ENG255
Week 5 Weekly Writing

postmodernism

read

• *The Literature Since Midcentury, 1945 – the Present*, pages 2261 – 2270
• Do some research on the Beat Movement.
• Allen Ginsberg, pages 2444 – 2454
• Handouts on Jack Kerouac, Denise Levertov, Lawrence Ferlinghetti

Tuesday’s discussion: Our book doesn’t cover the Beats well. Do some online or text research about this time period (the fifties) and this literary movement. Be prepared to share your findings with our group.

write

• We look back now and call this movement a romantic rebellion against American culture and values. What does it mean to be Beat? Explain to someone who is entirely unfamiliar with this time period and these writers how these writers were expressing their rebellion. Use a few of the writers that I’ve chosen or examples of your own to illustrate the movement.
• Choose one of the Beat writers (Ginsberg, Kerouac, Levertov, Ferlinghetti, or one of your own choosing) and show in what radical ways they resisted stylistic conventions and modernist subject matter.
• *Ginsberg* is a direct descendant of Walt Whitman. Explain in what ways, both in terms of form and content. Use specific poems to illustrate your point.
• *Ginsberg:* Critic Paul Zweig has stated that “Ginsberg’s *Howl* almost singlehandedly dislocated the traditionalist poetry of the 1950’s.” This long, emotional poem became in 1956 the “manifesto for the Beat movement, ushering in a decade of great experimentation in both poetic form and content.” After having read and studied the poem, choose a key section and write about this “experimentation” in form and content.
• Why does *Ginsberg*, in *Supermarket in California*, set his imaginary meeting with Whitman in a supermarket? What does he mean when he speaks of “the lost America of love”? What does the poem express about loneliness in America? About death in America?
• *Kerouac:* view the video, *The Source*, in our library. Study Kerouac’s *Belief and Technique for Modern Prose*. Write about the ways in which these “techniques” revolutionized prose writing. Describe them. What was the legacy of Kerouac’s “techniques”? In what ways do you recognize Kerouac’s techniques in contemporary writing?
• In any study of the Beat movement, *women* are not well represented. Consider and do your own conjecturing about the reasons for this. Of course, you’ll want to base your opinions on the works of these writers, their purposes and “conventions.”
• *You:* Choose one of the Beat poets to be influenced by and write your own Beat poem in response to contemporary culture and values. Then explain in what ways (both structure and content) your poem is decidedly *Beat*. 