

Amanda Ambriz

Ashley Foster

English 188T

13 May 2021

Curatorial Statement

The Victorian period began in 1837 and lasted until 1901. This period lasted until Queen Victoria led Britain into the monarchy. Britain during the Victorian era was mostly a rural agricultural society that was just starting to get introduced to industrialization.¹ The ever-changing lifestyles of those living in this era often translated their struggles into literature. Victorian literature often portrays the struggles of one's life. Victorian literature also focuses heavily on realism, relating to one another, and nature. The death of Queen Victoria in 1901 marks the end of the Victorian period and the start of the modernist movement. Modernism began as a way to break from the past. With a new era beginning, people began to reject the traditional way of storytelling and started something new. The world around them was changing quickly and this manifested in art and literature. While the era of Victorian literature focuses more on realism, the modernist movement focuses more on different ways of expression as well as the stream of consciousness.² The reader sees these characteristics of modernism through *To the Lighthouse*. Modernism is all about experimenting, and the reader definitely feels that within this novel. *To the Lighthouse* consists of three parts; *The Window*, *Time Passes*, and *To the Lighthouse*. The novel does not have an omniscient narrator (this only shows up in *Time Passes*). Throughout the novel, the reader gets to explore the minds of the characters, also known as the stream of consciousness. The structure of the book is a form of modernism within itself. The

¹ Information provided by Baylor University British Literature

² Information provided by Yale Modernism Lab.

sections of *Time Passes* and *To the Lighthouse* both begin with statements or a question that regards to future and life itself. *Time Passes* begins with “We must wait for the future to show.” (Woolf, 125). Although the characters are returning from the beach in this section, this quote can be translated into waiting for an unknown something. A utopian society. Something better than the place the world is at now. With this novel being published in 1927, the reader sees the aftermath of World War 1. The stakes of this war caused people to want a better life while questioning everything around them at the same time. The section of “To the Lighthouse” begins with Lily stating, “What does it all mean then, what can it all mean?” (Woolf, 145) As most modernist texts do, Lily is questioning what it means to be. It can be said Lily Briscoe is the most modernist character due to the restraint of tradition and expressing herself through art. Just like the literature movement, the art movement from Victorian to Modernism is a reflection of societal changes. Victorian literature and art have a classical feel while Modernist literature and art reject tradition and embrace experimentation and expression.

.Works Cited

Adams, James Eli. *A History of Victorian Literature*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2012

BritLit, "Modernism: Victorian Legacies" Baylor University

<https://blogs.baylor.edu/britlit/modernism-victorian-legacies/>

Lewis, Pericles "To the Lighthouse" Yale Modernism Lab

<https://campuspress.yale.edu/modernismlab/to-the-lighthouse/>

Woolf, Virginia. *To the Lighthouse*. London: Marshall Cavendish, 1988. Print.