

# Modernism in American Literature 1914 - 1945

Harlem Renaissance

Post Modernism



# MODERNISM

A literary movement that reflected disillusionment with the American Dream and characterized by its experimentation with style and form



# MODERNISM

## THE AMERICAN DREAM

America new Eden, “promised land” of unlimited resources. IDEALISM

Birthright to endless opportunities & expectation of things continually getting better. OPTIMISM

All things possible for independent, self-reliant INDIVIDUALISM who trust in his own powers and potentials



# Traits of Modernism

- Bold experimentation in style & form  
reflecting the fragmentation of society
- Rejection of traditional themes & subjects
- Sense of disillusionment & loss of faith in the  
American Dream
- Rejection of ideal of a hero
- Interest in the inner workings of the  
human mind, expressed through new  
writing techniques such as stream of  
consciousness



# Stream of Consciousness

Abandoned the usual format of writing following chronology, or time order. Instead it was meant to imitate moment-by-moment flow of a character's perceptions or memories.



# The New Hero

A modern hero is a “man of action”, a warrior, and a tough competitor

He has a code of honor, courage, and endurance

Shows “grace under pressure”

Thoroughly disillusioned with life



# MODERNISM

effects of

# WORLD WAR I

turning point in American life

Marked the loss of innocence

Created a strong disillusionment with  
tradition (especially authors) & the  
idea of the American Dream



# Rejection of Traditional Beliefs:

Prohibition, rather than foster traditional values, ushered in an age of bootleggers, speakeasies, cocktails, flappers, jazz music, and gangsters.

Women's liberation was huge during this period, ushering in women's right to vote.

