

Modernist Novel Reading Checklist

1. Stream of Consciousness

- Does the narrative present the inner thoughts and emotions of characters in a flowing, unstructured way?
- Are the characters' inner worlds more prominent than external events?
- Does the text use repetition to mimic the way thoughts circle in the mind?
- Does the text shift between different perspectives or streams of consciousness?

2. Fragmentation and Nonlinear Narratives

- Is the story non-linear, with shifts in time, perspective, or tone?
- Does the narrative lack a clear beginning, middle, or end?
- Are disjointed events or incomplete episodes used to reflect inner conflicts or societal chaos and uncertainty?
- Are there flashbacks, flash-forwards, or abrupt shifts in chronology?

3. Symbolism, Imagery, and Myth

- Are there recurring symbols or images that carry deeper meanings?
- Do objects, colours, or settings represent abstract ideas or emotions?
- Is myth (classical, religious, or cultural) used as a symbolic framework or underlying structure?

4. Alienation and Disconnection

- Do the characters seem disconnected or isolated from society or each other?
- Is there a focus on personal struggles, identity crises, disillusionment, self-discovery, or the search for meaning?
- Do the feelings of alienation shape the characters' inner conflicts?

5. Subjectivity and Psychological Depth

- Is time portrayed as subjective, fragmented, or nonlinear?
- Do characters often reflect on or relive past experiences?
- Is memory central to the narrative or to the characters' development?
- Does the text delve deeply into the characters' thoughts, inner conflicts, sensory and emotional details?

6. Unreliable Narrators

- Is the narrator's perspective subjective, biased, sceptical, pessimistic, or inconsistent?
- Do you find moments where the narrator's account seems contradictory or deceptive?
- Does the narrative force you to question the truth or accuracy of what is being presented?

7. Experimental Language and Style

- Does the author use innovative language, syntax, or punctuation?
- Are there passages that feel poetic, abstract, or difficult to interpret?
- Do the writing techniques themselves challenge traditional forms of expression (e.g., linear plot structure, omniscient narrator, or objective descriptions)?

8. Moments of Epiphany

- Do the characters experience sudden moments of insight or self-realisation?
- Are there key moments that change a character's understanding or perspective?
- Does the epiphany reveal something profound about the human condition or the story's themes?

9. Ambiguity and Multiple Interpretations

- Are there unresolved questions or ambiguous elements in the narrative?
- Does the story encourage multiple interpretations?
- Are there moments where the meaning or outcome is deliberately unclear?

10. The City as a Symbol

- Is the city portrayed as more than a setting, reflecting characters' inner states or societal themes?
- Are urban landscapes used symbolically to highlight themes of alienation, isolation, or chaos?
- Is there a critique of modern society or the effects of technology?
- Does the novel question or reject traditional moral values or societal norms and expectations?