

Postmodernism.

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A LIST OF POSTMODERN CHARACTERISTICS.

Irony, playfulness, black humor

Postmodern authors were certainly not the first to use irony and humor in their writing, but for many postmodern authors, these became the hallmarks of their style. Postmodern authors will often treat very serious subjects—World War II, the Cold War, conspiracy theories—from a position of distance and disconnect, and will choose to depict their histories ironically and humorously.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=Xfze51E7TEoC&printsec=frontcover&dq=catch-22&ei=HNsISpu3M5f2MizRwYYE>

Pastiche

Many postmodern authors combined, or “pasted” elements of previous genres and styles of literature to create a new narrative voice, or to comment on the writing of their contemporaries. Thomas Pynchon, one of the most important postmodern authors, uses elements from detective fiction, science fiction, and war fiction, songs, pop culture references, and well-known, obscure, and fictional history.

<http://booksoupbookstore.blogspot.com/2008/05/unfortunates-by-bs-johnson.html>

Intertextuality

An important element of postmodernism is its acknowledgment of previous literary works. The intertextuality of certain works of postmodern fiction, the dependence on literature that has been created earlier, attempts to comment on the situation in which both literature and society found themselves in the second half of the 20th century: living, working, and creating on the backs of those that had come before.

http://books.google.com/books?id=RC6JJmB_JEcC&printsec=frontcover&dq=rosencrantz+and+guildenstern+are+dead&ei=q9sISoqMMYjYMOqLrNAD

Metafiction

Many postmodern authors feature metafiction in their writing, which, essentially, is writing about writing, an attempt to make the reader aware of its fictionality, and, sometimes, the presence of the author. Authors sometimes use this technique to allow for flagrant shifts in narrative, impossible jumps in time, or to maintain emotional distance as a narrator.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=FM4y7N1kM9AC&printsec=frontcover&dq=slaughterhouse-five&ei=JdwISu7zLZasM4n7jIsG>

Historiographic metafiction

This term was created by Linda Hutcheon to refer to novels that fictionalize actual historical events and characters: Thomas Pynchon’s

Mason and Dixon, for example, features a scene in which George Washington smokes pot.

<http://www.amazon.com/General-Labyrinth-Gabriel-Garc%C3%ADa-M%C3%A1rquez/dp/0140148590>

Temporal distortion

Temporal distortion is a literary technique that uses a nonlinear timeline; the author may jump forwards or backwards in time, or there may be cultural and historical references that do not fit: Abraham Lincoln uses a telephone in Ishmael Reed's Flight to Canada. This technique is frequently used in literature, but it has become even more common in films.

http://books.google.com/books?id=4269RtovqTIC&printsec=frontcover&dq=flight+to+canada&lr=&num=50&as_brr=3&as_pt=ALLTYPES&ei=s9wISsguk841mYeBow4

Technoculture and hyperreality

In his essay of the same name, Frederic Jameson called postmodernism the "cultural logic of late capitalism." According to his logic, society has moved beyond capitalism into the information age, in which we are constantly bombarded with advertisements, videos, and product placement. Many postmodern authors reflect this in their work by inventing products that mirror actual advertisements, or by placing their characters in situations in which they cannot escape technology.

http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2003/01/27/030127fi_fiction

Paranoia

Many postmodern authors write under the assumption that modern society cannot be explained or understood. From that point of view, any apparent connections or controlling influences on the chaos of society would be very frightening, and this lends a sense of paranoia to many postmodern works.

http://books.google.com/books?id=vp2Sv9KO1VUC&printsec=frontcover&dq=crying+of+lot+49&lr=&num=50&as_brr=3&as_pt=ALLTYPES&ei=BN0ISsjXMIvKNdv-tYUC

Maximalism

Villified by its critics for being in turns disorganized, sprawling, overly long, and emotionally disconnected, maximalism exists in the tradition of long works like The Odyssey. Authors that use this technique will sometimes defend their work as being as long as it needs to be, depending on the subject material that is covered.

http://books.google.com/books?id=xbeUMn6pi2UC&printsec=frontcover&dq=howl&lr=&num=50&as_brr=3&as_pt=ALLTYPES&ei=IN0IStmwNYvKNdv-tYUC

Minimalism

Minimalism is a style of writing in which the author deliberately presents characters that are unexceptional and events that are taken from everyday life. It is not an exclusively postmodern technique, as many writers, most notably Ernest Hemingway, wrote in a similar style, but some critics claim that Samuel Beckett, one of the most important postmodern authors, perfected minimalism.

<http://www.amazon.com/Waiting-Godot-Tragicomedy-Two-Acts/dp/0802130348>

Faction

Faction is very similar to historiographic metafiction, in that its subject material is based on actual events, but writers of faction tend to blur the line between fact and fiction to the degree that it is almost

the line between fact and fiction to the degree that it is almost impossible to know the difference between the two, as opposed to metafiction, which often draws attention to the fact that it is not true.

<http://books.google.com/books?>

[id=mYC3yRvvXxMC&printsec=frontcover&dq=in+cold+blood&lr=&num=50&as_brr=3&as_pt=ALLTYPES&ei=etoISonVK4a6NarmnKcB](http://books.google.com/books?id=mYC3yRvvXxMC&printsec=frontcover&dq=in+cold+blood&lr=&num=50&as_brr=3&as_pt=ALLTYPES&ei=etoISonVK4a6NarmnKcB)

Magical realism

Arguably the most important postmodern technique, magical realism is the introduction of fantastic or impossible elements into a narrative that is otherwise normal. Magical realist novels may include dreams taking place during normal life, the return of previously deceased characters, extremely complicated plots, wild shifts in time, and myths and fairy tales becoming part of the narrative. Many critics argue that magical realism has its roots in the work of Jorge Luis Borges and Gabriel García Márquez, two South American writers, and some have classified it as a Latin American style.

<http://books.google.com/books?>

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<http://books.google.com/books?>

[id=W6oIvSR4MQkC&printsec=frontcover&dq=100+years+of+solitude&lr=&num=50&as_brr=3&as_pt=ALLTYPES&ei=p9oISvfjPI3MM7a1u](http://books.google.com/books?id=W6oIvSR4MQkC&printsec=frontcover&dq=100+years+of+solitude&lr=&num=50&as_brr=3&as_pt=ALLTYPES&ei=p9oISvfjPI3MM7a1u)

Participation

Many postmodern authors, as a response to modernism, which frequently set its authors apart from their readers, attempt to involve the reader as much as possible over the course of a novel. This can take the form of asking the reader questions, including unwritten narratives that must be constructed by the reader, or allowing the reader to make decisions regarding the course of the narrative.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Choose_Your_Own_Adventure