**Characteristics of**

**Modern Literature**

1. A response to "sense of social breakdown"
   1. -reaction to WW I -visual arts, Picasso, schooled as realist, became cubists, surrealism
2. sees world as "fragmented"
   1. -pattern of construction out of fragments -unrelated pieces
   2. -"these fragments I have shorn against my ruin" –Wasteland
   3. -life is fragmented -unusual connective patterns missing: morals, framework, gone
3. point of view is remote/detached from subject
   1. -ironic but not unfeeling
4. poetry is very allusive,
   1. -allusions to myth, the Bible, foreign languages, street life, personal
   2. -highly footnoted (see "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" or The Wasteland
5. poems like a riddle, labyrinth
   1. -meaning must be searched for by reader
6. Subject: the subject of modernist literature often asks what is the purpose of literature and poetry?
   1. -what is the use for art in a world falling apart?
7. Elite audience: intellectual, academic

**Philosophical Background**

(as opposed to historic causes: WW I, the Depression, America/Europe feeling lost)

1. F. Nietzsche
   1. -God is Dead
   2. -economic and psychological determinism
   3. -no divine patterns, search for meaning
   4. -trying to put "world" back into some kind of form, structure
   5. -spiritual ruins after the war, what is the meaning of life???

**Characteristics of Modernism:**

1. anti-Romantic, meaning not in nature but in art itself
2. meaning is subjective, poem need not have a meaning
3. modernist searching for new forms
4. break with the past deliberately
5. poet responsible for life of the spirit "Sunday Morning"
6. poetry becomes the subject of poetry
7. the old subjects are the means, the poem is the end

**Some characteristics found in Modernistic works:**

1. Alienation from Society and Loneliness

1. Procrastination/An inability to act
2. Agonized recollection of the Past -constant flashbacks into the past
3. Fear of death and the Appearance of Death
4. Inability to feel or express Love
5. World as a Wasteland: poor Environmental portrayal
6. see Man creating his own myths within his mind to fall back upon

**Major themes emerging in Faulkner, Hemingway, Fitzgerald and others of period:**

1. violence and alienation
2. historical discontinuity
3. decadence and decay
4. loss and despair
5. rejection of history
6. race relations
7. unavoidable change
8. sense of place, local color