

1. Defining trends in the present or recent past is a risky enterprise.
2. Terms like “postcolonialism,” “posthumanism” and “postmodernism” suggest that a significant period of historical time has passed but that no label seems adequate.

I. The United States from the 1960s into the Twenty-First Century

A. The 1960s: The Vietnam War and the Counterculture

1. Sometimes referred to as “the last colonial war,” the large-scale involvement of the United States in Vietnam began in 1964.
2. It was the first televised war and the government struggled mightily to keep the political mainstream supporting the effort.
3. It was a political watershed that provoked the greatest degree of protest since the Civil War.
4. The war dangerously undermined faith in American institutions, particularly among the young.
5. The *counterculture* offered an alternative view of American ideals and idealism during this crisis period.

B. Black Liberation

1. After the Civil Rights Act of 1965, the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. took on discrimination in voting rights that led to the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.
2. In the mid-sixties, however, the “Black Power” movement represented a more militant expression of the desire for racial justice.
3. The Black Power movement advocated racial separatism and rejected the peaceful protest methods espoused by Dr. King.
4. The civil rights movement then divided over both goals and methods and was further fragmented by the assassination of Dr. King.
5. Racial unrest after the death of Dr. King led to white flight from urban areas.
6. Over the years, some whites challenged gains made by African Americans for equality through affirmative action but without much success.

C. The 1970s

1. Renewed talk of the “decline of the West” came about from a series of setbacks that shook American-self assuredness—Vietnam, the Arab oil embargo, and Watergate.
2. A desire for self-expression and self-fulfillment led to the 70s being dubbed “The Me Decade.”
3. Great strides were made in the women’s and gay liberation movements.

D. The 1980s

1. American optimism reasserted itself despite a host of economic challenges.
2. The Reagan years were marked by unfettered capitalism and a new prosperity that lasted until nearly the end of the decade.

E. The 1990s

1. The 1990s began with an economic recession that impacted all segments of the workforce.

2. During the 90's, a retooled economy emerged, leaner and more efficient, resulting in a substantial jump in per capita productivity.
3. The emergence of the Internet created an entirely new economic sector.
4. The number of Americans with a stake in the stock market through retirement plans or personal investments soared.

F. The Early Twenty-First Century

1. The attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, changed the dynamic of the United States as an open society.
2. The means of establishing the delicate balance between safety and civil rights within the context of the terrorist threat has yet to be resolved.
3. Those responsible for the September 11th attacks were quickly found to be members of the Al-Quaida organization based in Afghanistan and supported by the militant Taliban regime.
4. The Taliban were quickly defeated by the United States and its allies in an effort that had broad support in the United States.
5. The outset of war in Iraq was more controversial with many in the United States expressing the view that Iraq posed no immediate threat and was not affiliated with Al-Quaida.
6. The attempt by President George Bush to jumpstart the economy with a tax cut that was seen as benefiting the wealthy was controversial.

II. The World After the Cold War

A. Israel and the Arab Middle East

1. After its success in the 1967 war, Israel occupied Arab territories.
2. As part of peace negotiations with its neighbor in 1979, Israel returned the Sinai Peninsula to the Egyptians.
3. Serious efforts between 1993 and 1995 to negotiate a peace accord that allowed for Palestinian self-rule in the Gaza strip and West bank were frustrated by fundamentalist factions on both sides.
4. The "Oslo Accords" peace process was undermined by Palestinian extremist and a hardening of the Israeli position in the wake of suicide terrorist attacks.
5. When peace negotiations broke down again in 2000, Palestinian militants responded with *the al-Aqsa Intifada* and Israel with an intensified military response.
6. The Palestinian side lost confidence in the ability of the United States to act as an even-headed broker in the pursuit of a resolution between the two parties.

B. Globalization

1. Economic integration and mass communication are creating a world where there exists the possibility of creating unitary policies that address common global interests.
2. A driving force of globalization is the trend toward *free trade*.
3. The move toward free trade has proved controversial and is viewed as a disappointment, particularly for workers in developed economies.
4. International development efforts for the third world have at times been poorly managed and exploitive.
5. Yet technological and other factors that transcend the power of governmental and international bodies seem to keep pushing nations and peoples into greater interdependence.

C. Immigration

1. Immigration demonstrates the globalization phenomenon.

2. Western Europe has been especially dependent on immigration where birth rates are falling and the population is aging among the indigenous white Europeans.
3. The labor shortage of both skilled and unskilled workers threatened the economic recovery of the 1990s in the developed countries.
4. The influx of immigrants to the United States has significantly altered the racial and ethnic makeup of many large cities.
5. Multiculturalism is a fact of life now in the United States.

D. Postcolonialism

1. Postcolonialism focused on imperialism as a cultural process that subverted cultural societies and westernized them.
2. Edward Said suggested that colonial powers took possession of colonial cultures and recreated them in their own interests.
3. The thrust of the postcolonial movement is to ferret out and discard Western assumptions and stereotypes that are still pervasive in formerly colonial countries.

E. Sexual Politics

1. Issues involving women's rights had come to the forefront and then subsided throughout Western history.
2. After the suffrage movement won women the right to vote, women's issues gave way to more immediate and pressing problems.
3. In the 1970s the women's movement really mushroomed, profoundly affecting the lives of all ages and social classes.

III. The Arts in the Contemporary World

1. Contemporary African art and artists have assumed a prominent and leading international role.
2. African writers, those of African descent or from African countries, have been among those awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for literature in recent decades.

A. African Literature, 1948–2000

1. The *Anthology of the New Negro and Madagascan Poetry* in 1948 placed before the world the poets of the négritude movement begun in Paris in the 1920s.
2. Fiction writers soon followed as the process of decolonization accelerated.
3. In 1954 Camara Laye published the *African Child*, in French, a story of his early years and French schooling in Africa.
4. Chinua Achebe followed four years later with *Things Fall Apart* about the West African Ibo people's encounter with the West at the onset of colonialism.
5. In the 1960s, African writers illuminated pre-colonial African traditions for the benefit of a Western readership.
6. By the 1970s, some African writers were expressing a more critical view of African culture past and present.

B. Writing and the African Diaspora

1. The négritude movement was important for African and African-American cultures.
2. Some writers complained that the movement romanticized Africa's past while overlooking serious and glaring contemporary problems.
3. Leading African-America writers insisted African-American culture was more American than African.

4. The black aesthetic movement of the 1960s tried to unite Africans and those of African heritage into a worldwide spiritual movement.
5. Some writers like Toni Morrison and Alice Walker have explored women's issues and universal themes.

C. New African Art

1. By the mid-twentieth century, young artists trained in U.S. schools began creating art that was traditionally African in its aesthetic and subject matter but that relied on western techniques and materials.
2. In *Ogunic Exploits*, Moyo Okedjeji uses intense colors and rhythms reminiscent of African textiles to convey the dual metaphors associated with the Yoruba god of iron—destruction and creation.

D. Black Aesthetic Art

1. Black aesthetic art was functional, collective, and didactic.
2. Whereas the dominant trend of African-American art prior to the 1960s focused on the oppression and domination of African Americans, the new art centered on positive aspects and determined cultural enrichment.
3. Like Mexican and Latin-American artists, the black artist chose outdoor murals to create works of optimism, encouragement, and hope.

E. Jazz of the 1960s: Ornette Coleman (B. 1930)

1. The creator of “free jazz” Ornette Coleman’s artistic vision has helped to expand contemporary musical boundaries.
2. Ornette’s *Free Jazz* (1960) is his masterpiece which broke with tradition and moved jazz in a new direction.
3. Coleman revolted against the constraints of jazz harmonies and traditional rhythm sections, replacing it with his “free form” concept that was pivotal to the new style.

IV. Postmodernism, Culture, and the Arts

1. *Postmodernism* lacks an agreed upon and succinct definition.
2. The postmodernism phenomenon is driven by the extraordinary advances in technology, the dominant role of the mass media, and an increase in the international exchange of goods leading to a growing sameness in consumerism.
3. It includes a “backlash” characteristic that resists global uniformity by embracing the ethnic, the local, and the particular.

A. The Postmodern Cultural Scene

1. Frederic Jameson defined “postmodernism” as “what you have when the modernization process is complete and nature is gone for good.”
2. While the avant-garde had the power to shock, postmodern spectacle society absorbs everything as just another image.
3. Postmodernism rejects the myth of master narratives and accepts infinite diversity.

B. The Arts

1. Since the romantic period there has been a widening cleavage between mass culture and high culture.
2. This cleavage takes its most extreme form in modernism.
3. In modernism artists create intensely individualistic works for a highly select clientele with the leisure and sophistication to comprehend them.
4. Artists working from a postmodern sensibility do not distinguish between mass and elite styles or between period styles.

5. Video, computer art, hypertext, and other media that liberate and text images from the permanence of the printed page extend the means of the postmodern artist.
- V. Architecture from the International Style to Postmodernism
1. The term postmodern has been applied to architecture more than any other art form.
 2. Postmodern architecture helps liberate building design from the cool rational “box” of the International Style.
 1. The historic preservation movement also influenced postmodern architecture.
 2. Postmodern architecture now incorporates pluralistic designs that include direct historical references, unusual materials, or that somehow reference the context of their place within a campus, community, or neighborhood.
- VI. Postmodern Visual Art: Polemics or Platitudes?
1. The postmodern culture of the *simulcrum* or reproducible image was perhaps announced in the 1960s by Andy Warhol and other of the “pop art” movement.
 2. Warhol’s *Campbell Soup*, 1965, and other works help trigger awareness of the relationship among art, advertising, and popular culture.
 3. Other pop artists attacked socially relevant subjects like AIDS, genocide, and human rights.
 4. In Germany Anselm Kiefer created works that addressed his country’s fascist past.
 5. In America feminist Judy Chicago celebrated the achievements and creativity of women with her monumental work, *The Dinner Party*.
- VII. The Ascendancy of Craft: The Expansion of the Tradition
1. The Industrial Revolution changed the way people make, use, and relate to the objects of everyday life.
 2. As the need for traditional craftsmanship declined, its potential disappearance was seen as an irredeemable loss to the industrialized world’s cultural identity.
 3. Attempt to revive and preserve craft culture began as early as the mid-nineteenth century in Europe and the beginning of the twentieth century in the United States.
 4. In the creation of quilts, clothing, baskets, furniture, and glassware, individuals working within the crafts movement have created utilitarian objects of great artistry.
- VIII. Postmodern Music and Dance
1. The term “postmodern” is not a universally accepted term or construct of contemporary culture, though conscious attempts at postmodern expression have left their mark in music and dance as well as literature.
 2. Composer John Cage experimented with random sounds and silence and his work influenced a whole generation of composers.
 3. Merce Cunningham, who often collaborated with Cage, sought to create a dance of pure movement that sometimes did not even include music.
- IX. Mass Culture and Popular Culture
1. Born in Cuba and raised in the United States, singer Gloria Estefan garnered an enormous following in Europe and the United States with her Spanish- and later English-language recordings.

2. A Hispanic American in a world culture, Estafan's vantage point has helped inspire many poetic and musical works of poetic and social commentary.

X. Postmodern Literature and Theory

1. Postmodern writers comment ironically about the literature of the past while questioning the possibility of still writing literature.
2. Traditional genres such as lyric poetry, drama, and prose fiction have become blurred.
3. What was once called literary criticism is now called "theory."
4. One of the most prominent practitioners of "theory" proclaimed, "We have gone from a God centered world to a man centered world to a world without center, a world as text."
5. Latin-American literature since the period in the 1960s called *el boom* has been one of the major forces of postmodernism.
6. In postmodern writing, highly experimental forms coexist with more traditional ones.