

## The Modern Era (1915 – 1946)

### Historical Background

#### WWI Era (1914 – 1918)

- ❑ Years prior to WWI were incredibly optimistic
- ❑ WWI changed all of that
  - Trench Warfare and the Machine Gun
  - Isolationism of the U.S.
  - *Lusitania*, sank by a German U-Boat; 1,200 dead and 128 Americans dead
  - Allies vs. Germany

#### Prosperity after the War (1918 – 1929)

- ❑ War ended in November of 1918
- ❑ 1919 Prohibition: Illegal liquor sales, bootlegging, speakeasies, gang warfare
- ❑ Roaring 20's: Stock Market Boom
  - Metropolitan Expansion
  - Big Business
  - Jazz
  - Hollywood
  - Greenwich Village in NY: Artistic Community

#### Stock Market Crash of October 1929

- ❑ Stock Market and stock values dived
- ❑ 1932 – 12 million unemployed or ¼ of the workforce
- ❑ Bread lines and soup kitchens
- ❑ Hoovervilles or shantytowns and President Herbert Hoover
- ❑ FDR defeats Hoover and the New Deal

#### WWII Era (1939 – 1945)

- ❑ Germans invade Poland
- ❑ Axis (Germany, Italy, and Japan) vs. Allies (Europe, Russia, and U.S.)
- ❑ Isolationism persists in America, despite the fall of France in 1940
- ❑ Pearl Harbor December 7, 1941
- ❑ VE Day then 3 months later VJ Day
- ❑ Birth of the atomic age with bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima

### Modern Values Reflected in Literature

- ❑ Uncertainty, disjointedness, and disillusionment
- ❑ Both Poetry and Prose became fragmentary, traditional narrative form abandoned
- ❑ Themes are implied rather than directly stated
- ❑ Popular Literary Forms
  - Imagism: Clear expression concrete images, everyday speech. Rebelled against 19<sup>th</sup> century sentimentality.
  - Expatriates: Writers in exile, usually lived in Europe (Paris especially), reflected disillusionment with the American Dream after WWI. Were often characterized as the “lost generation.” Writing is often characterized as despairing, dark, and hopeless.
  - Stream of Consciousness: A presentation of a series of thoughts, memories, and insights, connected only by a character’s natural associations.