**Modernist literature:**

**Influences &**

**INFLUENCES**

● Industrial revolution & growth of cities

● Increased consumerism

● New technologies and inventions (auto,

airplane, telephone, camera)

● WWI

● Developments in science (Einstein),

psychology (Freud), philosophy

(Nietzche), linguistics (Saussure), and

anthropology (Frazer’s study of

comparative religions).

**Characteristics: Themes**

● Modern life alienates the individual. It numbs us to our

truest selves.

● Conviction that older forms of authority are decayed or

useless, and that the authority of the individual must be

strengthened…

● A faith in the power of the art to save humanity from the

deadening features of everyday life….

● The belief that the artist is...sensitive and even heroic.

● The experience of time and space are subjective, depend

on one’s context and perspective.

● Language is not “fixed”: It’s complex and nuanced.

**Characteristics:**

**Style**

● Emphasis on innovation. Disrupt traditional syntax and

form break old patterns in order to see things in a fresh,

new way.

● Artistic self-consciousness: The style of the text makes it

clear that an author consciously crafted it.

● Perspectivism: Switching narrators, use of many voices (multiple narrators)

● Emphasis on presenting life as experienced: Capturing

the impression of a moment, for instance, or representing

the inner experience of time.

● Focus on psychological reality.

● Mixing of forms and blurring of boundaries. (A nursery

rhyme embedded into an adult poem, for example.)

**Characteristics:**

 **Techniques & Devices**

● Stream-of-consciousness

● Multiple narrators or voices

● Non-sequential narration

● Use of fragmentation and juxtaposition

● Use of symbols and allusions

● Imagery that captures the essence of a thing or

experience

● Open or ambiguous endings (more “realistic” because

that’s what life is like.)

● Use