
How Postmodernism Has Rejected The Modernism Movement

Postmodern, or contemporary, literature cannot be defined as easily as most other common or popular literary movements. The postmodern movement is often described as paradoxical, simultaneously creating and destabilizing meaning and conventions through the use of irony or criticism from works in the past (Lewis 124). Works in postmodernism are characterized by skepticism and rejection, particularly of cultural progress and the implementation of universalizing theories or grand narratives (Matos). Modern literature is the basis for postmodern literature in the sense that everything modernism is, postmodernism rejects. In modernism, grand narratives generalize the plot and story, failing to account for experiences and beliefs that do not fit within their perimeters or boundaries (Matos). Modernist thinking sees science and logic as holding a concrete, absolute truth that has the answers to all of life's questions (Kowalski). In postmodernism, there is no absolute truth, there is only the concentration of concealed desires and normalizing what in modernism is considered to be irrational taboo.

Modernists have greatly limited their knowledge to practical and evidence-based findings. The only things they tend to accept are those that have a purely natural or physical and logical explanation (Kowalski). Postmodern thinkers are the next generation in the literary world. They are no longer satisfied with the modernist way of thinking, and instead begin to act against academic verification, seeking more personal modes of expression (Eder). Instead of one absolute truth, postmodernists believe in "epistemological pluralism", or utilizing multiple ways of knowing multiple possible truths (Hoffman). By only believing in one truth, postmodernists say that modernists have not thought deeply enough about the world or taken personal feelings and experiences into account for their own individual view of the world (Kowalski). In all the wild and paradoxical ways the world works, postmodernists argue that it cannot be possible for there to be a singular, solid answer to all questions. David Kowalski spoke about how many postmodern thinkers and writers dared to question the authority of modernism, and how the modernists can make such absolute claims without taking other's experiences into account. Postmodernism is the new start of a literary movement that dares to criticize the modern way of thinking, showing the flaws of the once widely accepted absolute truth.

Postmodern literature sparks a new interest among people in keeping individuality while still being part of a community, but rejects the notion of higher cliques. Postmodernists seek to deconstruct the previous modern authority; this power has grown to be distrusted and dejected by postmodernists who wish to set up a less hierarchical approach and diffuse the authority sources (Hoffman). Postmodernists wish to step away from the elevation of the "so-called self-made man" and transition to an emphasis on community (Grenz). In postmodernism, the cliché and ideal of the lone hero has been tossed aside, and instead replaced with the value of community, or "social dimension of existence" (Grenz). This new movement is doing away with dictating how certain works can be interpreted to certain people, and instead challenging the regulation of identities through new ideas such as the "death of the author" and the "queer theory" (Matos). By instilling these new ideas, new senses of identity and community are brought up in postmodern works. Instead of the common modern device of the lone hero that saves the day, there is now the ideal that a character can be a part of something larger while

still being their own person.

This drastic change in literature is the result of the post-World War II generation. After World War II ended is commonly start to be the birth of postmodernism, coincidentally, it is also in that same time period that the up and coming generation started to rebel against the ideals society formerly put in place. As David Kowalski says, "the postmodern era is one in which we challenge long held assumptions, value our own experiences, [and] respect the experiences of others . . ." The world is bored of perpetual answers, and the new generation of writers are forging new, more intuitive paths and throwing away the old, modernist concerns about rules, logic, and morals (Kowalski). It is no longer desirable to rest in just fact or fiction, only reality or imagination, but to constantly be oscillating between the two options (Eder). Stuart Sim states that "to move from the modern to the postmodern is to embrace skepticism about what our culture stands for and strives for". Now, being skeptical is encouraged, and the groups of postmodernists thinkers are starting to embody an anti-authoritarian position when analyzing the world (Matos). With postmodernism come the birth of a new generation, and a new set of ideals placed in society by the people.

What sets postmodernism apart the most from modernism are the elements that define the literary movement. In both first and second-wave postmodernism, common elements displayed in the works of literature are temporal disorder, fragmentation, paranoia, vicious circles, etc. (Matos). Postmodern works do not have to have more than one of these characteristics to be a part of the movement; For instance, Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street* is written in vignettes, or fragmentation, setting it apart as a postmodern novel for that simple reason. According to Barry Lewis, the only difference between first and second-wave postmodernism is the element of experimentation. The characteristics used all throughout postmodernism were employed in the first-wave as an additional way to challenge the authority that modernism had previously put in place (Matos). In second-wave postmodernism, the common characteristics are employed simply because they have become integrated with the literary culture (Matos). The works produced during the second-wave of postmodernism were created during a time in which "postmodernist fiction itself became perceptible as a kind of 'style' and its characteristic techniques and themes came to be adopted without the same sense of breaking new ground" (Lewis 170). The characteristics often used in postmodernism novels were established as another way to stray away from the set structure of modernism and branch off into the new literary movement and express one's own experiences.

In postmodernism literature, there is no right, wrong, or absolute truth. All concepts and authority previously set by modernism have been abandoned and replaced with new ideals such as individualism in a community, focus on experiences and beliefs, and rebelling against the old scientific and logical morals. Postmodernism has taken everything that modernism has deemed right and wrong and reversed the two; Science and logic no longer rule over personal beliefs and experiences. In a way, this new literary movement can be seen as a good change in the sense that everything in the literature is new and something that had never been done before.