTMODERNISM
IN 20TH-CENTURY
ENGLISH LITERATURE**

Postmodernism:

general characteristics

- Emerged in the 1950s as a reaction to the tendencies in Modernism. Postmodern writers often leave their stories open-ended, without any satisfying conclusion, or the book concludes by making a reference back to the beginning.
- Postmodern stories and novels often rely on parody or satire.
- Authors often reject the boundaries between “high” and “low” forms of literature as well as the distinctions between different genres.

Postmodernism: general characteristics (cont'd)

- The postmodern text reveals skepticism about the ability of art to create meaning, about the ability of history to reveal truth, about the ability of language to convey reality.
- All that skepticism leads to fragmented, open-ended, self-reflexive stories that are intellectually fascinating but often difficult to grasp while reading for the first time.

Techniques and devices

- **excess**
- **discontinuity**
- **randomness**
- **minimalism**
- **maximalism**
- **reader involvement**

Techniques and devices (cont'd)

- **permutation** - any radical alteration of sentence structure; total transformation
- **pastiche** - a creative work that imitates the style or character of the work of one or more other authors
- **intertextuality** - the relationship between one text (a novel for instance) with another text
- **magical realism** - a literary genre in which realistic narrative and naturalistic technique are combined with surreal elements of dream or fantasy
- **poioumena** - a specific type of fiction in which the story is about the process of creation
- **faction** - a literary technique in which real events are used as a basis for a fictional narrative or dramatization

John Fowles (1926-2005)

prose:

- *The French Lieutenant's Woman*
- *The Magus*
- *A Maggot*
- *Mantissa*
- *Eliduc*



Anthony Burgess (1917-1993)

- *A Clockwork Orange*
- *The Long Day Wane*
- *Inside Mr Enderby*
- *Time for Tiger*



William Golding (1911-1993)

Novelist, poet, playwright.

- *Lord of the Flies* (Nobel Prize winner)
- *The Inheritors*
- *The Spire*
- *Pincher Martin*
- *Darkness Visible*
- *The Paper Men*
- *To the End of Earth* (trilogy)



Bryan Stanley Johnson (1933-1970)

Experimental novelist, poet and literary critic.

- *Travelling People*
- *Albert Angelo*
- *The Unfortunates*



Angela Carter (1940-1992)

Prosaic works remarkable for their complex blending of parody, allegory and symbolism and their generic mixing of fantasy, romance, the gothic and science fiction.

- *Wise Children*
- *Bloody Chamber*
- *The Magic Toyshop*
- *The Company of Wolves*
- *Nights at the Circus*



Iris Murdoch (1919-1999)

Authored **24 novels**, among them:

- *The Sea, the Sea* (Booker Prize winner)
- *The Sandcastle*
- *Under the Net*
- *Unicorn*
- *The Black Prince*
- *The Bell*
- *The Italian Girl*
- *The Red and the Green*



Doris Lessing (1919-2013)

Nobel Prize winner.

- *The Golden Notebook*
- *The Grass Is Singing*
- *The Good Terrorist*
- *Fifth Children*
- *The Diary of a Good Neighbour*



Samuel Beckett (1906-1989)

Avant-garde novelist, playwright, poet, 1969 Nobel Prize winner. Associated with the “Theatre of Absurd.”

- *Waiting for Godot*
- *Happy Days*
- *End Game*
- *Come and Go*
- *Murphy* (novel)



***Theatre of Absurd** - drama portraying the futility and anguish of human struggle in a senseless and inexplicable world.

Edward Albee (1926)

Dramatist, representative of the “Theatre of Absurd”. Showed a naturalistic approach and an interest in closely observed human relations.

- *The Sandbox*
- *The Zoo Story*
- *Tiny Alice*
- *The American Dream*
- *Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolf*

