

# Postmodernist Style

- Postmodernist works often *reject* many traditional literary conventions.
- Literary devices are not used to bring order but instead to *deconstruct* ideas
- *Metafiction* (unique plot devices)
- Fragmentated narrative (non-linear)
- Freely mixes “high art” with pop culture

# Postmodernist Themes

- Contemporary life is seen as bleak and fragmented.
- Art is not seen as corrective to life's issues; there is no attempt to fix things.
- Instead, postmodernist works celebrate or play with the fragmentation of life.
- *Subjective* experience is valued over objective knowledge.

# Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?

A Latin phrase traditionally attributed to the Roman poet Juvenal from his *Satires*, which is literally translated as:

## Who watches the watchmen?

# Major Stylistic Elements

- Mixes high art with pop culture
  - is obviously in the form of a comic
  - grapples with with complex themes
  - utilizes literary devices (e.g. symbols)
- Use of fictional secondary sources to provide reader deeper insight
  - Hollis Mason's autobiography
  - Rorschach's psychological report

# Major Stylistic Elements

- Use of historical events, altered for the story's greater purpose
  - Vietnam (US won war, Vietnam 51<sup>st</sup> state)
  - Richard Nixon serving third term
- Frame narrative / parallel story to provide greater insight for reader
  - the two Bernies
  - the Black Freighter pirate comic

# Major Stylistic Elements

- Quotations that frame each chapter provide reader with further insight
  - Percy Shelley (Mary's husband)
  - Bob Dylan
  - Nietzsche, Jung, Einstein, Freud, Byron
- Fragmented narrative
  - Important information intentionally withheld until later in the story
  - Dr. Manhattan's perception of time

# Major Stylistic Elements

In modernist texts, fragmentation is symbolic of the chaos of life itself; the author tries to resolve this chaos by putting everything in perspective.

In postmodernism, fragmentation is still symbolic of chaos, but the author has no intention of overcoming this by trying to impose structure on the complexity of the contemporary world.

# Major Stylistic Elements

- Repetition of visual symbols
  - clocks & hands/lines on the face
  - silhouettes of human embrace
- Unreliable narrators provide structural irony and manipulation of the reader's sympathies
  - Rorschach
  - Dr. Manhattan