

## PRE-REQUISITES :

Some concepts that you should know before discussing the core issue of M1 syllabus: AMONG WHICH are the history of English literature and the main literary movements.

An analysis of a work of literature begins with an understanding of the work's context. This invariability requires some knowledge of the period in which the work was written, and what ideas or movements influenced its composition. For that reason, an overview of the history of English language literature is required.

In the broadest terms, English language literature has undergone six major periods or movements since ancient times. They are usually described as follows:

**Medieval** (500-1500 A.D.), beginning with the fall of Rome and continuing until the Renaissance. The period comprises Anglo-Saxon and Middle English literatures.

**Renaissance** (1500-1660), ending with the Restoration of Charles II;

**Neo-classical** (1660-1800), beginning with the Restoration and continuing through the end of the end of the revolutionary period, when it was known as the "AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT"

**Romantic** (1800-1865), beginning in the last decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and continuing through the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> ,

**Realist** (1840- 1914), beginning in England with the accession of Queen Victoria, and continuing up to WWI; and

**Modern** (1900-1945), running from the turn of the twentieth century to the end of WWII.

Each of these labels reflects a system of broad assumptions about the world that was more or less generally accepted by thinkers of the period. Familiarity with these assumptions can help you place the book you read in the proper historical and philosophical context- a key first step of analysis

## **Modernist Literature:**

The Modern period in English language literature dawned in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as Western civilization began to undergo cataclysmic changes. These changes caused widespread feelings of disorientation, rootlessness and uncertainty. Writers of the modern period were motivated by the sense that an old world had passed away and there was nothing with which to replace it.

The ideas of Karl Marx undermined faith in 19<sup>th</sup> century models for economic and political progress. World War I had destroyed that century's geopolitical system and offered no guarantees of future stability. Dramatic innovations in technology became widely available, including telephones, radios, phonographs, moving pictures and automobiles. By making communication and transportation easier, these inventions fostered restlessness and dissatisfaction. The growth of modern science, embodied in Einstein's theory of Relativity and Darwin's theory of evolution, undermined faith in the traditional Christian explanations of natural phenomena. The social ideas of Sigmund Freud led to unsettling conclusions about traditional family relationships. Political controversies surrounding prohibition and women's suffrage added to the feeling that the whole world was turning upside down.

Modernist literature attempted to convey this sense of uncertainty and to depict a society in decay. Where the Realists of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century still held to the idea that society was something stable that could be accurately described, modernists felt forced by the events of their time to reject this assumption. At the heart of modernist literature was the conviction that the traditional structures of human life – religious, social, political, economic and artistic – had either been destroyed or proven false.

Modernist fiction reflected this conviction in its style and structure. The typical modernist story comes across as a collection of disjointed fragments. It will seem to begin arbitrarily, to advance without explanation and to end without resolution, consisting of vivid segments juxtaposed without cushioning or integrating transitions. For this reason, modernist stories such as Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* can be unsettling to the reader.

Modernist works are often spare of language, compressed, vivid and direct. They often portray characters who exhibit none of the traits that earlier ages would have ascribed to heroes. The protagonists in a modernist story are often aimless and defeated, frustrated in their search for meaning.

### **Authors: Modernism**

#### **Willa Cather (1873-1947)**

*O Pioneers!* (1913)

*My Antonia* (1918)

*Death comes for the Archbishop* (1927)

#### **James Joyce (1882-1941)**

*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916)

*Ulysses (1922)*  
*Finnegan's Wake (1939)*

**Virginia Woolf (1882-1941)**

*Mrs. Dalloway (1925)*  
*To the Lighthouse (1927)*  
*Orlando (1928)*

**T.S. Eliot (1888-1965)**

*The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock (1917)*  
*The Waste Land (1922)*  
*The Hollow Men (1925)*  
*Ash Wednesday (1930)*

**F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940)**

*The Beautiful and the Damned (1922)*  
*This Side of Paradise (1920)*  
*The Great Gatsby (1925)*  
*Tender is the Night (1934)*

**William Faulkner (1897-1962)**

*The Sound and the Fury (1929)*  
*As I Lay Dying (1930)*  
*Light in August (1932)*  
*Absalom, Absalom! (1936)*  
*The Unvanquished (1938)*

**Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961)**

*The Sun Also Rises (1926)*  
*A Farewell to Arms (1929)*  
*Winner Take Nothing (1933)*  
*The Snows of Kilimanjaro (1936)*  
*To Have and Have Not (1937)*  
*For Whom the Bell Tolls (1940)*  
*The Old Man and the Sea (1952)*

**John Steinbeck (1902-1968)**

*Of Mice and Men (1937)*  
*The Grapes of Wrath (1939)*  
*The Pearl (1947)*  
*East of Eden (1952)*