The Great Watershed

1. A cultural crisis

- The First World War left the country in a **disillusioned** and **cynical mood**.

- Stability and prosperity belonged only to the **privileged class**.

- Consciences were haunted by the **atrocities of the war**.

- The **gap between the younger and older generation** grew wider and wider.
1. **A cultural crisis**

Increasing **transformation** of the notions of imperial hegemony

Beginning of the slow dissolution of the British Empire into a **Commonwealth of Nations**

**Nothing** seemed to be right or certain

**New views** of man and the universe emerged
2. **Sigmund Freud** and psychoanalysis

- Born in **1856** to a **Jewish** family in what is now the Czech Republic.

- He moved to **Vienna** at the age of four, grew up, was educated, and spent most of his life there.

- After an impressive career in school, he matriculated in **1873** and then attended the **University of Vienna** to study **medicine**.

- During his medical research, he came to be interested in the **complex operations of the mind**.
2. Sigmund Freud and psychoanalysis

Freud created a structural **model of the psyche** where he identified three parts:

- **ID**
  - The set of instinctual impulses lacking organisation

- **EGO**
  - The coordinated realistic part

- **SUPER-EGO**
  - Has a critical and moralising role since it includes the constraints imposed on the individual by society, education and moral laws
The argument of this essay can be summarised as follows:

- Dreams are the **fulfilment of a wish**.
- Dreams are the **disguised fulfilment of a wish**.
- Dreams are the disguised fulfilment of a **repressed wish**.
- Dreams are the disguised fulfilment of a repressed, **infantile wish**.

The development of the human psyche is affected by the **subconscious**

**Man’s action could be motivated by irrational forces**

**The superego can profoundly distort man’s behaviour**
2. Effects of Freud’s theory

The effects of Freud’s theories were deep:

- the **relationship between parents and children** was altered
- the Freudian concept of infantile **sexuality** focused attention on the importance of early developments and **childhood**
- the conventional models of **relationship between the sexes** were readjusted
- his **method of investigation** of the human mind through the analysis of dreams and the concept of ‘**free association**’ influenced the modern writers

Freud painted by Andy Warhol (1980).
3. Albert Einstein (1879-1955)

- Born in Ulm, **Germany**, in **1879**, the first child of a middle-class **Jewish** couple.
- He was strongly influenced by his mother, who encouraged his **passion for the violin**.
- As he grew up, he began to show a talent for mathematics and developed a total indifference to convention and authority.
- **1905** was Einstein’s **annus mirabilis** because he wrote four papers on:
  1. the photoelectric effect;
  2. Brownian motion;
  3. special relativity;
  4. the equivalence of mass and energy \( E = mc^2 \) where \( E \) is energy, \( m \) is mass, and \( c \) is the speed of light.

Albert Einstein.
Between 1907 and 1915 Einstein developed a new theory called ‘general relativity’ (GR) to distinguish it from the original theory of special relativity.

A theory of gravitation according to which the observed gravitational attraction between masses results from the warping of space and time by those masses.
3. Albert Einstein (1879-1955)

- In 1921, Einstein was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics for his explanation of the photoelectric effect.
- In 1933 he accepted an appointment at the new Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, N.J.
- In 1939 a group of scientists persuaded him to write a letter to President Roosevelt urging the U.S. to start a programme of nuclear research.
- This led to the Manhattan Project and the atom bomb that exploded over Hiroshima in 1945.
- He became an American citizen in 1940.
- He died in 1955.
The idea of ‘time’ was questioned also by the American associationist philosopher William James (1842-1910) and the French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941).

Our mind records every single experience as a continuous flow of ‘the already’ into ‘the not yet’.

William James.

Henri Bergson.

Distinction between historical time and psychological time.
4. Historical vs psychological time

**Historical time**
- External
- Linear
- Measured in terms of the spatial distance travelled by a pendulum or the hands of a clock

**Psychological time**
- Internal
- Subjective
- Measured by the relative emotional intensity of a moment
5. Modernism

A powerful international movement reaching through Western cultures
gave shape to the modern consciousness
expressed the desire to break with established forms and subjects

5. Modernism

COMMON FEATURES

• The intentional **distortion of shapes**.
• The **breaking down of limitations in space and time**.
• Emphasis on **subjectivity**, on how perception takes place, rather than on what is perceived.
• New literary techniques such as the **stream-of-consciousness**.
• The use of **allusive language** and the development of the **multiple association of words**.
• The importance given to the ‘**sound** of words’ as conveying ‘the music of ideas’.
• The intensity of the **isolated ‘moment’** or ‘image’ to provide a true insight into the nature of things.
5. Modernism

COMMON FEATURES

- The substitution of the *mythical* for a realistic *method* and the parallelism between the contemporary and antiquity.

- The importance of *unconscious* as well as conscious *life*.

- The need to reflect the *complexity of modern urban life* in an artistic form.

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