

Modern Period (1901 - 1939)

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The Modern Period begins with the death of Queen Victoria in 1901 and ends with the starting or outbreak of World War II in 1939. It is usually said by many people. As mentioned earlier, different eras are named after different important political or literary figures. After the death of Queen Victoria, a new era began in the literary world where a touch of modernity was seen. The Modern Period is further divided into two parts: **The Edwardian Period (1901 - 1910) and The Georgian Period (1911 - 1936).**

Edward VII ruled England for the first ten years of the Modern Period. Many historians believe that the literary themes and trends of this period essentially ended with the beginning of the First World War. Many historians believe that these literary trends and themes continued until the end of the First World War.

George V ruled England from 1910 to 1936, essentially the second part of the Modern Period. However, the literary trends and themes of this period continued until 1939. And with this, the Modern Period ends.

Some important events happened in the Modern Period. The First World War took place in this period which spanned from 1914 to 1918. Nobel Prize giving was started in 1901. Various changes can be observed due to rapid industrialization in this era. During this period, economic depression was seen all over the world due to the outbreak of world war. Whenever there is an economic crisis, the world is thrown into trouble. People of this era also lived through various changes.

In this era, we got some artistic terms like Georgian Poetry (1911 - 1922), Stream of Consciousness, Dadaism, Surrealism, Imagism, Impressionism, Expressionism etc. It should be noted that those who wrote Georgian Poetry are called Georgian poets. Wilfred Wilson Gibson, Rupert Brooke, John Masefield, Ralph Hodgson, D. H. Lawrence and so on were well-known Georgian poets.

Absurd Drama

Absurd Drama shows that life has no meaning. It has no clear story or ending. The characters act strange and talk in silly or broken ways. They wait for something, but nothing happens. This drama shows confusion and hopelessness in modern life. It began after World War II. Famous example: *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett.

Stream of Consciousness

Stream of Consciousness is a special style of writing in modern literature. It shows the deep and natural thoughts of a character. The writer presents the way a person thinks inside the mind. The thoughts come one after another, just like real thinking — fast, messy, and sometimes confusing. This style does not follow a fixed structure or grammar. It may have long or broken sentences. The character's thoughts are often unfiltered and full of emotions, memories, and senses like sound or smell. This technique helps the reader to go inside the mind of the character. Famous writers: Virginia Woolf and James Joyce.

Drama of Ideas

Drama of Ideas is a type of modern play that focuses on serious thoughts and social problems. In this drama, the story is not just about love or action. It is about big ideas like justice, poverty, religion, or freedom. The characters talk about these ideas and represent different views. Their dialogues are often full of arguments and debates. The purpose of this drama is to make the audience think deeply. It shows real-life problems and asks moral or political questions. George Bernard Shaw is the best-known writer of the Drama of Ideas.

Modern Drama

Modern drama shows real-life problems instead of royal stories. It focuses on realism, emotional conflicts, loneliness, and social criticism. Characters often feel confused, frustrated, and unhappy with life. Themes like war, love, and family are questioned. The drama highlights class struggles, women's roles, and false ideals. Humor is used to reveal truth. Modern plays aim to teach lessons while also entertaining the audience through realistic and thoughtful content.

Modern Poetry

Modern poetry reflects the confusion, sadness, and changes of the modern world. It breaks old rules of rhyme and structure. The poems often show deep personal feelings, loneliness, and loss of faith. They use symbols and images to express ideas. Time, death, love, and modern life are common themes. The language is often difficult, but rich in meaning. Modern poetry tries to understand life in a broken, changing world.

Victorian Novel and Modern Novel

Victorian novels focus on social issues, morality, and personal growth. They have long plots and complex characters. The narrative is clear and often deals with class, family, and relationships. In contrast, Modern novels are shorter and often fragmented. They focus on inner conflicts, alienation, and existential questions. These novels use unconventional styles like stream-of-consciousness. Themes of disillusionment and uncertainty about life are common.

Important Features of the Modern Period

- **Loss of Morality:** In the Modern Age, old moral values have started to fade. People stopped following traditional rules. They questioned what is right or wrong. Writers talked about confusing and difficult moral issues. This shows the change in society and culture.
- **Conflict in the Human Heart / Loss of Decision-Making Power:** Modern literature shows the inner fight of people. Characters feel confused and lost. They want many things at the same time. They cannot decide what to do. This shows the stress and uncertainty of modern life.
- **Extreme Attraction to Sexuality:** The modern time became open about sexuality. Writers talked about love, desire, and body. They showed passion and sexual identity in their works. People's views about these topics were changing. Literature reflected this change.
- **Experimentation:** Writers tried new ways to tell stories. They broke old writing rules. They used new styles and formats. They changed the order of events. This made literature fresh and different.
- **Symbolism and Allusion:** Writers used symbols to give deep meaning. A symbol means something more than it shows. They also used allusion — short references to other stories or ideas. These helped to express big emotions and messages. Such tools made modern writing rich and thoughtful.
- **Social Criticism:** Many writers pointed out the problems in society. They talked about rich and poor people. They showed the bad side of industrial life. They wrote about injustice and

unfair treatment. They wanted to change society through writing.

- **Stream of Consciousness:** This style shows the deep thoughts of characters. Thoughts flow like a river in the mind. It has no fixed order or grammar. It shows how people think inside. This became a new way to write stories.
- **Existential Crisis:** People in the modern age felt lost. They asked: Why am I here? What is the purpose of life? Writers showed this sadness in their works. Characters feel lonely and confused. They search for meaning in a changing world. They feel life has no clear answer.
- **Influence of Psychology:** Psychology became very popular during this time. Writers studied the human mind. They used ideas of Freud and others. They wrote about dreams, fear, and deep thoughts. Literature went inside the brain of the character.
- **Frustration:** World War made people sad and angry. It destroyed hope and peace. Writers wrote about war pain and loss. They showed how war broke people's hearts. They questioned the old values of the world.
- **Literary Magazines and Journals:** Many new magazines and journals came up. Writers published short stories, poems, and essays there. These gave a place to share new ideas. Readers got new styles and thoughts. It helped spread modern writing to many people.

Remarkable Writers and Literary Works of the Modern Period

Henry James (1843-1916)

- The Wings of the Dove (1902)
- The Ambassadors (1903)
- The Golden Bowl (1904)

Andrew Cecil Bradley (1851-1935), known as A. C. Bradley, a famous critic of Shakespeare:

- Shakespearean Tragedy (1904)
- Oxford Lectures on Poetry (1909)

George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950), a modern dramatist, famous for 'drama of ideas':

- The Devil's Disciple (1901)

- **Caesar and Cleopatra (1901)**

- **The Philanderer (1902)**

- **Man and Superman (1903)**

- Major Barbara (1905)

- Pygmalion (1913)

- Heartbreak House (1921)

- Saint Joan (1924)

- The Apple Cart (1929)

- Too True to Be Good (1932)

Joseph Conrad (1857-1924)

- The Nigger of the Narcissus, published in the previous age in 1898.
- Lord Jim (1900)

- **Heart of Darkness (1902)**

- The End of the Tether (1902)

- Typhoon (1903)

- Nostromo (1904)

- The Mirror of the Sea (1906)

- The Secret Agent (1907)

- Under Western Eyes (1911)

- Chance (1913)

- Victory (1915)

- The Shadow Line (1917)

- The Rescue (1920)
- The Rover (1923)

Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936)

- Kim (1901)
- Just So Stories (1902)
- Puck of Pook's Hill (1906)
- Rewards and Fairies (1910)

John Millington Synge (1871-1909), an Irish dramatist:

- In the Shadow of the Glen (1903)
- **Riders to the Sea (1904)**
- The Well of the Saints (1905)
- The Playboy of the Western World (1907)
- The Tinker's Wedding (1907)
- Deirdre of the Sorrows (1910)
- Gilbert Keith Chesterton (1874-1936)
- Heretics (1905)
- Charles Dickens: A Critical Study (1906)
- The Man Who Was Thursday: A Nightmare (1908)
- Orthodoxy (1908)

Edward Morgan Forster (1879-1970)

- Where Angels Fear to Tread (1905)
- A Room with a View (1908)
- Howards End (1910)
- **A Passage to India (1924)**

- Aspects of Novel (1927), a critical work
- The Celestial Omnibus (1911), a collection of short stories
- The Eternal Moment and Other Stories (1928)

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) wrote most of his novels in the earlier period. In this period, he wrote his poems and short stories.

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), a psychologist known for his theory of psycho-analysis:

- Interpretation of Dreams (trans. 1913)
- Psychopathology of Everyday Life (trans. 1914)

William Butler Yeats (1865-1939), a poet, dramatist and critic, famous for his use of symbolism and mysticism:

- The Resurrection (1913)
- The Wild Swans at Coole (1919)
- The Cat and the Moon (1926)
- The Tower (1928)
- The Winding Stair and Other Poems (1933)

Bertrand Russell (1872-1970), a philosopher:

- Mysticism and Logic (1918)
- The Analysis of Mind (1921)
- History of Western Philosophy (1946), published in the Post-modern age.
- Authority and the Individual (1949), published in the Post-modern age.

William Somerset Maugham (1874-1965), a novelist and short story writer:

- **The Luncheon (1924)**

- The Sacred Flame (1928)
- Cakes and Ale (1930)
- The Razor's Edge (1944), published in the Post-modern age.

John Edward Masefield (1878-1967), Georgian poet:

- The Midnight Folk (1922)
- Collected Poems (1923)
- The Bird of Dawning (1933)
- Dead Ned (1938)

Pelham Grenville Wodehouse (1881-1975), known as P.G. Wodehouse. He is famous for his use of language. He wrote about 96 books:

- The Man with Two Left Feet (1917)
- Jeeves (1923)
- Blandings Castle (1935)
- Lord Emsworth and Others (1937)

James Joyce (1882-1941), a novelist, famous for stream of consciousness:

- **Dubliners (1914), a collection of short stories. (Araby is taken from this.)**
 - A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (1916)
 - Exiles (1918)
- **Ulysses (1922)**
- Finnegans Wake (1939)

Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), a feminist:

- The Voyage Out (1915)

- Mrs. Dalloway (1925)

- **To the Lighthouse (1927)**

- The Waves (1931)
- Flush (1933)
- The Years (1937)
- **A Room of One's Own (1929)** (Shakespeare's Sisters)

Franz Kafka (1883-1924), a novelist, a short story writer, an existentialist:

- **The Metamorphosis (1915)**

- The Trial (1925)
- The Castle 1926)
- Amerika (1927)

David Herbert Lawrence (1885-1930), a novelist, painter, playwright, critic, Georgian poet:

- **Love Poems and Others (1913), (Piano is taken from this)**

- **Sons and Lovers (1913)**

- The White Peacock (1911)
- The Rainbow (1915)
- Women in Love (1921)
- Lady Chatterley's Lover (1928)

Ezra Pound (1885-1972), he is one of the exponents of "Imagism". He wrote a two-line poem as an example of imagist poetry: Here is the poem:

- "In a Station of the Metro"
- The apparition of these faces in the crowd.
- Petals on a wet, black bough.

His major writings are:

- Umbra: Collected Poems (1920)
- Cantos I-XXVII (1925-28)
- Literary Essays (1954)
- Make It New (1934)

Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888-1965), a poet, dramatist, literary critic, an editor. His theory of 'objective co-relative' is very famous:

- **Prufrock and Other Observations (1917)**
- **"The Waste Land" (1922)**
 - Poems (1919)
 - Selected Essays 1917-1932 (1932)
 - Four Quartets (1942)
- **Murder in the Cathedral (1935)**
- **The Family Reunion (1939)**
- **The Cocktail Party (1950), published in the post-modern age.**
- Henry Miller (1891-1980)
- Tropic of Cancer (1934)

Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald (1896-1940)

- The Great Gatsby (1925)
- Tender Is the Night (1934)
- The Love of the Last Tycoon (1941)

William Cuthbert Faulkner (1897-1962)

- The Sound and the Fury (1929)

- As I Lay Dying (1930)
- Light in August (1932)
- Absalom, Absalom! (1936)

Ernest Miller Hemingway (1899-1961)

- **The Sun Also Rises (1926)**
- **A Farewell to Arms (1929)**
- **The Old Man and the Sea, published in the next age in 1952**

Graham Greene (1904-91)

- It's a Battlefield (1934)
- Wystan Hugh Auden (1907-1973)
- Poems (1930).
- The Oxford Book of Light Verse (1938)

Dylan Marlais Thomas (1914-53)

- Twenty-five Poems (1936)