**List of postmodern film characteristics.**

Irony, playfulness, black humor

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 will often treat very serious subjects—World War II, the Cold War, conspiracy theories—from a position of distance and disconnect, and will choose to depict their histories ironically and humorously.

Pastiche

Many postmodern authors combined, or “pasted” elements of previous genres and styles of literature to create a new narrative voice, or to comment on the writing of their contemporaries. Thomas Pynchon, one of the most important postmodern authors, uses elements from detective fiction, science fiction, and war fiction, songs, pop culture references, and well-known, obscure, and fictional history.

Intertextuality

An important element of postmodernism is its acknowledgment of previous literary works. The intertextuality of certain works of postmodern fiction, the dependence on literature that has been created earlier, attempts to comment on the situation in which both literature and society found themselves in the second half of the 20th century: living, working, and creating on the backs of those that had come before.

Metafiction

Many postmodern authors feature metafiction in their writing, which, essentially, is writing about writing, an attempt to make the reader aware of its ficitionality, and, sometimes, the presence of the author. Authors sometimes use this technique to allow for flagrant shifts in narrative, impossible jumps in time, or to maintain emotional distance as a narrator.

Historiographic metafiction

This term was created by Linda Hutcheon to refer to novels that fictionalize actual historical events and characters: Thomas Pynchon’s Mason and Dixon, for example, features a scene in which George Washington smokes pot.

Temporal distortion

Temporal distortion is a literary technique that uses a nonlinear timeline; the author may jump forwards or backwards in time, or there may be cultural and historical references that do not fit: Abraham Lincoln uses a telephone in Ishmael Reed’s Flight to Canada. This technique is frequently used in literature, but it has become even more common in films.

Technoculture and hyperreality

In his essay of the same name, Frederic Jameson called postmodernism the “cultural logic of late capitalism.” According to his logic, society has moved beyond capitalism into the information age, in which we are constantly bombarded with advertisements, videos, and product placement. Many postmodern authors reflect this in their work by inventing products that mirror actual advertisements, or by placing their characters in situations in which they cannot escape technology.

Paranoia

Many postmodern authors write under the assumption that modern society cannot be explained or understood. From that point of view, any apparent connections or controlling influences on the chaos of society would be very frightening, and this lends a sense of paranoia to many postmodern works.

Maximalism

Villified by its critics for being in turns disorganized, sprawling, overly long, and emotionally disconnected, maximalism exists in the tradition of long works like The Odyssey. Authors that use this technique will sometimes defend their work as being as long as it needs to be, depending on the subject material that is covered.

Minimalism

Minimalism is a style of writing in which the author deliberately presents characters that are unexceptional and events that are taken from everyday life. It is not an exclusively postmodern technique, as many writers, most notably Ernest Hemingway, wrote in a similar style, but some critics claim that Samuel Beckett, one of the most important postmodern authors, perfected minimalism.

Faction

Faction is very similar to historiographic metafiction, in that its subject material is based on actual events, but writers of faction tend to blur the line between fact and fiction to the degree that it is almost impossible to know the difference between the two, as opposed to metafiction, which often draws attention to the fact that it is not true.

Magical realism

Arguably the most important postmodern technique, magical realism is the introduction of fantastic or impossible elements into a narrative that is otherwise normal. Magical realist novels may include dreams taking place during normal life, the return of previously deceased characters, extremely complicated plots, wild shifts in time, and myths and fairy tales becoming part of the narrative. Many critics argue that magical realism has its roots in the work of Jorge Luis Borges and Gabriel García Márquez, two South American writers, and some have classified it as a Latin American style.

Task: Find examples of post-modern films for each of the follow post-modern film characteristics;

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| --- | --- |
| [Pastiche](http://www.onpostmodernism.com/movies/default.aspx#Pastiche) | Self-referential, tongue-in-cheek, rehashes of classic pop culture  ie |
| [Flattening of Affect](http://www.onpostmodernism.com/movies/default.aspx#Affectless) | Technology, violence, drugs, and the media lead to detached, emotionless, unauthentic lives  Ie |
| [Hyperreality](http://www.onpostmodernism.com/movies/default.aspx#Hyperreality) | Technologically created realities are often more authentic or desirable than the real world  Ie |
| [Time Bending](http://www.onpostmodernism.com/movies/default.aspx#TimeBending) | Time travel provides another way to shape reality and play "what if" games with society  Ie |
| [Altered States](http://www.onpostmodernism.com/movies/default.aspx#AlteredStates) | Drugs, mental illness and technology provide a dark, often psychedelic, gateway to new internal realities  Ie |
| [More Human than Human](http://www.onpostmodernism.com/movies/default.aspx#MoreHumanthanHuman) | Artificial intelligence, robotics, and cybernetics seek to enhance, or replace, humanity  Ie |

**Postmodernist film** attempts to articulate [postmodernism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postmodernism) (its ideas and themes and methods) through the medium of [film](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Film). Postmodernist film attempts to subvert the [mainstream](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mainstream) [conventions](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Convention_(norm)) of [narrative structure](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narrative_structure), [characterization](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Characterization) and destroys (or, at least, toys with) the audience's [suspension of disbelief](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suspension_of_disbelief).[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postmodernist_film#cite_note-Susan1-1)[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postmodernist_film#cite_note-Laurent1-2)[[3]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postmodernist_film#cite_note-Linda2-3) Typically, such films also break down the cultural divide between high and low [art](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art) and often upend typical portrayals of [gender](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender), [race](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Race_(classification_of_humans)), [class](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_class), [genre](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genre), and [time](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Time) with the goal of creating something different from traditional narrative expression.

**Identifying the Characteristics of Postmodern Films**

**Playfulness and self reference:**

Firstly when viewing a classical narrative, the narrative will try to hide the fact that its a fictional product, the film is usually edited in away to get viewers to forget about any editing transitions etc which has actually taken place. Compared to a classical/modern film, a postmodernist film will jump up and down to draw attention to itself and its modes of construction. Thomas Tykwer's film, Run Lola Run plays with its narrative structure, delivering a similar scenario three times with different conclusions. Its cinematic style which includes animation, both video and film stock, colour changes, whip pans(where the camera whips sideways), crash zooms which quickly focuses on experimental editing. It also never lets you forget that its a highly constructed film using a number of storytelling devices. The film also makes references to other forms of popular culture, such as music videos and computer games and also positions itself in context of other media products. The message of the film is basically not to take the film seriously which is done through the audience distancing itself from the media representations etc which are found in the film. Compared to a classical movie, a postmodernist films include texts which keep us at arms length by reminding us that its a constructed or simulated reality which we experience in order to communicate to audiences that the text being conveyed through the movie isn't real whereas a classical narrative draws the audience into the storyline of the film and attempts to create a belief in the characters and their experiences. Postmodernist film is also known to challenge the mainstream conventions of narrative structures and characterization, while also destroying the audiences suspension of disbelief in order to create a work in which a less recognizable internal logic forms the mediums means of representation and expression. For the film to convey their desired meaning, they are also known to maintain conventional elements to help orient the audience. Another example of where the film plays around with its narrative structure, is the film, The Time Travellers Wife, which plays around the narrative as Eric Bana's character goes back and forth in time, trying to reach different conclusions within his life with his family.

Postmodernist films also include concepts such as pastiche, flattening of affact, hyperreality, time bending, altered states and more human then human. Pastiche is self referential, tongue in cheek, rehashes of classic pop culture. Flattening of affect involves technology, violence, drugs and the media lead to detached, emotionless, unauthentic lives. Hyperreality is described in relation to where technology creates realities which are original or more desirable then the real world. Time bending is used to connote the importance of time travel, as it relates to how time travel provides another way to shape reality. Whereas altered states involves mental illness, drugs and technology which provide a dark gateway to internal realities. Whereas Human more human involves artifical intelligence, robotics and cybernetics, which seeks to replace or enhance humanity.

**Generic blurring and intertexuality:**

This is where films often cross boundaries between different genres an example of this is Pans Labyrinth, which clearly has different film genres included within the film such as it creates scenes of horror, tragedy, adventure and fantasy with elements of a fairy tale like story line combined with elements of military history when combined with the topic of the Spanish civil war and it also explores the themes of obedience, religion, politics, war and imagination.  Intertexuality is also, where the film makes reference to any other medium formats, such as Toy Story 2 refers to the shortage of Buzz Lightyear toys as an intertexual joke, which is connected to the manufacturers underestimated demand for the toy. This postmodern tendency towards generic cross reference and intertexuality creates a relationship with the audience by both playing with and complementing their knowledge of film. Another example of this is in South park, when they make intertexual references to Harry Potter, The Lords of The Rings and the Dark Knight, when Cartman dresses up as the Coon to make a mockery out of the Dark Knight. Pans Labyrinth also uses intertexual references to Del Toro's film, The Devils Backbone and Narnia etc, which Guillermo Del Toro uses to combine pieces of his favourite writers to compromise the story which is original and to explore the figure of the god, pan and its symbolic nature of the Labyrinth.  
  
**Popular and commercial media meets High Culture:**  
This were the film or another type of media format uses popular culture is combines with high culture, which can be done through various ways such as having parts of high culture such as literature, art forms etc combined with popular culture such as computer games etc. An example of this is Pan's Labyrinth which contains cultural styles and times which are combined with each other, as it challenges the chronological history as it includes scenes of Captain Vidal involved in fascism and while at the same time addressing Ofelia's innocence when completing Pans tasks.  These could be considered as high culture elements and the text can be perceived as postmodern as it involves this and can be considered modern because its enjoyed by the masses. The OC is also another example of where it combines the Cohens, high cultural lifestyle with that of Ryan's, whose from Chino.  
  
**Fragmentation and the death of representation:**

This is were films, use a range of fragments from other texts, genres and cultural influences, this fragmentation also applies to representation. Captain Vidal representation of someone who is perceived as violent as it can be argued that there's a death of representation as his constructed to be like a monster and the audience make a connection with fairy tale monstrous characters, which Ofelia faces and see's as an uncertain threat, the same can be said about how the antagonist in The lovely Bones.

**Uncertainty and the loss of context:**  
This can result in a sense of uncertainty and the shaking up of previously understood beliefs and roles. Postmodernist films can also make the audience feel their are no generic rules and that representations only make reference to other representations. Postmodernist filmmakers such as Christopher Nolan, Stanley Kubrick and David Lynch etc challenge aspects of life or belief systems. This can be said of Nolan's film, Inception, When the audience are made to decide if DiCaprio's character is trapped in reality or a simulated/constructed reality or The Simpsons which challenges law enforcement, science and the American Dream.

**Other characteristics which are sometimes used in postmodernist films:**

Postmodernist films are also known to include other key concepts when its comes to them being embedded into films. Such as postmodern films also include concepts like a pre-fabrication which is similar to how simulation is used in movies but this draws the audience closer to already existing and noticeable scenes, and these are basically reused in narratives, dialogue etc. A bricolage is also used, which is where a person such as a producer, editor or director usually builds a film like a collage of different film styles and genres. It also includes metafiction which is were someone within a film write someone writing within a film to demonstrate its fictionality and is used for shifts in narrative, impossible jumps in time or to mainatin emotional distance for the narrator. Historic metafiction is a technique refering to novels that fictionalise actual historical events and characters. Temporal distortion is the jumping of time backwards and forwards. Minimalism is a technique used to demonstrate characters that are unexceptional and events which usually occur. Postmodernist films are also known to use other characteristics such as technoculture, paranoia, maximalism, faction, participation and magical realism.