

Introduction

Modern Europe through Art was designed to teach the history, literature, political science, and/or languages of modern Europe through a well-known work of art. Following the North Carolina K-12 curriculum, it can be used to support an entire lesson or a specific concept. From painting to sculpture, each work of art chosen represents a key period and/or artistic movement in the first half of the 20th century, while the image acts as catalyst for discussions on the historical, social, and political context in which the work was created. Further discussion includes how the work of art influenced and was influenced by contemporary current events. In order to assist students in thinking on a more global level, each work is also placed in the context of the events leading to a European Community and contemporary culture in the US.

META has been divided into 5 modules, each exploring the decade related to the main work of art, which is its focus. Module 1 explores the roots of modernism through the examination of new views of time and space and the influence of colonization on Europe, focusing on Pablo Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. Version O)* and Henri Bergson's *Creative Evolution*. Module 2 considers one reaction to World War I in an exploration of Dada through Jean Arp's *Collage Arranged According to the Laws of Chance* and Tristan Tzara's *Seven Dada Manifestoes*. Module 3 is concerned with the period between the wars and the more creative, hopeful activities of the Surrealists, focusing on René Magritte's *Interpretation of Dreams* and André Breton's *Surrealist Manifestoes*. Module 4 explores the ideas of politics, censorship, and creation through Adolf Hitler's *Degenerate Art* exhibition and Aldous Huxley's *An Encyclopedia of Pacifism*. Finally, module 5 examines the idea of life after World War II and the role of Existentialism in philosophical thought in the 1940s through Alberto Giacometti's *Man Walking in the Rain* and Jean Paul Sartre's *Existentialism and Humanism*.

Each module is divided into several components: 1. primary literary source – the text in both English and the foreign language if applicable; 2. cultural and historical context – the historical background; 3. situation of artwork in historical context – analyzes the work in light of the historical information provided; 4. relationship of artwork to literary source – examines the work of art in direct relation to the text provided; and 5. a timeline – both US and European events, so that the student coming from the US can put the European events into a cross-cultural perspective.

The purpose of putting this material together in this manner is to provide post-secondary teachers with background information on key periods in art as they relate to the language, literature, history, and social science of the same decade and combine the information in an interdisciplinary manner to enrich the language, literature, history, or art student's exploration of an artist or period. Although the intended audience is advanced high school or elementary level university courses, the information provided can be adapted to any level. For example, an elementary language course of any age could use the works of art to study colors, body parts, and any number of vocabulary exercises, while the students are learning about western European culture at the same time.

Each module has been rated as to level of difficulty of concepts discussed. The following ratings are comparative by module from most difficult ***** to most accessible*.

Module 1 ***** – most esoteric concepts and French text is difficult. Could substitute Zulu poems from Wren’s *Perspectives on Western Art* for this period.

Module 2** – Dada, although not the easiest concept to grasp in its entirety, is the most straightforward and the French text is accessible.

Module 3***** – Surrealism is accessible, but again at times an esoteric concept.

Module 4* – Hitler’s *Degenerate Art* exhibition, censorship, and propaganda are fairly straightforward concepts.

Module 5*** – Existentialism although it can be difficult to grasp at first can also be placed into a fairly formulaic context in order to explain the main points.

Order of difficulty (easy to difficult):

Module 4*

Module 2**

Module 5***

Module 3*****

Module 1 *****