

# Fragmentation In Postmodern Literature

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## Abstract:

*Postmodern literature is characterized by a number of features and Fragmentation is one of the prominent features of Postmodern literature. Fragmentation is an important aspect of Postmodernism. Fragmented narratives comprise of the events jumbled together and the readers are expected to make sense of the sequence of the story by collaborating the different components of story. Intertextuality is a theory associated with fragmentation which advocates that a piece of literature is impacted and shaped by the literature composed earlier. The present paper will explore the fragmentation of the personality of the individuals during the Postmodern era. After World War- 11, the Modernist writers tried to express their grief regarding the sadness brought by war through the literary mediums as depicted in the Waste Land. The Modernist literature tried to project the art as a tool to bring meaning to the world which had almost lost its meaning. The Postmodern literature on the other hand tried to embrace the idea of Fragmentation and used this technique to create playful texts which reflected the chaos of the world. The Postmodernism literature did not find any grand meaning or insights as it realized a disintegration of the personalities of individuals through different literary works such as William Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom! The novel rejected the idea of meta narrative and pointed to the fact that it was not possible to reach ultimate truth since the people in the Postmodern world deal with multiple truths and realities owing to the fact that ultimate truth did not exist. Kurt Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse-Five (1969) is all about Fragmentation; owing to the fact that its protagonist travels around in time. This fragmentation not only lets Vonnegut play around with time and place; but also reflects the sense of Psychological Fragmentation faced by the protagonist of the novel. Postmodern writers advocate breaking narratives into irregular pieces in order to present a complex reality and ambiguity reflecting the uncertain state of the world. Postmodern literature tends to reflect the chaos and disorder prevalent in the world by making use of various techniques such as fragmentation, intertextuality, irony, metafiction and Pastiche.*

**Keywords:** Fragmentation, Intertextuality, Literature, Postmodernism, Modernism, Society.

## Introduction

### Postmodern Literature

Postmodern literature shares many similarities with modernist literature, as both movements deal with the modern world and its depressing loss of tradition and meaning. However, what makes postmodern literature different is the fact that its mindset towards all this is more optimistic and playful. The Postmodernists accept that life is basically without meaning and stability - and they make the best of it by playing around with this in literature in numerous ways. It is difficult to pinpoint particular literary genres as postmodern because Postmodernism is the 'breakdown of genre': Its authors often mix a variety of genres and styles, from past to present and from high culture to low culture. One example is *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2009), which mixes the 19th century love

novel (past, high culture) with modern zombie movies (present, low culture). The Postmodernist writer does not trust the wholeness and concept of completion associated with traditional stories, and prefers to deal with other ways of structuring narrative. One alternative is the multiple ending, which resists closure by offering numerous possible outcomes for a plot. The French Lieutenant's Woman (1969) by John Fowles is the classic example of fragmented reality. The novel explores the love of the naturalist Charles Smithson for Sarah Woodruff who was an outcast being scandalously involved with a French lieutenant. Although the book is set in Lyme Regis in 1867, and follows several love story conventions, it cannot be considered as a regular historical romance. Fragmentation also involves breaking up the text into short fragments or sections,, separated by space, titles, numbers or symbols. Richard Brautigan and Donald Barthelme's short stories and the novels are characterized by Fragmentation. Some authors go even further and fragment the very fabric of the text with illustrations, typography, or mixed media. As Raymond Federman puts it in the introduction to *Surfiction: Fiction Now and Tomorrow* (1975): 'In those spaces where there is nothing to write, the fiction writer can, at any time, introduce material (quotations, pictures, diagrams, charts, designs, pieces of other discourses, etc.) totally unrelated to the story.' The postmodern literature is characterized by a refusal of rules and norms, exhibiting the playfulness, entertainment and free leisure. Whereas the modernist style of writing aimed at the economy and time planning, the Postmodern style advocated activating intercultural communication, virtual reality, while ignoring the conventional norms. Postmodern texts present the amalgamation of times, cultures, languages, real facts and fiction, and the present and the past. For example the literary works of writers such as J. Bart, U. Eco, K. Vonnegut, J. Fowles, T. Morrison, M. Atwood, etc. belong to the category of Postmodern writing. Postmodern literature is based on the principles of rejection of strict rules of a plot construction, the ironic attitude to reality, a discourse fragmentation hybrid genres, paradox, intertextuality and plurality of styles. Since the writers in the postmodern era viewed the modern world as complex, chaotic, and fragmented ('shattered into bits'). So the fiction composed in the postmodern era tends to be fragmented in a number of ways. Therefore the variation of time, place, narrator or character can be often found in the postmodern writing as one of the characteristic feature. As a result, there occurs many interpretations of a single text leading to the observation that reality is not fixed and it can change with the circumstances. Pastiche is a stylistic literary device which is used to express the fragmentation and complexity of the modern world,. it involves combining or mixing the style of different genres and style of the text creating a new playful and ironic style such as the novel *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2009) by Seth Grahame-Smith. The novel borrows its plot and setting from Jane Austen's famous love novel *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), but at the same time, the novel has incorporated elements from the *Zombie* and *Ninja* genres. For instance, the main character, Elizabeth Bennet, uses her martial arts skills to fight off zombies while looking for a suitable husband. B. S. Johnson's novel *The Unfortunates* (1969) also represents the features of Pastiche while portraying the randomness of the modern world. Pastiche can be regarded as a way of incorporating the feature of intertextuality in composing the literary works. Intertextuality is also an important feature in the

Postmodern literary works. Intertextuality means to include references and incorporating elements of the previous works in a particular literary work in order to create new meanings. Intertextuality aims to broaden the horizon of knowledge and understanding of different streams and various cultural perspectives. Hence the theory of Intertextuality enriches the creative and critical thinking of the readers. Fragmentation is a key element that appears in many of the researched postmodern literary works. In addition to the Fragmentation, Metafiction is also an important element of the Postmodern literary theory. Metafiction refers to self-reflective theory that makes readers challenge the originality of narratives and makes the readers think about the fictional elements within the story. Through fragmentation, non-linear narratives, blending of genres, and the use of

imagery and metaphor, postmodern literature presents complex and often ambiguous realities that reflect the state of an uncertain world.

### **Conclusion**

Postmodern writers think that modern world has become complex, chaotic and fragmented. As a result there is typically not just one interpretation of the text or one message, but many, reflecting the postmodern view that there exists no absolute truth and the context of truth varies from one person to another depending on one's situation. Therefore the postmodern literature depicts a world which presents the fragmented realities and ideas. The analysis of the Postmodern literary works reveals that through the use of postmodern literary techniques, writers can create complex, ambiguous, and deeply meaningful works. Therefore the study concerning the use of Postmodern tools like Fragmentation, Metafiction, Intertextuality and pastiche uncovers the importance of postmodern literature and its impact in responding to a complex and chaotic Postmodern world. By understanding the elements of postmodern literature and their implications, the Paper provides further advancements in literary studies.

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