



THE KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF MODERNISM IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

Bachelor's degree student of University of Tashkent for Applied Sciences

Alimova Sevinch Qilich qizi

Abstract: *Modernism in English letters was one of the most influential movements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It was a response to rapid social, technological, and cultural changes, including industrialization, urbanization, and the aftermath of World War I. Modernist writers renounced traditional forms of writing and sought to work with new narrative methods, such as stream-of-consciousness, fragmented structures, and multiple viewpoints. Key features of modernism include a focus on alienation and disillusionment, rich symbolism and imagery, psychological depth, and, lastly, disruption of conventional forms of narration and poetry. This article describes these features, pointing out the ways in which modernist literature is devoted to the labyrinthine nature of human experiences and also to the malaise of the contemporary world.*

Keywords: *Modernism, English literature, stream-of-consciousness, alienation, symbolism, fragmentation, experimental narrative, psychological depth.*

One of the most significant literary trends of the late 19th and early 20th centuries in English literature was modernism. It developed in response to the significant social, political, and technical shifts of the era, such as urbanisation, industrialisation, World War I, and the quick development of contemporary cities. Modernist authors believed that the complexity of modern life could no longer be adequately described by conventional literary forms and styles. In order to investigate human cognition, emotions, and the fractured reality of the contemporary world, they experimented with novel methods. Modernism's experimenting with storytelling approaches is one of its main characteristics¹. The conventional

¹ Shmuradova N. Kauzallik Va Kauzativlikning Ingliz Va O'zbek Tillarida Qiyosiy Tadqiqi //Conference Proceedings: Fostering Your Research Spirit. – 2024.305-307p.



chronological storyline and linear storytelling were frequently abandoned by modernist authors. They investigated novel techniques such as fragmented narrative frameworks, internal monologue, and stream-of-consciousness.

For instance, stream-of-consciousness enables readers to follow a character's thoughts and emotions as they happen, frequently in a chaotic and nonlinear manner. This method, which combines time, memory, and perception to provide a realistic depiction of the human mind, is well-known in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* and James Joyce's *Ulysses*. In James Joyce's *Ulysses*, for example, lines like "Yes because he never did a thing like that before..." show how ideas flow naturally from the mind without the need of punctuation, providing a close-up picture of the character's head. Another illustration of the modernist subject of alienation and disillusionment is "History, Stephen said, is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake," which depicts a man grappling with both historical and personal reality². The sense of alienation, disappointment, and uncertainty is another significant aspect of modernism. Characters in modernist literature frequently have feelings of social alienation, purpose confusion, or disconnection from conventional moral principles. This illustrates the psychological and social ramifications of modernity, since individuals found it difficult to find purpose in a world that was changing quickly. One important example is T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922), which portrays a post-war society of spiritual emptiness and cultural collapse. The poem's patchwork of literary, cultural, and historical allusions evokes a sense of disorder and spiritual emptiness, but lines like "April is the cruellest month" illustrate the contradictory nature of life and regeneration.

The modernist focus on intricacy is best illustrated by Eliot's use of changing voices, fractured structure, and deep symbolism. Modernist writing also heavily relies on symbolism and vivid imagery. To communicate difficult concepts, modernist writers typically employed symbols, allusions to mythology, and oblique language. Modernist literature sometimes call on the reader to actively analyse them

² Shamuradova N. Usage of parts of body in uzbek and english idioms //Мир исследований. – 2021. – Т. 2. – №. 2.



rather than providing a simple story or obvious moral teachings. Images of deterioration, water, and urban settings, for instance, represent deeper themes of loss, rebirth, and spiritual crises in T.S. Eliot's poetry. Modernist literature also exhibits subjectivity and psychological depth. Modernist authors frequently prioritised subjective experience above factual truth as they examined the interior lives of their characters³.

The theories of Sigmund Freud and other early psychologists, who highlighted the unconscious mind and the intricacy of human cognition, had an impact on them. For example, characters' memories and perceptions frequently blend with current events in Woolf's works, resulting in a complex and subjective vision of reality. Lastly, the rupture of established systems and fragmentation are characteristics of modernism. Poetic form, language, and story all demonstrate this. The fragmented aspect of modern life is reflected in modernist works, which frequently blend several literary styles, voices, and eras. The portrayal of life as chaotic, erratic, and perhaps pointless forces readers to face complexity and ambiguity⁴.

In summary, modernism in English literature signifies a profound change in the way authors addressed human experience, style, and narrative. Its key elements—experimentation with narrative techniques, emphasis on alienation and disillusionment, symbolism and imagery, rejection of realism, psychological depth, and structural fragmentation—enabled authors to convey the spirit of a society that was changing quickly. Modernist literature offers deep insights into the human condition and the difficulties of contemporary living, and it still has an impact on authors and readers today.

³ Muxtarovna S. N. Independent learning //Евразийский научный журнал. – 2017. – №. 4. – С. 374-375.

⁴ Naima S. The effect of using songs on young learners and their motivation for learning English. – 2021.



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Internet resources:

1. <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/4300>
2. <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47311/the-waste-land>