

## English 11/AP English Language and Composition

### Modernism

Modernism is a philosophical, literary, and artistic movement that arises out of the inadequacy of Victorian literature and art to speak to the experience of the end of the 19th century and then during and after World War I.

We see the early move toward modernism in the Impressionist Exhibition of 1874:



This emphasis on image and the movement of light finds further development in Expressionism, where the object is recognizable but has a primary purpose of depicting emotion:



And then Cubism:



Tenets of Modernism in art, then, might be said to include:

- increased attention to the dispassionately observed experience (e.g., the picture is the way the light looks, as in impressionism; reality is cast as it appears in the moment)
- increased attention to the emotional experience (e.g., reality is physically shaped by emotions, as in expressionism)
- preference for image over narrative
- depictions of motion in a static canvas (as in Cubism)
- multiple perspectives given at once (as in Cubism, with the two eyes on one side of the head or light coming from multiple sources)
- reduction of complex structures to geometric shapes (as in Cubism)
- skewed perspective, flattening (as in Cubism)
- self-consciousness (“painterly” moves, where the painting calls attention to itself as a painting)