

Common Themes and Techniques of Postmodern Literature of Shakespeare

Ramen Sharma and Dr. Preety Chaudhary

Research Scholar, Singhania University, Rajasthan, India

Postmodern Literature

The term Postmodern literature is used to describe certain characteristics of post-World War II literature (relying heavily, for example, on fragmentation, paradox, questionable narrators, etc.) and a reaction against Enlightenment ideas implicit in Modernist literature.

Postmodern literature, like postmodernism as a whole, is hard to define and there is little agreement on the exact characteristics, scope, and importance of postmodern literature. However, unifying features often coincide with Jean-François Lyotard's concept of the "metanarrative" and "little narrative", Jacques Derrida's concept of "play", and Jean Baudrillard's "simulacra." For example, instead of the modernist quest for meaning in a chaotic world, the postmodern author eschews, often playfully, the possibility of meaning, and the postmodern novel is often a parody of this quest.

This distrust of totalizing mechanisms extends even to the author and his own self-awareness; thus postmodern writers often celebrate chance over craft and employ metafiction to undermine the author's "univocation" (the existence of narrative primacy within a text, the presence of a single all-powerful storytelling authority). The distinction between high and low culture is also attacked with the employment of pastiche, the combination of multiple cultural elements including subjects and genres not previously deemed fit for literature.

Background

Notable influences

Postmodernist writers often point to early novels and story collections as inspiration for their experiments with narrative and structure: Don Quixote, 1001 Arabian Nights, The Decameron, and Candide, among many others. In the English language, Laurence Sterne's 1759 novel The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman, with its heavy emphasis on parody and narrative experimentation, is often cited as an early influence on postmodernism. There were many 19th century examples of attacks on Enlightenment concepts, parody, and playfulness in literature, including Lord Byron's satire, especially Don Juan; Thomas Carlyle's Sartor Resartus; Alfred Jarry's ribald

Ubu parodies and his invention of 'Pataphysics; Lewis Carroll's playful experiments with signification; the work of Isidore Ducasse, Arthur Rimbaud, Oscar Wilde. Playwrights who worked in the late 19th and early 20th century whose thought and work would serve as an influence on the aesthetic of postmodernism include Swedish dramatist August Strindberg, the Italian author Luigi Pirandello, and the German playwright and theorist Bertolt Brecht. In the 1910s, artists associated with Dadaism celebrated chance, parody, playfulness, and attacked the central role of the artist.^[clarification needed] Tristan Tzara claimed in "How to Make a Dadaist Poem" that to create a Dadaist poem one had only to put random words in a hat and pull them out one by one. Another way Dadaism influenced postmodern literature was in the development of collage, specifically collages using elements from advertisement or illustrations from popular novels (the collages of Max Ernst, for example). Artists associated with Surrealism, which developed from Dadaism, continued experimentations with chance and parody while celebrating the flow of the subconscious mind. André Breton, the founder of Surrealism, suggested that automatism and the description of dreams should play a greater role in the creation of literature. He used automatism to create his novel *Nadja* and used photographs to replace description as a parody of the overly-descriptive novelists he often criticized. Surrealist René Magritte's experiments with signification are used as examples by Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. Foucault also uses examples from Jorge Luis Borges, an important direct influence on many postmodernist fiction writers. He is occasionally listed as a postmodernist, although he started writing in the 1920s. The influence of his experiments with metafiction and magic realism was not fully realized in the Anglo-American world until the postmodern period.^[1]

Comparisons with modernist literature

Both modern and postmodern literature represent a break from 19th century realism. In character development, both modern and postmodern literature explore subjectivism, turning from external reality to examine inner states of consciousness, in many cases drawing on modernist examples in the "stream of consciousness" styles of Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, or explorative poems like *The Waste Land* by T. S. Eliot. In addition, both modern and postmodern literature explore fragmentariness in narrative- and character-construction. *The Waste Land* is often cited as a means of distinguishing modern and postmodern literature. The poem is fragmentary and employs pastiche like much postmodern literature, but the speaker in *The Waste Land* says, "these fragments I have shored against my ruins". Modernist literature sees fragmentation and extreme subjectivity as an existential crisis, or Freudian internal conflict, a problem that must be solved, and the artist is often cited as the one to solve it. Postmodernists, however, often demonstrate that this chaos is insurmountable; the artist is impotent, and the only recourse against "ruin" is to play within the chaos. Playfulness is present in many modernist works (Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* or Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, for example) and they may seem very similar to postmodern works, but with postmodernism playfulness becomes central and the actual achievement of order and meaning becomes unlikely.^[1]

Shift to postmodernism

As with all stylistic eras, no definite dates exist for the rise and fall of postmodernism's popularity. 1941, the year in which Irish novelist James Joyce and English novelist Virginia Woolf both died, is sometimes used as a rough boundary for postmodernism's start.

The prefix "post", however, does not necessarily imply a new era. Rather, it could also indicate a reaction against modernism in the wake of the Second World War (with its disrespect for human rights, just confirmed in the Geneva Convention, through the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Holocaust, the bombing of Dresden, the fire-bombing of Tokyo, and Japanese American internment). It could also imply a reaction to significant post-war events: the beginning of the Cold War, the civil rights movement in the United States, postcolonialism (Postcolonial literature), and the rise of the personal computer (Cyberpunk fiction and Hypertext fiction).^{[2][3][4]}

Some further argue that the beginning of postmodern literature could be marked by significant publications or literary events. For example, some mark the beginning of postmodernism with the first publication of John Hawkes' *The Cannibal* in 1949, the first performance of *Waiting for Godot* in 1953, the first publication of *Howl* in 1956 or of *Naked Lunch* in 1959. For others the beginning is marked by moments in critical theory: Jacques Derrida's "Structure, Sign, and Play" lecture in 1966 or as late as Ihab Hassan's usage in *The Dismemberment of Orpheus* in 1971. Brian McHale details his main thesis on this shift, although many postmodern works have developed out of modernism, modernism is characterised by an epistemological dominant while postmodernism works are primarily concerned with questions of ontology.^[5]

Post-war developments and transition figures

Though postmodernist literature does not refer to everything written in the postmodern period, several post-war developments in literature (such as the Theatre of the Absurd, the Beat Generation, and Magic Realism) have significant similarities. These developments are occasionally collectively labeled "postmodern"; more commonly, some key figures (Samuel Beckett, William S. Burroughs, Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortázar and Gabriel García Márquez) are cited as significant contributors to the postmodern aesthetic.

The work of Jarry, the Surrealists, Antonin Artaud, Luigi Pirandello and so on also influenced the work of playwrights from the Theatre of the Absurd. The term "Theatre of the Absurd" was coined by Martin Esslin to describe a tendency in theatre in the 1950s; he related it to Albert Camus's concept of the absurd. The plays of the Theatre of the Absurd parallel postmodern fiction in many ways. For example, *The Bald Soprano* by Eugène Ionesco is essentially a series of clichés taken from a language textbook. One of the most important figures to be categorized as both Absurdist and Postmodern is Samuel Beckett. The work of Samuel Beckett is often seen as marking the shift from modernism to postmodernism in literature. He had close ties with modernism because of his friendship with James Joyce; however, his work helped shape the development of literature away from modernism. Joyce, one of the exemplars of modernism, celebrated the possibility of language; Beckett had a

revelation in 1945 that, in order to escape the shadow of Joyce, he must focus on the poverty of language and man as a failure. His later work, likewise, featured characters stuck in inescapable situations attempting impotently to communicate whose only recourse is to play, to make the best of what they have. As Hans-Peter Wagner says, "Mostly concerned with what he saw as impossibilities in fiction (identity of characters; reliable consciousness; the reliability of language itself; and the rubrication of literature in genres) Beckett's experiments with narrative form and with the disintegration of narration and character in fiction and drama won him the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1969. His works published after 1969 are mostly meta-literary attempts that must be read in light of his own theories and previous works and the attempt to deconstruct literary forms and genres.[...] Beckett's last text published during his lifetime, *Stirrings Still* (1988), breaks down the barriers between drama, fiction, and poetry, with texts of the collection being almost entirely composed of echoes and reiterations of his previous work [...] He was definitely one of the fathers of the postmodern movement in fiction which has continued undermining the ideas of logical coherence in narration, formal plot, regular time sequence, and psychologically explained characters."^[6]

"The Beat Generation" is a name coined by Jack Kerouac for the disaffected youth of America during the materialistic 1950s; Kerouac developed ideas of automatism into what he called "spontaneous prose" to create a maximalistic, multi-novel epic called the *Duluoz Legend* in the mold of Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*. "Beat Generation" is often used more broadly to refer to several groups of post-war American writers from the Black Mountain poets, the New York School, the San Francisco Renaissance, and so on. These writers have occasionally also been referred to as the "Postmoderns" (see especially references by Charles Olson and the Grove anthologies edited by Donald Allen). Though this is now a less common usage of "postmodern", references to these writers as "postmodernists" still appear and many writers associated with this group (John Ashbery, Richard Brautigan, Gilbert Sorrentino, and so on) appear often on lists of postmodern writers. One writer associated with the Beat Generation who appears most often on lists of postmodern writers is William S. Burroughs. Burroughs published *Naked Lunch* in Paris in 1959 and in America in 1961; this is considered by some the first truly postmodern novel because it is fragmentary, with no central narrative arc; it employs pastiche to fold in elements from popular genres such as detective fiction and science fiction; it's full of parody, paradox, and playfulness; and, according to some accounts, friends Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg edited the book guided by chance. He is also noted, along with Brion Gysin, for the creation of the "cut-up" technique, a technique (similar to Tzara's "Dadaist Poem") in which words and phrases are cut from a newspaper or other publication and rearranged to form a new message. This is the technique he used to create novels such as *Nova Express* and *The Ticket That Exploded*.

Magic Realism is a technique popular among Latin American writers (and can also be considered its own genre) in which supernatural elements are treated as mundane (a famous example being the practical-minded and ultimately dismissive treatment of an apparently angelic figure in Gabriel García Márquez's "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings"). Though the technique has its roots in traditional

storytelling, it was a center piece of the Latin American "boom", a movement coterminous with postmodernism. Some of the major figures of the "Boom" and practitioners of Magic Realism (Gabriel García Márquez, Julio Cortázar etc.) are sometimes listed as postmodernists. This labeling, however, is not without its problems. In Spanish-speaking Latin America, modernismo and posmodernismo refer to early 20th-century literary movements that have no direct relationship to modernism and postmodernism in English. Finding it anachronistic, Octavio Paz has argued that postmodernism is an imported grand récit that is incompatible with the cultural production of Latin America.

Along with Beckett and Borges, a commonly cited transitional figure is Vladimir Nabokov; like Beckett and Borges, Nabokov started publishing before the beginning of postmodernity (1926 in Russian, 1941 in English). Though his most famous novel, *Lolita* (1955), could be considered a modernist or a postmodernist novel, his later work (specifically *Pale Fire* in 1962 and *Ada or Ardor: A Family Chronicle* in 1969) are more clearly postmodern, see Brian McHale.^[7]

Common themes and techniques

All of these themes and techniques are often used together. For example, metafiction and pastiche are often used for irony. These are not used by all postmodernists, nor is this an exclusive list of features.

Irony, playfulness, black humor

Linda Hutcheon claimed postmodern fiction as a whole could be characterized by the ironic quote marks, that much of it can be taken as tongue-in-cheek. This irony, along with black humor and the general concept of "play" (related to Derrida's concept or the ideas advocated by Roland Barthes in *The Pleasure of the Text*) are among the most recognizable aspects of postmodernism. Though the idea of employing these in literature did not start with the postmodernists (the modernists were often playful and ironic), they became central features in many postmodern works. In fact, several novelists later to be labeled postmodern were first collectively labeled black humorists: John Barth, Joseph Heller, William Gaddis, Kurt Vonnegut, Bruce Jay Friedman, etc. It's common for postmodernists to treat serious subjects in a playful and humorous way: for example, the way Heller, Vonnegut, and Pynchon address the events of World War II. A good example of postmodern irony and black humor is found in the stories of Donald Barthelme; "The School", for example, is about the ironic death of plants, animals, and people connected to the children in one class, but the inexplicable repetition of death is treated only as a joke and the narrator remains emotionally distant throughout. The central concept of Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* is the irony of the now-idiomatic "catch-22", and the narrative is structured around a long series of similar ironies. Thomas Pynchon in particular provides prime examples of playfulness, often including silly wordplay, within a serious context. *The Crying of Lot 49*, for example, contains characters named Mike Fallopian and Stanley Koteks and a radio station called KCUF, while the novel as a whole has a serious subject and a complex structure.^{[1][10][11]}

Intertextuality

Since postmodernism represents a decentered concept of the universe in which individual works are not isolated creations, much of the focus in the study of postmodern literature is on intertextuality: the relationship between one text (a novel for example) and another or one text within the interwoven fabric of literary history. Critics point to this as an indication of postmodernism's lack of originality and reliance on clichés. Intertextuality in postmodern literature can be a reference or parallel to another literary work, an extended discussion of a work, or the adoption of a style. In postmodern literature this commonly manifests as references to fairy tales – as in works by Margaret Atwood, Donald Barthelme, and many other – or in references to popular genres such as sci-fi and detective fiction. An early 20th century example of intertextuality which influenced later postmodernists is “Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote” by Jorge Luis Borges, a story with significant references to Don Quixote which is also a good example of intertextuality with its references to Medieval romances. Don Quixote is a common reference with postmodernists, for example Kathy Acker's novel *Don Quixote: Which Was a Dream*. Another example of intertextuality in postmodernism is John Barth's *The Sot-Weed Factor* which deals with Ebenezer Cooke's poem of the same name. Often intertextuality is more complicated than a single reference to another text. Robert Coover's *Pinocchio in Venice*, for example, links *Pinocchio* to Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*. Also, Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* takes on the form of a detective novel and makes references to authors such as Aristotle, Arthur Conan Doyle, and Borges.^{[12][13][14]}

Pastiche

Related to postmodern intertextuality, pastiche means to combine, or "paste" together, multiple elements. In Postmodernist literature this can be an homage to or a parody of past styles. It can be seen as a representation of the chaotic, pluralistic, or information-drenched aspects of postmodern society. It can be a combination of multiple genres to create a unique narrative or to comment on situations in postmodernity: for example, William S. Burroughs uses science fiction, detective fiction, westerns; Margaret Atwood uses science fiction and fairy tales; Umberto Eco uses detective fiction, fairy tales, and science fiction, Derek Pell relies on collage and noir detective, erotica, travel guides, and how-to manuals, and so on. Though pastiche commonly refers to the mixing of genres, many other elements are also included (metafiction and temporal distortion are common in the broader pastiche of the postmodern novel). For example, Thomas Pynchon includes in his novels elements from detective fiction, science fiction, and war fiction; songs; pop culture references; well-known, obscure, and fictional history mixed together; real contemporary and historical figures (Mickey Rooney and Wernher von Braun for example); a wide variety of well-known, obscure and fictional cultures and concepts. In Robert Coover's 1977 novel *The Public Burning*, Coover mixes historically inaccurate accounts of Richard Nixon interacting with historical figures and fictional characters such as Uncle Sam and Betty Crocker. Pastiche can also refer to compositional technique, for example the cut-up technique employed by Burroughs. Another

example is B. S. Johnson's 1969 novel *The Unfortunates*; it was released in a box with no binding so that readers could assemble it however they chose.^{[1][15][16]}

Metafiction

Metafiction is essentially writing about writing or "foregrounding the apparatus", making the artificiality of art or the fictionality of fiction apparent to the reader and generally disregards the necessity for "willful suspension of disbelief". It is often employed to undermine the authority of the author, for unexpected narrative shifts, to advance a story in a unique way, for emotional distance, or to comment on the act of storytelling. For example, Italo Calvino's 1979 novel *If on a winter's night a traveler* is about a reader attempting to read a novel of the same name. Kurt Vonnegut also commonly used this technique: the first chapter of his 1969 novel *Slaughterhouse-Five* is about the process of writing the novel and calls attention to his own presence throughout the novel. Though much of the novel has to do with Vonnegut's own experiences during the firebombing of Dresden, Vonnegut continually points out the artificiality of the central narrative arc which contains obviously fictional elements such as aliens and time travel. Similarly, Tim O'Brien's 1990 novel/story collection *The Things They Carried*, about one platoon's experiences during the Vietnam War, features a character named Tim O'Brien; though O'Brien was a Vietnam veteran, the book is a work of fiction and O'Brien calls into question the fictionality of the characters and incidents through out the book. One story in the book, "How to Tell a True War Story", questions the nature of telling stories. Factual retellings of war stories, the narrator says, would be unbelievable and heroic, moral war stories don't capture the truth.

Fabulation

Fabulation is a term sometimes used interchangeably with metafiction and relates to pastiche and Magic Realism. It is a rejection of realism which embraces the notion that literature is a created work and not bound by notions of mimesis and verisimilitude. Thus, fabulation challenges some traditional notions of literature—the traditional structure of a novel or role of the narrator, for example—and integrates other traditional notions of storytelling, including fantastical elements, such as magic and myth, or elements from popular genres such as science fiction. By some accounts, the term was coined by Robert Scholes in his book *The Fabulators*. A good example of fabulation is Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*.^[17]

Poioumena

Poioumenon (plural: poioumena; from Ancient Greek: ποιούμενον, "product") is a term coined by Alastair Fowler to refer to a specific type of metafiction in which the story is about the process of creation. According to Fowler, "the poioumenon is calculated to offer opportunities to explore the boundaries of fiction and reality—the limits of narrative truth."^[18] In many cases, the book will be about the process of creating the book or includes a central metaphor for this process. Common examples of this Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* and Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* which is about the narrator's frustrated attempt to tell his own story. A significant

postmodern example is Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire*, in which the narrator, Kinbote, claims he is writing an analysis of John Shade's long poem "Pale Fire", but the narrative of the relationship between Shade and Kinbote is presented in what is ostensibly the footnotes to the poem. Similarly, the self-conscious narrator in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* parallels the creation of his book to the creation of chutney and the creation of independent India. Other postmodern examples of poioumena include Samuel Beckett's trilogy (*Molloy*, *Malone Dies* and *The Unnamable*); Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*; John Fowles's *Mantissa*; William Golding's *Paper Men*; and Gilbert Sorrentino's *Mulligan Stew*.^{[14][18][19][20][21]}

Historiographic metafiction

Linda Hutcheon coined the term "historiographic metafiction" to refer to works that fictionalize actual historical events or figures; notable examples include *The General in His Labyrinth* by Gabriel García Márquez (about Simón Bolívar), *Flaubert's Parrot* by Julian Barnes (about Gustave Flaubert), *Ragtime* by E. L. Doctorow (which features such historical figures as Harry Houdini, Henry Ford, Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, Booker T. Washington, Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung), and Rabih Alameddine's *Koolhaas: The Art of War* which makes references to the Lebanese Civil War and various real life political figures. Thomas Pynchon's *Mason and Dixon* also employs this concept; for example, a scene featuring George Washington smoking marijuana is included. John Fowles deals similarly with the Victorian Period in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. In regards to critical theory, this technique can be related to *The Death of the Author* by Roland Barthes.^[1]

Temporal distortion

This is a common technique in modernist fiction: fragmentation and non-linear narratives are central features in both modern and postmodern literature. Temporal distortion in postmodern fiction is used in a variety of ways, often for the sake of irony. Historiographic metafiction (see above) is an example of this. Distortions in time are central features in many of Kurt Vonnegut's non-linear novels, the most famous of which is perhaps Billy Pilgrim in *Slaughterhouse-Five* becoming "unstuck in time". In *Flight to Canada*, Ishmael Reed deals playfully with anachronisms, Abraham Lincoln using a telephone for example. Time may also overlap, repeat, or bifurcate into multiple possibilities. For example, in Robert Coover's "The Babysitter" from *Pricksongs & Descants*, the author presents multiple possible events occurring simultaneously—in one section the babysitter is murdered while in another section nothing happens and so on—yet no version of the story is favored as the correct version.^[1]

Magic realism

Literary work marked by the use of still, sharply defined, smoothly painted images of figures and objects depicted in a surrealist manner. The themes and subjects are often imaginary, somewhat outlandish and fantastic and with a certain dream-like quality. Some of the characteristic features of this kind of fiction are the mingling and juxtaposition of the realistic and the fantastic or bizarre, skillful time shifts,

convoluted and even labyrinthine narratives and plots, miscellaneous use of dreams, myths and fairy stories, expressionistic and even surrealistic description, arcane erudition, the element of surprise or abrupt shock, the horrific and the inexplicable. It has been applied, for instance, to the work of Jorge Luis Borges, the Argentinian who in 1935 published his *Historia universal de la infamia*, regarded by many as the first work of magic realism. Colombian novelist Gabriel García Márquez is also regarded as a notable exponent of this kind of fiction – especially his novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. The Cuban Alejo Carpentier is another described as a "magic realist". Postmodernists such as Salman Rushdie and Italo Calvino commonly use Magic Realism in their work.^{[1][14]} A fusion of fabulism with magic realism is apparent in such early 21st century American short stories as Kevin Brockmeier's "The Ceiling",

Technoculture and hyperreality

Fredric Jameson called postmodernism the "cultural logic of late capitalism". "Late capitalism" implies that society has moved past the industrial age and into the information age. Likewise, Jean Baudrillard claimed postmodernity was defined by a shift into hyperreality in which simulations have replaced the real. In postmodernity people are inundated with information, technology has become a central focus in many lives, and our understanding of the real is mediated by simulations of the real. Many works of fiction have dealt with this aspect of postmodernity with characteristic irony and pastiche. For example, Don DeLillo's *White Noise* presents characters who are bombarded with a "white noise" of television, product brand names, and clichés. The cyberpunk fiction of William Gibson, Neal Stephenson, and many others use science fiction techniques to address this postmodern, hyperreal information bombardment.^{[23][24][25]} Steampunk, a subgenre of science fiction popularized in novels and comics by such writers as Alan Moore and James Blaylock, demonstrates postmodern pastiche, temporal distortion, and a focus on technoculture with its mix of futuristic technology and Victorian culture.

Paranoia

Perhaps demonstrated most famously and effectively in Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* and the work of Thomas Pynchon, the sense of paranoia, the belief that there's an ordering system behind the chaos of the world is another recurring postmodern theme. For the postmodernist, no ordering system exists, so a search for order is fruitless and absurd. *The Crying of Lot 49* by Thomas Pynchon has many possible interpretations.^[26] This often coincides with the theme of technoculture and hyperreality. For example, in *Breakfast of Champions* by Kurt Vonnegut, the character Dwayne Hoover becomes violent when he's convinced that everyone else in the world is a robot and he is the only human.^[1]

Maximalism

Dubbed maximalism by some critics, the sprawling canvas and fragmented narrative of such writers as Dave Eggers has generated controversy on the "purpose" of a novel as narrative and the standards by which it should be judged. The postmodern position is that the style of a novel must be appropriate to what it depicts and represents, and

points back to such examples in previous ages as *Gargantua* by François Rabelais and the *Odyssey* of Homer, which Nancy Felson hails as the exemplar of the polytropic audience and its engagement with a work.

Many modernist critics, notably B.R. Myers in his polemic *A Reader's Manifesto*, attack the maximalist novel as being disorganized, sterile and filled with language play for its own sake, empty of emotional commitment—and therefore empty of value as a novel. Yet there are counter-examples, such as Pynchon's *Mason & Dixon* and

Minimalism

Literary minimalism can be characterized as a focus on a surface description where readers are expected to take an active role in the creation of a story. The characters in minimalist stories and novels tend to be unexceptional. Generally, the short stories are "slice of life" stories. Minimalism, the opposite of maximalism, is a representation of only the most basic and necessary pieces, specific by economy with words. Minimalist authors hesitate to use adjectives, adverbs, or meaningless details. Instead of providing every minute detail, the author provides a general context and then allows the reader's imagination to shape the story. Among those categorized as postmodernist, literary minimalism is most commonly associated with Samuel Beckett.

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This article discusses Shakespeare themes, and how he used themes in his play. Themes are the ideas that Shakespeare explores dramatically through the. There are common themes in all of the plays, such as appearance and reality, but in addition to those, each play explores its own issues, which are dramatised in the language, the actions of the characters and in the setting. Macbeth Themes. Macbeth explores several ideas or key themes throughout the play. Here's our take on four of the key themes in Macbeth. Romeo and Juliet Themes. Whilst the play features the meeting and falling in love of the two main protagonists, to say that love is a theme of Romeo and Juliet is an oversimplification. Hamlet Themes. Shakespeare need not be abandoned by the postmodern world. Indeed; the postmodern world does and continues to embrace his works wholeheartedly. Hugh Grady rightly observes "we are now witnessing the emergence of a postmodernist Shakespeare through the development of critical paradigms which incorporate aspects of contemporary postmodernist aesthetics" (p.207) Though, his plays in chaste form do not always agree with post-modern ideologies, they prove conducive to a myriad of discussions relevant to the postmodern era. The issues of Race constitute one of the most important themes of in postmodern literature which figure prominently in Shakespeare's plays like Othello, The Tempest, Merchant of Venice and Titus Andronicus. Post-modernism is the term used to suggest a reaction or response to modernism in the late twentieth century. Postmodern authors were certainly not the first to use irony and humor in their writing, but for many postmodern authors, these became the hallmarks of their style. Postmodern authors are very frustrated for World War II, the Cold War, conspiracy theories. They try to amalgamate it from indirect way so, irony, playfulness, black humor comes. In fact, several novelists later to be labeled postmodern were first collectively labeled black humorists. : John Barth, Joseph Heller, William Gaddis, Kurt Vonnegut, Bruce Jay Friedman, etc. It's common for postmodernists to treat serious subjects in a