

## ***META Project Overview***

Modern Europe Through Art is an attempt to integrate important ideas from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Western Europe into several disciplines. Integrating disciplines allows the student to have a much clearer overall view of the period in question and in turn a much fuller understanding of a culture that has in many ways shaped 21<sup>st</sup> century consciousness.

The idea of a “shrinking” world has its origins in two main aspects of Western European culture. First, the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and industrialization acted as an impetus for technological advances. The two world wars that followed brought several different countries and cultures together on a global scale as never before.

Two main themes run through all 5 modules of META: 1. the idea that a “collective conscience” operates on all levels of creation throughout time in a specific region; and 2. the idea that art has the power to not only engage the audience, but also to inspire fear in those who are concerned with radical change.

### **Collective Conscience**

When explored via multiple disciplines, artistic inspiration and insights become moored in the political, cultural, and historical tone of the era. In this project, each work of art is juxtaposed with a written text chosen from the same decade to reveal a fuller picture of human thought. Hence, ideas that are explored verbally are also explored visually. Although some of the selected texts directly related to the works of art, others arose independently, showing that an understanding of history, art, literature, science, or any discipline, is clarified by examining other ideas set forth at the same time, sometimes consciously, other times in separate spaces.

### **Power of art**

Another important theme that runs through each module of the META project is the power of art, not only to inspire hope and/or question our everyday realities, but also the power of art to evoke political and cultural change. In the first module, Picasso’s *Les Femmes d’Alger (O. J. R. M.)* explores the power of images to evoke change and to exorcise certain spirits as many African sculptures and masks do. In module 2, the Dadaists react to the horror of war through creating an art of non-creation, or an art of chance, as exemplified by Jean Arp’s work. While the Surrealists attempted to use art to create positive change in the world by forcing the reader-viewer to see his or her everyday reality in a different light in module 3, module 4 shows the true power of art on a political level. Hitler’s *Degenerate Art* exhibition is a primary example of not only the power of art in the face of censorship, but also a politician’s fear of its power. Finally, in module 5, the existential works of Alberto Giacometti explore our solitude and loneliness in a world without a god and with the devastation and destruction of the two World Wars, and help us to find some sense of community and understanding even if it is that we are all alone together.