

American post-modernism since 1950s

Task 1. Read the text and look up the meaning of the unknown words in the dictionary.

PROSE

From the mid-40th century and onward, the American society underwent drastic changes. America and its citizens were greatly affected by numerous conflicts, namely three wars: World War II, Korea and Vietnam. As a part of the world community, it witnessed the 1945 explosion of its first atomic bomb in Japan and, at home, the production of the first electronic computer in 1946, the launch of transistor and fulltime TV broadcast in 1948, the decoding of the configuration of the DNA molecule in 1953, the civil rights movement of the 1960s and the rise of blacks and women, space explorations, the first successful heart transplant in 1968, along with experiments with manmade intelligence. Society found itself penetrated by the media and examined by them, more interconnected, more selfconscious, and culturally more diversified.

Simultaneously, American literature was transformed by the rising power of nonfiction and the new means of reporting history, which were crucial to literary and overall cultural changes. The bomb explosions over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, on August 6, 1945, led to a new reality. A number of disasters followed, including the Cold War culminating in the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, the assassination of John F. Kennedy in 1963, and Martin Luther King in 1968, the permanent Persian Gulf crises and the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

Nonetheless, literature lives its own life, even if certain tragic episodes tarnish it with dark colors. Many authors demonstrated their involvement in every detail of American history, there were novels bearing the direct impact of WWII, for example, John Hersey's *Hiroshima* (1946). On the whole the war novels were long chronicles written in the naturalist technique and unambitious in their form or style.

The most overwhelming fictional success of the 1950s came with J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), in which a young protagonist is at odds with the academic, business and sexual customs of adults and condemns all the falsehood or "phoniness" of the grownup world. The book, assumed to have been read by almost every college student, both unites and helps young people feel better about their common

unhappiness. A clearly pacifist tendency, condemning war, is felt in William Saroyan's *The Adventures of Wesley Jackson* (1947).

It tells about a nineteenyearold youth who cannot realize why he was prepared for war and death. The novelists also took to exploring fantasies, extremities of experience, "black humor". Novels like Ken Kesey's *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962), along with many others rejected ordinary experience, the mundane existence in towns or cities. These works admitted to the fact that, in striving towards a brilliant aim, no means can be rejected, either verbal resources or the extravagance

of style. The dominant culture of the 1970s was backed up by the business and professional worlds. The "yuppies", who adopted the careerism trend promoted by the business and professional world clashed with the "hippies" who preferred drugs, music and unrestricted behavior.

The consequence of the nation's changed cultural circumstance was the decreased role of contemporary writers in the public arena. They continued to come from every region; the literary scene was even more sexually and racially diversified. Also, women, unlike before, were responsible for a large portion of the most interesting work in various spheres.

Fear that television was to finish what motion pictures had begun was further strengthened after the telereporting of the staggering events of the Vietnam War and America's space explorations. The blend of literature and other media such as movies, television, the internet, as well as radio and periodical issues, continued to speed up, particularly on stage through the combination of music, dance, poetry, prose and drama.

Task 2. Answer my questions.

1. What events influenced the development of society in the second half of the xx century?
2. What new authors appeared?
3. What was the culture of 1970s backed up by?
4. Did people fear that television would replace literature and theatre?

Task 3. Match the words with their meaning and learn them.

1) Assassination	a) надзвичайний
2) assume	b) прагнути
3) condemn	c) крайнощі
4) crucial	d) затьмарювати
5) drastic	e) головний герой
6) extremities	f) фальшивий
7) mundane existence	g) постійний
8) be at odds with	h) засуджувати
9) penetrate	i) важливий
10) permanent	j) передбачати
11) phoney	k) політичне вбивство
12) protagonist	l) корінні зміни
13) staggering	m) буденне існування
14) strive	n) не ладити
15) tarnish	o) проникати