

## Central Concepts

### Modern Breakthrough

Place: Scandinavia

Time: 1870-1890 (peak)

- A belief in God is replaced by a belief in science and reason.
- The world is explainable and logical.
- Realism - Literature tries to give a true picture of life.
- An interest in social issues. (Class struggle, feminism)
- A belief in objectivity - It is possible to depict reality as it is.
- Social problems can be solved in public debate.

### Fin de Siècle

Place: Europe

Time: 1890-1910 (peak)

- There is a growing pessimism about science.
- The irrational is of interest.
- Realism is used as well as dream-like symbolism.
- An interest in existential issues.
- A belief in subjectivity. (The only mind you can know is your own. The only reality you can know is your own subjective reality.)
- A suspicion of language - Is it possible to communicate fully with others?

### Modernism

Place: Europe and America

Time: 1910-1930 (peak)

- A belief in God is replaced by a feeling of isolation and anguish.
- The world is fragmented. The artist must provide coherence.
- Irrationality - Literature creates poetic, subjective realities which do not conform to the rules of this world.
- An interest in artistic issues. (The limits of literary genres are tested. Aspects of form in literature are of major interest.)
- A belief in subjectivity. (The only mind you can know is your own. The only reality you can know is your own subjective reality.)
- A suspicion of language - Is it possible to communicate fully with others?

## **Postmodernism**

Place: The Western World

Time: 1960-Now (peak)

- Contemporary existence is in a state of confusion.
- The world is absurd. -- The modernist quest for coherence is abandoned.
- Contradictory orders of reality - A taste for science fiction and the eruption of the fabulous into the secular world.
- An interest in the products of culture. (A distinction between "high" and "low" culture is dissolved. Styles are mixed. Commercialism and the media are key players.)
- Disbelief in traditional literary values, originality is challenged through parody, narrative authority is undermined, the canon is questioned, as is the "normal self"
- Radical questioning of the integrity of language