

# Romanticism

---

## TIME PERIOD: 1789–1848

The French Revolution of 1789 and the European revolts of 1848 form a neat, although not completely accurate, boundary for Romanticism.

---

**ENDURING UNDERSTANDING:** Art is influenced by changes in society. It is affected by economic forces which cause widespread migration, war, and a concentration of population in cities. New countries emerge and social movements gain strength.

### Essential Knowledge:

- The late eighteenth century is known as the Enlightenment, a period of scientific advance. It is followed by the revolutionary principles of the Romantic period.
- New philosophies, particularly those by Marx and Darwin, spread throughout the world. These views were supplemented by a new understanding of worldwide cultures.

**ENDURING UNDERSTANDING:** Artists become more prominent members of society. Art movements come in a rapid succession.

### Essential Knowledge:

- Modern movements include Neoclassicism and Romanticism.
- Artists belong to academies and show their work in salons.
- Architecture is characterized by a series of revivals.

**ENDURING UNDERSTANDING:** Art was seen in a new, often provoking, way by the public.

### Essential Knowledge:

- The salons of Paris grow in importance.
- Artists work less in the service of religion, more for corporations.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The revolutionary spirit of casting off oppressors and installing “Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity” created a dynamic for freedom not just in France, but throughout Europe, and in North and South America as well. However, the French Revolution itself, even though well-intentioned, devolved into the chaos of the Reign of Terror and eventually the Napoleonic Wars.

Nonetheless, the philosophical powers that were unleashed by these revolutionary impulses had long-term positive effects on European life, which are embodied in the Romantic spirit.

Romantics espoused social independence, freedom of individual thought, and the ability to express oneself openly. This was manifest not only in the political battles of the day, but also in the societal changes in general education, social welfare, and a newfound expression in the arts. As a reaction against the Enlightenment, the Romantics would argue that you should trust your heart, not your head.

### **Patronage and Artistic Life**

The Romantic artist was a troubled genius, deeply affected by all around him or her—temperamental, critical, and always exhausted. Seeking pleasure in things of greatest refinement, or adventures of audacious daring, the Romantic was a product of the extremes of human endeavor. **Turner**, for example, liked to be tied to the deck of a ship in a storm so that he could bring a greater sense of the **sublime** to his paintings.

Stereotypically, Romantic artists were loners who fought for important causes. **Delacroix** painted a number of great political paintings, and **Goya** understood that human folly exists on the side of the villain and the hero alike.

Romantics enjoyed a state of melancholy, that is, a gloomy, depressed, and pensive mindset that is soberly thoughtful. This can be seen in a series of nineteenth century portraits. Romantics also championed the antihero, a protagonist who does not have the typical characteristics of a hero, often shunning society and rarely speaking, but capable of great heroic deeds.

The greatest artistic invention of the period was the development of photography. Since this was a new art form, there were no academies, no salons, and no schools from which to learn the craft. Even so, the mechanical nature of the camera prejudiced the public against viewing photographs as works of art. Anyone with a camera and a how-to book could open a photo shop. Because of photography's universality, and because there were no preconceived notions about photographers creating great art, marginalized populations, including women, easily entered the field. Some of the most important advances in the history of photography were made by these groups; it was the first instance of equal opportunity in the arts.

### **REVIVAL ARCHITECTURE**

Nineteenth-century architecture is characterized by a revival of nearly every style of the past. Historicism and yearning for past ideals fueled a reliance on the old, the tried, and the familiar.

There was symbolism in this. The Middle Ages represented a time when religion was more devout and sincere, and life was more centered around faith. Modern living, it was felt, was corrupted by the Industrial Revolution. People were so nostalgic for medieval ruins that when there were none handy, they had ruins built so that Romantic souls could ponder the loss of civilization.

Medieval art may have been the favorite theme to revive, but it was by no means the only one. Egyptian, Islamic, and even Baroque architecture was updated and grafted onto structures that had no connection with their original inspiration. Bath houses in England are done in the Islamic style; opera houses in Paris are Baroque; office buildings in the United States are Gothic; a monument to George Washington in Washington, D.C., is an Egyptian obelisk.

The use of iron in architecture, which started in the Neoclassical period, became more important in the Romantic. Architects concerned with reviving past architectural styles like Gothic or Romanesque used ironwork, but hid it under the skin of the building. More adventuresome architects used stone on the exterior, but were unafraid of iron as an exposed structural element on the interior. Progressive architects found the elegance and malleability

of ironwork irresistible, especially when combined with walls of glass.

**Charles Barry and Augustus Pugin, Palace of Westminster (The Houses of Parliament), 1840–1870, limestone, masonry, and glass, London (Figures 20.1a and 20.1b)**

- Competition held in 1835 for a new Houses of Parliament after the old one burned down
- 97 entrants in the contest; 91 in the Perpendicular Gothic, 6 in the Elizabethan style; thought to be native English styles
- Enormous structure of 1,100 rooms, 100 staircases, 2 miles of corridors
- Modern office building cloaked in medieval clothes
- Barry a classical architect, accounts for regularity of plan
- Pugin a Gothic architect, added Gothic architectural touches to the structure
- Profusion of Gothic ornament is greater than would appear in an original Gothic building
- Big Ben is a clock tower, in a sense a village clock for all of England
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Government Centers**
  - Nan Madol (Figures 28.1a, 28.1b)
  - Versailles (Figures 17.3a, 17.3b, 17.3c)
  - Forbidden City (Figures 24.2a, 24.2b, 24.2c, 24.2d)

**Central Lobby**

- Situated between the House of Commons and the House of Lords
- Meant to be a space where constituents can meet their member of Parliament
- Metal grills on doorways were originally in the House of Commons and marked off the spots where women could be seated to watch Parliament; now they are symbols of the suffrage movement
- Central octagonal space with statues of the Kings and Queens of England and Scotland
- Four large mosaics over each doorway represents the four saints who represent different areas of the UK
  - England is St. George
  - Scotland is St. Andrew
  - Wales is St. David
  - Northern Island is St. Patrick

**Westminster Hall**

- When the old Houses of Parliament were burned to the ground, this remained as the last vestige of the medieval parliament building
- See Figure 12.5.



Figure 20.1a: Charles Barry and Augustus Pugin, Palace of Westminster (The Houses of Parliament), 1840–1870, limestone, masonry, and glass, London



Figure 20.1b: Central lobby of the Houses of Parliament



Figure 20.1c: Westminster Hall, 1097–1099; ceiling 1390s, stone and wood, London, England

## ROMANTIC PAINTING

Artists were impressed by the **sublime** in art. What the Enlightenment saw as ordered, symmetrical, logical, and scientific—and therefore beautiful—the Romantics viewed with disdain.

Artists wanted to create the fantastic, the unconscious, the haunted, and the insane. Some visited asylums and depicted their residents. Others painted the underside of the subconscious state a hundred years before Freud.

Photography had an enormous impact on painters. Some fled painting, feeling that their efforts could not match the precision and speed of a photograph. Others more wisely saw that pictures could be a great aid in a painter's work, from hiring a model to capturing a landscape. Painters eventually learned that photography was a new art form that was not in competition with the long-standing tradition of painting.

Artists, like everyone else, were caught up in European and American revolutions. The fight for Greek independence was particularly galvanizing for European intellectuals. Political paintings became important, expressing the artist's solidarity with a social movement or a political position. **Delacroix** and **Goya** are among many who create memorable political compositions.

Even landscape painting had a political agenda. No longer content to paint scenes for their physical beauty or artistic arrangement, landscape painters needed to make a contemporary statement. Perhaps the paintings were expressions against the Industrial Revolution, or as in the case of **Cole**, an answer to criticism on how Americans had polluted their land.



Figure 20.2: Francisco de Goya, *And There's Nothing to Be Done* (*Y no hai remedio*), from the *Disasters of War*, 1810–1823, drypoint etching

**Francisco de Goya, *And There's Nothing to Be Done* (*Y no hai remedio*), from the *Disasters of War*, 1810–1823, drypoint etching (Figure 20.2)**

### *Disasters of War*

- Eighty etchings and aquatints
- Published in 1863, thirty-five years after the artist's death
- Art work was critical of the French occupation of Spain and the subsequent Spanish rulers
- Influenced by Spain's continuous warfare
- Original title: "Fatal Consequences of Spain's Bloody War with Bonaparte and Other Emphatic Caprices"
- Explores themes of war, famine, and politics

### *And There's Nothing to Be Done*

- Bitterly ironic and sardonic
- Guns at very close range point toward victims, assumedly Spanish patriots, who will be summarily killed by French soldiers
- Mangled body on the ground
- Are they civilians or soldiers who are being shot?

**Jean-Auguste Ingres, *La Grand Odalisque (The Grand Odalisque)*, 1814, oil on canvas, Louvre, Paris (Figure 20.3)**

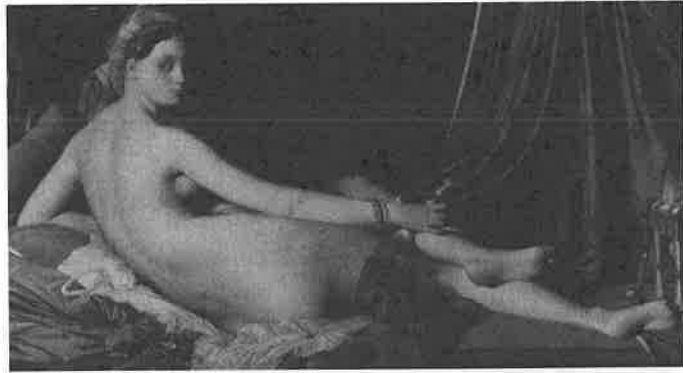


Figure 20.3: Jean-Auguste Ingres, *La Grand Odalisque (The Grand Odalisque)*, 1814, oil on canvas, Louvre, Paris

- Raphael-like face
- Turkish elements: incense burner, peacock fan, tapestrylike turban, hashish pipe, hence the name “odalisque”
- Inconsistent arrangement of limbs: rubbery arm, elongated back, placement of leg, one arm is longer than the other
- Heavily influenced by Italian Mannerism in the exaggerated body forms
- A further development of the female nude form
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Female Figure**
  - Tlatilco Female Figure (Figure 1.5)
  - Neshat, *Rebellious Silence* (Figure 29.14)
  - Pwo Mask (Figure 27.8)

**Eugène Delacroix, *Liberty Leading the People*, 1830, oil on canvas, Louvre, Paris (Figure 20.4)**



Figure 20.4: Eugène Delacroix, *Liberty Leading the People*, 1830, oil on canvas, Louvre, Paris

- July Revolution of 1830; Liberty with French tricolor marches over the barricades to overthrow government soldiers
- Red/white/blue echo throughout the painting
- Strong pyramidal structure
- Child with pistols symbolizes the role of students in the revolt; middle class by man in top hat and carrying rifle; lower class represented by man at extreme left with sword in hand and pistol in belt
- Liberty wears a red Phrygian cap, worn in the ancient world by freed slaves
- Notre Dame Cathedral seen through the smoke on the far right; French tricolor raised on its tower
- The Parisian landmark of Notre Dame is mixed with the true historical event and the allegorical and symbolic figures
- Memorializes the overthrow of the French government in favor of the “Citizen King” Louis-Philippe
- Acquired by the French state in 1831, but not exhibited publicly for 25 years because of its subversive message
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: National Symbols**
  - Menkaura and His Queen (Figure 3.7)
  - *Chairman Mao En Route to Anyuan* (Figure 24.7)
  - Golden Stool (Figure 27.4)



Figure 20.5: Joseph Turner, *Slave Ship (Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying, Typhoon Coming On)*, 1840, oil on canvas, Museum of Fine Arts Boston

**Joseph Turner, *Slave Ship (Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying, Typhoon Coming On)*, 1840, oil on canvas, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (Figure 20.5)**

- Exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1840, with an excerpt from Turner's own poem called "The Fallacies of Hope"
 

"Aloft all hands, strike the top-masts and belay;  
Yon angry setting sun and fierce-edged clouds  
Declare the Typhon's coming.  
Before it sweeps your decks, throw overboard  
The dead and dying - ne'er heed their chains  
Hope, Hope, fallacious Hope!  
Where is thy market now?"

- Based on the true story of an event in 1781 in which a slave ship, *The Zong*, sailed for the Americas full of slaves

- The slaves were insured against accidental drowning but not against sickness; a policy instituted to force captains to treat slaves humanely
- Knowing that he would not collect insurance money on sick and dying slaves, the captain cast them overboard
- Turner's painting inspired by account of the scandal published in a book by Thomas Clarkson which had been reprinted in 1839
- England freed the slaves in 1833 by an act of Parliament; however, there were exceptions which were not addressed until 1843
- Emotional use of color
- Rapid brushwork
- Recognizable forms—the ship, the hands, the chains—are reduced in size and pale in comparison to the mightiness of the turbulent seascape
- Bloody sunset acts as a symbol of the scene taking place
- Use of the sublime enhances dramatic impact

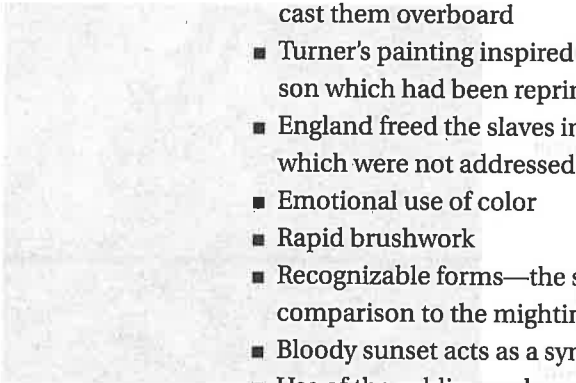


Figure 20.6: Thomas Cole, *The Oxbow*, 1836, oil on canvas, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

**Thomas Cole, *The Oxbow*, 1836, oil on canvas, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (Figure 20.6)**

- Founder of the Hudson River School
- Actual view in Massachusetts
- Cole's division of landscape into two clearly contrasting areas: the Romantic on the left and the Classical landscape on the right
- Cole's self-portrait in the foreground amid a dense forest that is impenetrably thick, with broken trees, and a wild landscape with storms; the sublime
- On the right, man's touch is seen in light, cultivated fields, boats drifting down the river

- Painted as reply to a British book that alleged that Americans had destroyed a wilderness with industry
- Painted for an exhibit and the National Academy of Design, accounts for the unusually large size

### ■ Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Nature

- Korin, *White and Red Plum Blossoms* (Figures 25.4a, 25.4b)
- Su-nam, *Summer Trees* (Figure 29.6)
- Ryoan-ji (Figures 25.2a, 25.2b, 25.2c)

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Experiments in photography go back to the seventeenth century, when artists used a device called a **camera obscura** (Figure 20.7) to focus images in a box so that artists could render accurate copies of the scene before them. Gradually, photosensitive paper was introduced that could replicate the silhouette of an object when exposed to light. These objects were called **photograms**, which yielded a primitive type of photography that captured outlines of objects and little else.

Modern photography was invented in two different places at the same time: France and England. The French version, called the **daguerreotype** after its inventor Louis Daguerre, was a single image that is characterized by a sharp focus and great clarity of detail. Englishman William Talbot invented the **calotype**, which, though at first inferior in quality to the French version, was less costly to make and had an accompanying negative that could generate an unlimited number of copies from the original. Both men showed their inventions to scientific conventions in January 1839.

Photography spread quickly, and technological advances followed almost as fast. For example, shutter speeds were made faster so that sitters could pose for pictures without blurring, and the cameras themselves became increasingly portable and user-friendly. The advantages to photography were obvious to everyone: It went everywhere a person could go, capturing and illustrating everything from the exotic to the commonplace.

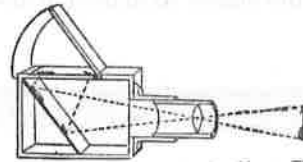


Figure 20.7: Camera obscura

### Louis Daguerre, *Still Life in Studio*, 1837, daguerreotype, French Photographic Society, Paris (Figure 20.8)

- Still life inspired by painted still lifes, like vanitas paintings
- Variety of textures: fabric, wicker, plaster, framed print, metal, wood, and so on
- New art form inspired by older art forms
- Daguerreotypes have a shiny surface with great detail
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Still Lifes**
  - Ruysch, *Fruits and Insects* (Figure 17.11)
  - Matisse, *Goldfish* (Figure 22.1)



Figure 20.8: Louis Daguerre, *Still Life in Studio*, 1837, daguerreotype, French Photographic Society, Paris

## VOCABULARY

**Calotype:** a type of early photograph, developed by William H. F. Talbot that is characterized by its grainy quality. A calotype is considered the forefather of all photography because it produces both a positive and a negative image

**Camera obscura:** (Latin, meaning “dark room”) a box with a lens which captures light and casts an image on the opposite side (Figure 20.7)

**Caprice:** usually a work of art that is an architectural fantasy; more broadly any work that has a fantasy element (Figure 20.2)

**Daguerreotype:** a type of early photograph, developed by Louis Daguerre that is characterized by a shiny surface, meticulous finish, and clarity of detail. Daguerreotypes are unique photographs; they have no negative (Figure 20.8)

**Odalisque:** a woman slave in a harem (Figure 20.3)

**Photogram:** an image made by placing objects on photosensitive paper and exposing them to light to produce a silhouette

**School:** a group of artists who share the same philosophy, work around the same time, but not necessarily together

**The sublime:** any cathartic experience from the catastrophic to the intellectual that causes the viewer to marvel in awe, wonder, and passion (Figure 20.5)

## SUMMARY

A spirited cultural movement called Romanticism inspired artists to move beyond former boundaries and express themselves as individuals. Romantic artists introduce new subjects such as grand political canvases, the world of the unconscious, and the awesome grandeur of nature.

Romantics were influenced by the invention of photography, which was used by some artists as a tool for preserving such things as a model's pose or a mountain landscape. Photography's immediacy and realistic impact made it a sensation from its inception, causing the art form to spread quickly among all classes of people.

Early nineteenth-century architects sought to revive former artistic styles and graft them onto modern buildings. It is common to see an office building, like the Houses of Parliament, wrapped in Gothic clothes. This yearning for the past is a reaction against the mechanization of the Industrial Revolution and a way of life that seemed to have permanently passed from the scene.

## PRACTICE EXERCISES

### Multiple-Choice

1. *The Grand Odalisque* by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres from 1814 was inspired by all of the following EXCEPT
  - (A) an exoticism derived from depicting a Middle Eastern setting
  - (B) the facial formulas used by Raphael
  - (C) a figure style reminiscent of Italian Mannerist
  - (D) a brushstroke used in the Rococo
2. *Liberty Leading the People* by Eugène Delacroix depicts in allegorical terms a moment from the
  - (A) French Revolution of 1789
  - (B) American Revolution of 1776
  - (C) Parisian uprising of 1830
  - (D) Franco-Prussian War of 1870



3. *The Slave Ship* by Joseph W.M. Turner is based on
  - (A) the novels of Herman Melville
  - (B) the sinking of the French frigate *The Medusa*
  - (C) events related to the eighteenth century ship called *The Zong*
  - (D) the American Civil War and the passage of the Emancipation Proclamation
  
4. Thomas Cole's paintings have historical allusion to contemporary issues concerning
  - (A) slavery in the American South
  - (B) Manifest Destiny
  - (C) the building of the railroads and their effect on American culture
  - (D) the treatment of American Indians as anthropological specimens
  
5. Joseph Turner's theories about landscape painting are most closely akin to those of
  - (A) Ogata Korin
  - (B) Thomas Cole
  - (C) Claude Monet
  - (D) Hokusai

### Short Essay

Both of these buildings are in the same location in London, England. The building on the left is the central lobby of the Houses of Parliament. Identify the building on the right.



What period is the building on the right from?

What event caused the construction of the building on the left?

Using specific examples, analyze how the building on the right influenced the construction of the building on the left.

## ANSWER KEY

1. **D**   2. **C**   3. **C**   4. **B**   5. **D**

## ANSWERS EXPLAINED

### Multiple-Choice

1. **(D)** Ingres was influenced by a great many sources, but he rejected the Rococo as frivolous.
2. **(C)** *Liberty Leading the People* depicts the Parisian uprising of 1830, which installed Louis-Philippe as “Citizen King” of France.
3. **(C)** *The Slave Ship* depicts the journey of an actual ship, *The Zong*, which traveled to the New World laden with slaves. The slaves were insured against accidental drowning, but they weren’t insured against sickness. Knowing that he would not collect insurance money on sick and dying slaves, the captain cast them overboard.
4. **(B)** The notion of Manifest Destiny, that it was in the United States’ interests to expand across the North American continent, is expressed in many of Cole’s works.
5. **(D)** The routine violence seen in Turner’s landscapes can be equated to Hokusai’s *The Great Wave*.

### Short-Essay Rubric

Question	Points	Key Points in a Good Response
Identify the building on the right.	1	Westminster Hall, 1097–1099; ceiling 1390s, stone and wood
What period is the building on the right from?	1	Perpendicular Gothic
What event caused the construction of the building on the left?	1	A fire caused the old Houses of Parliament to burn to the ground.
Using specific examples, analyze how the building on the right influenced the construction of the building on the left.	2	Answers could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Both done in Perpendicular Gothic</li> <li>■ Elaborate ceilings using detailed arches</li> <li>■ Gothic windows</li> <li>■ Pointed arches</li> <li>■ Pronounced vertical bays</li> <li>■ Both contain (or contained) statues of English royalty</li> </ul>