From a literary perspective, the main characteristics of modernism include:

1. an emphasis on impressionism and subjectivity in writing (and in visual arts as well); an emphasis on HOW seeing (or reading or perception itself) takes place, rather than on WHAT is perceived. An example of this would be stream-of-consciousness writing.

2. a movement away from the apparent objectivity provided by omniscient third-person narrators, fixed narrative points of view, and clear-cut moral positions. (Mrs. Dalloway)

3. a blurring of distinctions between genres, so that poetry seems more documentary (as in T.S. Eliot or ee cummings) and prose seems more poetic (as in Woolf or Joyce).

4. an emphasis on fragmented forms, discontinuous narratives, and random-seeming collages of different materials.

5. a tendency toward reflexivity, or self-consciousness, about the production of the work of art, so that each piece calls attention to its own status as a production, as something constructed and consumed in particular ways.

6. a rejection of elaborate formal aesthetics in favor of minimalist designs (as in the poetry of William Carlos Williams) and a rejection, in large part, of formal aesthetic theories, in favor of spontaneity and discovery in creation.

7. A rejection of the distinction between "high" and "low" or popular culture, both in choice of materials used to produce art and in methods of displaying, distributing, and consuming art.

Postmodernism, like modernism, follows most of these same ideas,

- rejecting boundaries between high and low forms of art,
- rejecting rigid genre distinctions, emphasizing pastiche, parody, bricolage, irony, and playfulness. Postmodern art (and thought)
- favors reflexivity and self-consciousness, fragmentation and discontinuity (especially in narrative structures), ambiguity, simultaneity, and
- an emphasis on the destructured, decentered, dehumanized subject.

But--while postmodernism seems very much like modernism in these ways, it differs from modernism

- Modernism, for example, tends to present a fragmented view of human subjectivity and history (think of The Wasteland, for instance, or of Woolf's To the Lighthouse), but presents that fragmentation as something tragic, something to be lamented and mourned as a loss.

- Many modernist works try to uphold the idea that works of art can provide the unity, coherence, and meaning which has been lost in most of modern life; art will do what other human institutions fail to do.
• Postmodernism, in contrast, doesn't lament the idea of fragmentation, provisionality, or incoherence, but rather celebrates that. The world is meaningless? Let's not pretend that art can make meaning then, let's just play with nonsense.

• Postmodernism, in rejecting grand narratives, favors "mini-narratives," stories that explain small practices, local events, rather than large-scale universal or global concepts. Postmodern "mini-narratives" are always situational, provisional, contingent, and temporary, making no claim to universality, truth, reason, or stability.

• meaning was predictable before this:

theory of language, Saussure – signifier-signified
or, sign-referent
language is totally arbitrary, meaning to be found in relationship between these two (cat)
doesn’t just work for language either: all kinds of signs – wearing a knit hat= it’s cold outside;
smile=you’re happy (Baudrillard is going to get to this later in the book)
for Baudrillard, no longer any connection between the two
advertising works best to explain this (show ads)
later in America: “You wonder whether the world itself isn’t just here to serve as advertising
copy in some other world” (32)

in postmodernism, only signifiers, no signifieds

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Jean Baudrillard, notorious French sociologist, cultural critic, and theorist of postmodernity,
was born in 1929
trained in sociology, criticizes and analyzes the media, influenced by Marxism
• earlier work from 60s and 70s examines the psychological imperatives of consumption in an
advanced capitalistic economy. The first argues that meaning, not use, is primarily
transferred through consumer objects and that the individual in effect buys a group identity
and a metaphysical order with each over-determined purchase. (can we think of examples?)
• how does this affect the indiv? the individual — to the extent that he matters at all — merely
fulfills the needs of the productive system under the illusion that he is servicing his private
wants.

• philosophy centers on the twin concepts of "hyperreality" and "simulation." (prefix hyper-
excessive – what does simulation mean? a counterfeit)
• simulacrum (image, representation of reality, resemblance of something)
• These terms refers to the virtual or unreal nature of contemporary culture in an age of mass
communication and mass consumption. We live in a world dominated by simulated
experience and feelings, Baudrillard believes, and have lost the capacity to comprehend
reality as it really exists. We only experience prepared realities-- edited war footage,
meaningless acts of terrorism, the destruction of cultural values and the substitution of
"referendum."

new method of analyzing society – written in the form of a travelogue
method was to travel through the US at great speed, not allowing himself to get bogged down with the “depth” of American society

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America (1986)
astral” (having do with stars, exalted)
how does he feel about America? does he hate it or admire it? find a passage

the way the image of the desert works: (5) read out loud – can we translate?
talks about why America interests him (7) read out loud – questions about vocab here, translate?

why does he begin with the desert and New York, do you think?

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day 2 Baudrillard
idea of America as hyperreality – 28 – how does he explain this?
image of hologram enters (29) – how does this work?

S California enters a number of times (30). why is this space important to him?
45-6. Santa Cruz
57-8. LA – no one walks
look at lines on 31 – is this a poem? can we translate this?

32-3. touching has been replaced with communication – what does he mean?
uses example of high-tech pot

33. how does this relate to his point about smiling?
35. starts to talk about cult of the body in US. what does he say?
talks about use of pronoun “into” – what’s his point here?
jogger, 37.
he says it’s *not* narcissism (what’s narcissism, by the way?)

role of video screen, Polaroid picture in our lives – 36-7. what’s his point here?

Americans are people of conviction (41). is this characterization true?
America as a museum (41)
he says this is perfect example of simulacrum – why?
51. DC as a museum

43. ref to Holocaust – anticipatory form of such a condition – how does he use this analogy?

49. laughter on sitcoms
50. Ams fear more than anything that the lights will go out
56. whole country is cinematic – read out loud?
58. one of America’s specific problems is fame and glory – what does he mean?

59-60. talks about reflective surfaces of skyscrapers

63. role deserts play.
67. Death Valley and Las Vegas are inseparable – how and why?
last paragraph – relationship between Europe and US --