

Twentieth-Century and After: British Literature

British Modern Period

Background

- Art for art's sake (aesthetic movement)
- Alienation of the artist/"split" between the artist/writer and audience (NA 3)
- Growth in public education/literacy
- Division in art--popular culture//intellectual culture.
- Stoicism and pessimism--how can human individuals live in the modern world? Reexamine the nature of reality--subconscious mind (NA 4)
- Changes in intellectual history and daily life/technology (NA 5)
- Edwardian and Georgian (NA 7)/WWI (Sassoon)
- Position of women--rights, identity (NA 6-7)
- Politics and empire (NA 10-15)/*Windrush* generation

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Poetry

- React against Romantic “fuzziness” and emotionalism//Against didactic impulse (NA 15-16)
- Experiment/Invent new forms and styles—Imagism: intellectual complexity, irony, conversational language, freer emotion, dissonances, (NA 16-17) (Sassoon)
- The Movement—”native” tradition that harkens back to 1910 (NA 18)
- Diversity of poets (NA 19)
- Influence of former colonies (NA 19-20)

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Fiction

- High Modernism--1920s--personal and textual inwardness (NA 21-23)
- Reaction against modernism--for example the 1930s--social realism (30s—50s). After WW II: 50s—60s and beyond (NA 23-25)
- Collapse of the Empire--self-consciousness about language/various types of “realism”//criticism and satire of the state of society--alienation and dissatisfaction (NA 25-26)
- *The Remains of the Day* (1988)—2nd and 3rd paragraphs, p 21 (consciousness); top paragraph, p 24: Being “possessed by the past”

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Drama

- Wilde, Shaw--drawing-room comedies (NA 26-27)
- Decade following WWII--"Theater of the absurd"--parodies traditional assumptions of Western culture as well as the conventions and forms of traditional drama
- Changes in production/technology//grotesquely comic and nonsensical
- Pinter--*The Dumb Waiter* (1960)
- Stoppard--*Arcadia* (1993) (NA 29)