

Vocabulary

Neoclassicism

Romanticism

Impressionism

Post-Impressionism

The Nineteenth Century

In the late eighteenth century, disruption in European society, including the French Revolution, caused artists to abandon the Rococo and Baroque styles, which mirrored the life of the aristocracy. In the nineteenth century, many artists wanted to create art that reflected the world they saw.

Neoclassicism

At the end of the eighteenth century, some European artists developed a new kind of art called **Neoclassicism** (“new classicism”), *an approach to art that borrowed subject matter and formal design qualities from the art of Greece and Rome*. Neoclassicism emphasized realism, minimized emotionalism, and featured epic or heroic events. The French artist Jacques-Louis David (**zjahk loo-ee dah-veed**) was the major artist working in this style. His work *The Death of Socrates* (**Figure 13.17**) depicts the last moments of the life of the great philosopher, who was tried for religious heresy and



▲ **FIGURE 13.17** This painting has a formal, dignified feeling to it. Even if you did not know the title, you would realize that the artist has depicted a serious and solemn occasion. What in the artwork tells you this? What do the different figures appear to be doing?

Jacques-Louis David. *The Death of Socrates*. 1787. Oil on canvas. 129.5 × 196.2 cm (51 × 77 1/4"). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York. Catharine Lorillard Wolfe Collection, Wolfe Fund, 1931. (31.45)



◀ **FIGURE 13.18** This painting is a romantic depiction of action and adventure in a distant land. Although the painting shows a battle scene, the battle seems more dreamlike than realistic. What gives the work this quality? Why is it called Romantic rather than Realistic?

Eugène Delacroix. *Arabs Skirmishing in the Mountains*. 1863. Oil on linen. 92.5 × 74.6 cm (36³/₈ × 29³/₈"). National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. © 1998 Board of Trustees. Chester Dale Fund.

sentenced to death. Although his friends and students appealed to the authorities to prevent the sentence from being carried out, Socrates willingly drank the cup of poison hemlock given to him.

Romanticism

At the dawn of the nineteenth century, the struggle to impose a new democratic political and social order continued. People grew anxious in response to ongoing political turmoil and uncertainty. Many did not want to

be reminded of the events surrounding them, but instead wanted to be distracted. A new art style evolved as a reaction to contemporary events.

Romanticism, as it was called, is *a style of art that found its subjects in the world of the dramatic and in cultures foreign to Europe. It emphasized rich color and high emotion.* Romantic artists disliked the cool colors, stiffness, and subdued emotion in Neoclassicism.

Eugène Delacroix (oo-**zhen** del-uh-**kwah**) demonstrated a mastery for capturing action in foreign locales. **Figure 13.18** shows one of his famous works.



▲ **FIGURE 13.19** This painting is very different from traditional pictures of ships at sea. Describe the mood created by the swirling colors. What feeling do you experience when viewing this artwork?

Joseph M.W. Turner. *Snowstorm: Steamboat off a Harbours Mouth*. 1842. Oil on canvas. 92 × 122 cm (36¼ × 48"). Clore Collection, Tate Gallery, London, Great Britain.

Joseph M. W. Turner emerged as England's most dramatic Romantic painter. Turner expected his viewers to use their imaginations. For him, the depiction of light and atmosphere was the most important part of a painting. In **Figure 13.19**, he portrayed nature at its most violent. Instead of using precise detail, he suggests this violence by using loose brushwork to apply bright color and light values in swirling patterns.

Realism

One group of artists grew dissatisfied with both Neoclassicism and Romanticism. They felt that artists should portray political, social, and moral issues,

but without glorifying the past or presenting romantic views of the present. Their art movement, called Realism, presented familiar scenes as they actually appeared. Édouard Manet (ay-doo-**ahr** mah-**nay**), an artist who participated in the Realist movement, discovered that the new style of art required new techniques. Therefore, he became more interested in *how* to paint rather than *what* to paint.

In *The Railway* (**Figure 13.20**), Manet painted a simple, common scene. A woman sits with a puppy in her lap. She is reading and has glanced up. A young girl faces away, watching the steam from a train. Manet avoided painting precise detail because he wanted to capture what a person would see with a



◀ **FIGURE 13.20** The artist uses line to unify this composition. Identify the different lines in the work and describe them. Do other elements or principles work to unify this painting? What are they?

Édouard Manet. *The Railway*. 1873. Oil on canvas. 93.3 × 111.5 cm (36³/₄ × 43⁷/₈"). National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. © 1998 Board of Trustees. Gift of Horace Havemeyer in memory of his mother, Louisine W. Havemeyer.

▶ **FIGURE 13.21** This photo depicts a civil war battle. The photographer was a journalist who reported on the war. Do you think this photograph is art? Why or why not? On what criteria do you base your judgment?

Mathew Brady. *Civil War*. c. 1865. Photograph. National Archives, Washington, D.C.



quick glance. Rosa Bonheur, a very successful artist of the time, combined the drama of Romanticism with the accuracy of Realism (see Figure 8.3, page 201).

Photography

In the mid-nineteenth century, photography was invented as a method for recording people and events on film. It was exciting for artists interested in realism. Early versions of the photographic

process were very expensive and time-consuming, but by the 1850s, several new methods were introduced that made the process easier and less expensive. Because of this, artists could record news events in the second half of the nineteenth century. A famous Civil War photographer, Mathew Brady, documented a battle that took place around 1865 (**Figure 13.21**). Photography introduced a new kind of realism to art.



▲ **FIGURE 13.22** Notice that the woman is not the focal point of the painting. Instead, she is depicted as simply a part of the whole garden.

Claude Monet. *Gladioli*. c. 1876. Oil on canvas. 60 × 80 cm (23⁵/₈ × 31¹/₂"). Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, Michigan. City of Detroit Purchase.

Photographs were more realistic than drawings could be. They preserved a visual record of an event in a single moment in time with more detail and precision than a painter ever could. Photography influenced the development of painting for many years to come.

Impressionism

The Realists had taken a hard look at the real world. This interest in the world outside the studio influenced another group of artists who did much of their painting outdoors. Their style, which came to be known as **Impressionism**, featured everyday subjects and emphasized the momentary effects of light on color. Impressionist painters concentrated on the play of light over objects rather than on the shape of objects themselves. These artists broke up solid shapes and

blurred the edges of objects by applying paint to the canvas in small dabs of pure color. When viewed from a distance, the dabs blend together visually. If you stand too close to an Impressionist painting, all you will see are colorful brushstrokes of paint. You have to step back to allow your eyes to perform the work of blending the colors.

One of the first artists working in the Impressionist style, Claude Monet (**kloh-d moh-nay**), painted many different series of landscapes, seascapes, and cityscapes that depicted the quality of light at various times of day, and in different seasons of the year (see Figures 6.24 and 6.25 on page 153). In **Figure 13.22**, Monet has achieved the effect of a hot summer day with brushstrokes that make the gladioli flowers appear to shimmer in the light.

Post-Impressionism

Eventually, some artists felt that Impressionism was not suited to the way they wished to depict the world. These artists began working in a variety of styles that came to be called **Post-Impressionism**, *a more individual approach to painting, unique to each artist working at this time*. The term for this period is Post-Impressionism because these works appeared after Impressionism. The word *post* means *after*. Some of the most outstanding Post-Impressionist artists were Paul Cézanne (say-**zahn**), Paul Gauguin (goh-**gan**) and Vincent van Gogh (van **goh**).

Paul Cézanne, who had originally painted in the Impressionist style, felt that the blurred shapes of Impressionism did not depict the solidity of the world. He wanted to create an art that emphasized form more than light. Cézanne did this by laying down interlocking blocks of color rather than dots and dabs of paint. He joined these patches of color together as if they were pieces of a puzzle. In this way, Cézanne strengthened the underlying structure in his compositions, giving the images a feeling of permanence and solidity. In **Figure 13.23**, the trees look almost as solid as the buildings, and the hills across the gulf look like geometric forms.



▲ **FIGURE 13.23** Cézanne was interested in the structure of objects. He used small brushstrokes like building blocks to make forms look like geometric solids. Notice how the trees look almost as solid as the buildings. How does Cézanne's technique affect the appearance of this scene?

Paul Cézanne. *The Gulf of Marseilles Seen from L'Estaque*. c. 1885. Oil on canvas. 73 × 100.3 cm (28³/₄ × 39¹/₂"). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York. Bequest of Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer, 1929 (29.100.67).

Paul Gauguin turned to the use of color and shape to create daring, unconventional works depicting far-off lands and people. Giving up his job as a stockbroker, he traveled around the world to learn about art and experience different artistic traditions. He finally settled in Tahiti, where he produced most of his famous works. Notice the simple shapes

and brilliant colors in **Figure 13.24**.

Gauguin used arbitrary color in most of his paintings.

Vincent van Gogh, like the other Post-Impressionists, was initially dazzled by Impressionist works but later felt that Impressionism was limited in what it could express. Van Gogh was not interested in achieving visual accuracy.



► **FIGURE 13.24**
Notice how color is the dominant element in this painting. Shape and form are also important. How do these elements create a dreamy quality?

Paul Gauguin. *Faaturuma (Melancholic)*. 1891. Oil on canvas. 94 × 68.3 cm (37 × 267/8"). The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri. Purchase: Nelson Trust, 38-5.



▲ **FIGURE 13.25** Notice van Gogh's unusual use of color, texture, and line to depict rhythm and movement. He uses the elements to make the stars swirl and the trees dance as if all of nature was alive.

Vincent van Gogh. *The Starry Night*. 1889. Oil on canvas. 73.7 × 92.1 cm (29 × 36 1/4"). The Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York. Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest.

Instead, he explored ways to convey his feelings about a subject. To do so, he used expressive elements in his paintings such as twisting lines, rich colors, and complex textures.

Van Gogh's art was rejected and he only sold one painting during his lifetime. His brother supported him financially. Toward the end of his life, he painted *The Starry Night* (**Figure 13.25**). He executed it using quick brushstrokes to create the dark trees that resemble flames. The stars in the sky seem to be alive with movement. He expressed the violent energy and creative force of nature in this painting. Today, we regard this artwork as one of van Gogh's greatest because it reflects his passion and originality in creating an energetic and forceful image.

Activity

Analyzing a Style

Selecting and Analyzing Exhibitions for Intents and Meanings.

Find an exhibition of Impressionist art in your community or online. List at least four Impressionist works of art, each one painted by a different artist. Select one of the four works to analyze. What conclusions can you form about the meaning of the work and the artist's intent?



Check Your Understanding

1. Describe Neoclassicism.
2. What was Realism a reaction to?
3. What was emphasized in Impressionist painting?