

Modern (1915-1939)

Modernism- a variety of twentieth-century artistic movements that shared a desire to break from the past. T.S. Elliot and Ezra Pound defined modern writing with their diction and what they chose to write about. Poetry is mostly modern writing.

The Modern Period of American Literature

1915 - 1939

The modern era was a time of great changes for the United States. WWI, the Great Depression, and WWII.

People of this era made immense technological advances.

Change was the norm of the time as there was new advances in technology.

No literary genre typified the modern period as much as poetry.

The Modern Period of American Literature is better defined by the traditions it broke rather than any tradition it created.

CHARACTERISTICS OF MODERN AMERICAN LITERATURE

Symbols and images are used often instead statements

There is a search for truth

The ideal of art is to regain the whole person or world.

Work is structured as a quest for the coherence lacking on the surface; order is found in art and religion

Sense of discontinuity, harmony was destroyed in WWI

Omission: of explanations, interpretations, connections, summaries, continuity

Arbitrary beginning, advancement of story occurs without explanation, end can come without resolution

Opposition to mass culture, belief that art is for the elites

Secularization of religion, erosion of religious belief, a loss of mystery.

Anti-female tendency. There is widespread male anxiety about a female “takeover” – some writers (Lawrence, Hemingway, Fitzgerald) believe that women conspired with the new technology to render their male contemporaries socially and even sexually impotent.

First person narration, one character’s point of view (truth does not exist objectively)

A naïve narrator (a child, an outsider) to convey the reality of confusion

There is Alienation of the individual

Experimental, self conscious manipulation of form

Stream of consciousness, interior monologue.

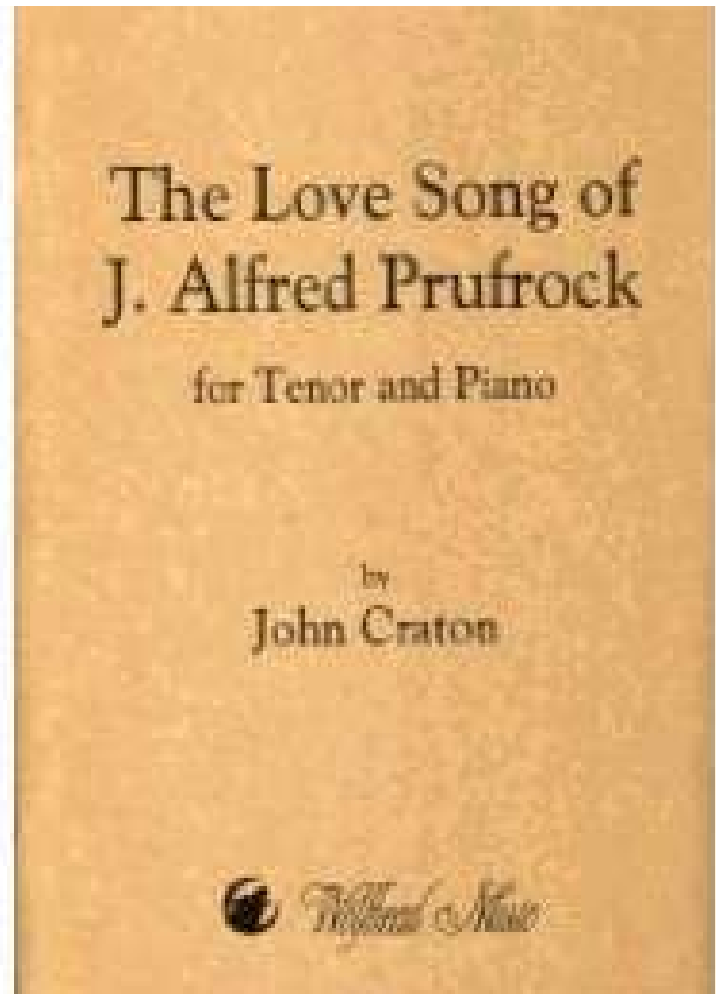
Modern Writers have a fascination with machines.

Modern writers see society in decay.

LET us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out
against the sky Like a patient
etherised upon a table; Let us
go, through certain half-
deserted streets, The muttering
retreats Of restless nights in
one-night cheap hotels And
sawdust restaurants with
oyster-shells: Streets that
follow like a tedious argument
Of insidious intent To lead you
to an overwhelming question
...Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"
Let us go and make our visit. –

"The Love Song of J. Alfred
Prufrock"

T.S. Eliot



And then went down to the ship,
Set keel to breakers, forth on the godly
sea, and
We set up mast and sail on that swart
ship,
Bore sheep aboard her, and our bodies
also
Heavy with weeping, and winds from
sternward
Bore us onward with bellying canvas,
Crice's this craft, the trim-coifed goddess.
Then sat we amidships, wind jamming
the tiller,
Thus with stretched sail, we went over
sea till day's end.
Sun to his slumber, shadows o'er all the
ocean,
Came we then to the bounds of deepest
water,
To the Kimmerian lands, and peopled
cities
Covered with close-webbed mist,
unpierced ever
With glitter of sun-rays. - "Canto 1"

Ezra Pound



EEZA POUND
(Ezra Weston Loomis Pound)
(1895 - 1972)

Great modern authors and their works.

- S. Anderson, *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919)
T. S. Eliot, *Tradition and the Individual Talent* (1920)
T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land* (1922)
W. Stevens, *Anecdote of the Jar* (1923)
F.S. Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (1925)
John Dos Passos *Manhattan Transfer* (1925)
E. Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* (1926)
E. Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (1929)
W. Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury* (1929)
John Dos Passos *The 42nd Parallel* (1930)
W. Faulkner, *Light in August* (1932)
W. Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936)
John Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men* (1937)
John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939)
N. West, *The Day of the Locust* (1939)