

Symbolism



Many people consider the painting to the left to be the best example of Symbolism in painting. *The Scream* by Edvard Munch shows us how frustrated the artist is on the inside. Like Munch, many artists during the late 1800s were feeling frustrated with society. They were unhappy with changes caused by the industrial revolution. They felt there was too much poverty and there were too few people with great wealth and

power. They also didn't like the pollution new factories were causing. Symbolists used painting as an **outlet**¹ for their anger.

This anger was not well accepted by society. People frowned on symbolist works. Many artists who embraced this medium were forced to go **underground**.² They stayed away from people who didn't agree with their views and formed their own art groups. Symbolists also held their own shows to exhibit their work.

Although their work was born in anger, many people believe symbolism is an important art movement. To express their feelings, Symbolist painters **distorted**³ figures. They also used line and color as never before. With these tools they made emotions like fear and jealousy scream out at the viewer.

¹ **outlet** – an activity that lets you express your feelings

² **underground** – done or working secretly

³ **distorted** – so badly formed or out of shape as to be ugly

Name: _____

Date: _____

1. The painting in the passage represents the artist's
 - a. looks.
 - b. feelings.
 - c. love.
 - d. brother.

2. Another word for **frustrated** is
 - a. content.
 - b. mean.
 - c. upset.
 - d. at peace.

3. A symbolist in the late 1800s would most approve of a society in which
 - a. there wasn't a great difference in wealth between rich and poor.
 - b. most of the power was held in the hands of a few.
 - c. people didn't care about pollution.
 - d. people didn't care about what Symbolists painted.

4. All of these are facts except
 - a. Symbolists used painting as an outlet for their anger.
 - b. although their work was born in anger, symbolism is an important art movement.
 - c. Symbolist painters distorted figures.
 - d. at the time, new industries were causing pollution.

5. The passage "Symbolism" is mostly about
 - a. Edvard Much's The Scream
 - b. the bad things that were happening in the 1800s
 - c. why an artistic movement started and what it was
 - d. how you can translate symbols into words

6. How would you describe paintings by Symbolists, such as the one in the passage?

7. How did Symbolists express their feelings?

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word or phrase that best completes the sentence.

Symbolism was not popular when it was around, _____ we know about it today.

- a. because
- b. after
- c. so
- d. yet

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

The painting *The Scream* shows Edvard Munch’s frustration.

What? the painting *The Scream*

(does) What? _____

Who? _____

10. **Vocabulary Word:** underground: something that is hidden or kept in secret.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: _____

Teacher Guide and Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 840

Featured Text Structure: Descriptive – the writer explains, defines or illustrates a concept or topic

Passage Summary: Symbolism was an artistic movement that started in the late 1800s. It came from a place of frustration, used line and color as never before, and was initially not well accepted by society.

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Suggested answer: Answers will vary but may include that they show deep emotion through the use of dark colors, wavy lines, and distortion of subject.

7. How did Symbolists express their feelings?

Suggested answer: Symbolists expressed their feelings by distorting figures, and using line and color as never before. [paragraph #3]

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Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: answers may vary.