

England in the XX century

Queens and Kings of the 20th century in Great Britain:

- When Queen Victoria died, became king her son, Edward VII.
- When he died became king George V, who changed the German family's title of *Hanover* into the "more English title" of *Windsor*.
- When George V died became king Edward VIII, his son, but he abdicated to marry an American divorced woman called Wallis Simpson.
- When Edward abdicated became king George VI, his brother.

The most important social reforms are:

- free school meals for the children
- there is the beginning of a pension scheme
- there is a compulsory school education up to 15, and later up to 16.

Then there is the 1st World War.

The Irish Question

In 1916 there is the *Easter Rising*, where the leader Patrick Pearse and his Irish Armed group called "*Sinn Fein*" (the Gaelic form for "Ourself Alone") made a revolt in Dublin. The revolt was stopped by the English police and Pearse and other 13 rebels were executed.

Between 1919 and 1921 there is the War of Independence led by IRA (Irish Republican Army). After the war there is the declaration of the Irish Free State, the Eire, so only Ulster (or Northern Ireland) remained united with Britain. After the war in 1921 there is the Anglo-Irish Treaty which recognized the rain of the British Crown and Ulster excluded by the republic.

There is a civil war between 1922 and 1923, where IRA was divided in 2 sides:

1. the *Irish Free State Army*, who accepted the treaty
2. the *Irregulars*, who were in favour of Ireland united in a republic.

The Irregulars lost the civil war and they went on fighting, and they were declared illegal in 1931.

In 1931, after the elections, the new prime minister Eamon de Valera officially declare in 1937 the Irish Republic. He was a survivor of the *Easter Rising*.

Some important historical events after 1919, were for example the general strike of 1926 against the bad conditions of workers, especially miners and low salaried. Between 1920 and 1930 there is the economic depression because of the foreign competition from the USA and Japan, in particular from industries, for example of iron, steel and textile. This fact went to the *Wall Street crash*, so the collapse of the American market in 1929, followed by the great depression with more that 3 million people unemployed.

In this period there was also the vote for the women obtained by the work of the "*Suffragettes movement*".

The British Empire became the *British Commonwealth*, so the countries became autonomies-countries inside the British Empire. The countries are: Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

India was fighting for the independence under Gandhi, called Mahatma (in Sanskrit is "Great Soul"), who was against violence and insisted on passive resistance. So he was in favour of "non-cooperation", so Indian people didn't cooperate with the British: they didn't buy British-made products. In 1948 the British left India, which was divided into Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan, each one independent state.

Then there was the 2nd World War.

Science, philosophy and art

In 20th century it was very difficult to believe in anything, so there were different currents:

- ✓ pacifism: it was born during the 1st World War, and artists were against the cruelty and heroism of the war.
- ✓ pessimism: it is a current where man should go on living in the best way even in hard times as for a war.
- ✓ psychoanalysis: with Sigmund Freud, an Austrian doctor who developed a treatment for hysteria and neurosis, exploring new areas of sensibility, known as the unconsciousness. This was the force originating instincts and repressed desires.

History of the Sinn Fein

- It was born in 1905.
- In 1919 there is the Irish Independence Revolt together with IRA.
- In 1949 there is the declaration of the Irish Republic.
- In 1972 there is the "*Bloody Sunday*".
- In 1981 there are some fights of the Irish political prisoners through a long hunger strike: 10 of them died.
- In 1998, for the Holy Friday, the 10th of April, there is the signature of the agreement for the end of the fights.
- In 2003 after the elections, the Sinn Fein is the 2nd political party in Northern Ireland after the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP).
- In 2005, at 30th January, some members of the IRA killed a Catholic.
- In 2005, on 31th July, the IRA declares they want to dismantle their arsenal; no checks were done.

The Irish people from the South are not so sure to form a united republic, so at the moment it's impossible a republic, because there isn't a complete approval by both countries.

Sunday Bloody Sunday

The group U2 wrote in 1983 this song to commemorate the death of 13 Catholic Irish who were killed by the English police at Londonderry at the end of January 1972. This episode is remembered as *Bloody Sunday*.

The song is about the moment when there is the news on the radio and TV about a riot between 13 Irish people and the English Army. This is not the last battle, in fact there is the repetition of "*how long must we sing this song?*"

At the end the singer says that it is difficult to recognize fiction from the reality. The only solution can be the religion or the pray.

Anthony Burgess (1917-1993)

He is a contemporary writer. He took part in the 2nd World War and it was a terrible experience for him. He lived not only in England but also in Rome and Côte d'Azur and his job was the literary critic. He was also very fond of music and of the ways of using language.

He wrote his only novel "**A Clockwork Orange**" in 1961, but the title was born long before. In 1945 when he had just come back from the war he met an old *cockney* (so a man coming just from the East-End of London) who was speaking about another man probably drunk saying: "*he's as nutty* (so freaked out) *as a clockwork orange*". This expression struck him because it was a mixture of slang and of surreal language.

The sources of "A Clockwork Orange" are:

1. The idea was born reading the English press. In fact at the end of 1950s young people were unsatisfied and violent, and wanted something new, so there was an increase of criminality.
2. Burgess wife was beaten and raped by 3 American deserters.

The main themes were:

- The importance of the "choice", so a man should be able to choose by oneself without the government's conditioning.
- Alex (the protagonist) is the "evil", so he must pay for his crimes, but the government uses the same violence to cure the violence in Alex.
- Alex loves 3 themes:
 - violence
 - music, in particular Beethoven
 - speaking, in particular using slang and young jargon.
- At the end of the novel there is catharsis because young people identify in Alex.

Film: "A Clockwork Orange" directed by Stanley KUBRICK

The film is about the attempt to give a limit to man's freedom to choose. Alex is the symbol of the violent and evil side inside everybody. Science is much more dangerous than the government.

There is the use of classical music as a return to Classicism to cancel "*the stupid attempt to create original music*". All along the film the music track is by Beethoven, loved also by the Nazi in the 2nd World War.

Plot

The protagonist is Alex, who is only 16 but he is a rapist and he beat people, but one night he also kills an old woman, so he is sent to a detention centre. There he is brainwashed by Dr Bronski.

When he went out by the detention centre, his place at home is taken by another boy, Joe. When Alex was outside a shopkeeper assaulted in the past by Alex, recognized him, so some people and him tried to lynch him.

Alex was saved by some policeman who were his old friends, and later also the policeman beat him. Alex is saved by a novelist whose wife was beaten and raped by the gang, so he tries to revenge her.

Alex can't stand in the situation, and he tries to die.

The Beat Generation

The Beat Generation was born in 1950s in California. It was created by young people who wanted an alternative way of living.

The Beat Generation had some characteristics:

1. they lived a simple life
2. they were non-puritan and non-conformist, in fact they didn't believe in family
3. they believed in free love, that's why they didn't want to create family
4. they also believed in friendship
5. they were pacifist and non-violent
6. the main religion was Buddhism with the research of the Nirvana; it is a state of mind where nothing can hurt person. In fact very strong feelings were abolished
7. they used LSD and drugs to have new states of consciousness
8. the most important types of music were Jazz and Rock-n-Roll

The Beat Generation had also other names, for example "*Beaten Up*" generation, or "*Burnt*" generation, where the myth was James Dean.

There is also another group of young people, called "*the Beatniks*"; they were young people who copied the way of life of the Beat Generation and went on fighting for changes in culture and politics in '60s and '70s.

For cinema some actors became very famous, for examples Jack Nicholson.

For music we have some important singers, for example Bob Dylan, Ray Charles, James Brown.

Music in the USA

- 1950s: Rock-n-Roll was born from the demands of young people to have music only for them; in fact jazz music was only for *Negroes* and too sophisticated. In this period started the importance of the *D.J.* in radio stations.
- 1960s: there is the dualism between the Beatles and the Rolling Stones. The main themes for young people were: love, friendship, illusions, loneliness, and messages against violence. In 1960s there is also folk music: it is a traditional music against conformism and against oppressive form of society, for example Bob Dylan.

For the novel the best novelists was **Jack Kerouac**. He was born in Massachusetts. His parents were French-Canadian. He was a rebel and he was against his society. He started travelling hitch-hiking around the country, so he wrote his novel "*On the road*". He didn't have a real home, he only travelled. He died young because he suffered from depression and abuse of alcohol and drugs, and he had money problems. At the end of his life he tried to find comfort in meditation and Buddhism.

In art **Andy Warhol** became very famous. Andy Warhol was American and he was born in 1930. He studied design, art, sociality and psychology. He started working for *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*. He travelled a lot for his job, because he was not only a photographer but also a painter. He worked also as a music producer and started as the producer of Lou Reed. He became famous for his portraits, in particular the one of Marilyn Monroe. He also made photo of advertisement, the most famous was the *Campbell's Soup can*. One of the last advertisement was for *Pepsi*. He was also famous for the extravagance of his clothes and his hair. In fact he dyed his hair straw-blond. He died in 1987.