



## **Expression under Suppression: The Artistic Response to the Occupation of France during World War II**

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### **Introduction**

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It is through the spoken word that we most easily communicate with others. Or is it? As the world becomes smaller, as the old cliché reminds us, our interest and need to communicate with others outside of our own milieu becomes more important - necessary, really. That's where my involvement comes in. My first love is the study and teaching of the French language. This is just a hook, however, because what is language without culture, without history, without an understanding of the needs and yearnings of a different people? We cannot appreciate what makes us different, unique, if we only communicate with words. We want to see, to taste, to know a different culture, as well as speak its language. Only then will the differing culture become clearer, more evident and accessible to us.

In addition to my French courses, I also teach an art history course, which has examined several different genres of French painting and sculpture: still life, genre, Romanticism, Realism, Impressionism, Expressionism and 20th Century art. Although I am new at this undertaking (this will be my third year teaching the course) I have always included the study of art in all my classes, in tandem with historical events in the lives of the French people. This is the purpose of this course unit: to look at how the events before and during World War II and the Occupation of France, specifically from the late 30s to 1944, influenced the visual art of French and European artists living in France during that time.

The expression of art, of visual art, has always played a key role in the understanding of a culture. In the twentieth century, the forces of two world wars and their aftermaths magnified this role. How was this influence manifested in art? How can art inform us about our strengths and weaknesses? How does art contribute to our ultimate survival? More specifically, how did the culture and tyranny of Nazi Germany affect the lives of the artists living in France, before, during and after the Occupation?

## The Artists' Dilemma: Overview

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Paris had for a long time been considered the center of artistic expression as well as a literary and intellectual capital in Europe, even the western world. The art that was being produced in modern France bore witness to the country's indefatigable ability to welcome change and inventiveness in its art. Paris was the hub of this creativity and became the true leader of the arts' avant-garde. Artists from all over the world, but particularly Europe, flocked to Paris to be a part of this new wave of artistic freedom and expression. They became known as the *École de Paris* -- the School of Paris -- an artistic "colony" of approximately 100 who frequented the Parisian cafés, lofts and galleries in the Montparnasse and Montmartre *arrondissements*. Not that the Parisian welcome, its reputation for being a "terre d'accueil" was anything new. France has always been a haven for new and exciting talent; Van Gogh, Soutine and Picasso all were ex-patriats, who lived and worked in France though from a foreign land. So, reeling from the sadness and wreckage of their own native lands after World War I, this colony found joy and liberation in the international city of Paris. The themes of their work reflected the melancholy they felt towards their homeland, reflecting the religious and familial traditions they left behind. They had escaped dictatorship and had embraced freedom in a modern world, the welcoming Paris. They were a mixture of nationalities, schools, talents and influence. The make up of the group was, therefore, also very diverse, and not represented by any one genre. This included Fauvism (whose god was Henri Matisse), Cubism (Pablo Picasso & Georges Braque), Post-Impressionism, Surrealism and Futurism - having begun in Italy, and in England known as Vorticism. Most, however, embraced a style bursting with color - bold, passionate and emotive. They all had some connection with Expressionism (German and French) and most were of Jewish descent from Central and Eastern Europe, their leaders being Marc Chagall, Amedeo Modigliani, Chaim Soutine.

The atmosphere began to change profoundly in the late 1930s, when a feeling of chauvinism and real xenophobia was felt throughout Europe, particularly in France. Many stellar talents were put on hold or openly criticized for intruding upon the traditions of French art. Often they were accused of "degenerate art," a term which became allied with the animosity of Hitler, whose Entartete Kunstii (meaning "degenerate") exhibition in Munich in 1937 was the jumping off point for his growing intolerance of non-Aryans. Even among Frenchmen could be found an undercurrent of negativism towards the new modernity in art, and about France's role as its international leader. What was to occur in 1940 seemed a culmination of mistrust -- a final blow to the lively, exciting, heady atmosphere that was the Paris art scene.

The period of occupation by the Germans began at the signing of an armistice on June 25, 1940. Marshal Philippe Pétain and Germany's Adolph Hitler divided the country of France into, essentially, two parts: the north, including the capital and the entire Atlantic coast, would be occupied, leaving some of the center, south and east in a free zone. It was not "free" from control, however, as Pétain became a puppet player in the grand scheme of Hitler to unite all of Europe under his control. Many artists living in France at the time were caught in what turned out to be the occupied zone, including Marcel Duchamp, Picasso and Matisse. Those who were fortunate enough to be in the fragile "free zone" included Picasso's partner in cubism, Georges Braque, the Fauvist André Derain, André Masson, André Breton, Wassily Kandinsky, Hans Arp and Marc Chagall. What they feared was the sublimation or destruction of what Hitler considered their degenerate art, as well as their lives.

The Occupation in Paris created a stalling of exhibits and openings for nearly three months. The art world was forced to reorganize itself at that point, to figure out what needed to be done and what could be done to keep

the arts alive under the Nazi thumb. They learned quickly. And, in spite of constant reviews (a virtual witch-hunt) by the German press of what was deemed degenerate art, of censored exhibits, and of the “Aryanization”<sup>iv</sup> of galleries (Jews were forced to “sell” their galleries to non-Jews, sometimes at ridiculously low prices), the visual arts received a jump-start soon after the summer and even became very lively. The Nazi and Vichy tandem-team welcomed shows, which presented the rather loosely translated style of painting “in the French tradition.”<sup>v</sup> Artists who saw their only hope for creativity being stifled had the moral choice of either acquiescing, and feeling guilty of betrayal, or risking livelihood, which could be ruinous, and even life by sticking to their guns. Leaving France became one real option, but one that could be difficult, if not impossible, to arrange.

In my curriculum unit I plan to study several painters, with a focus on Picasso. They refused to leave France, even when it was dangerous to stay. We will hear of others, as well, who fell under the heading of “collaborator” with the Nazi Regime. What made each one act? How was their art affected, changed, received? If it is true what Ezra Pound said in 1934, that “artists are the antennae of the race,”<sup>vi</sup> then what was the effect of censorship on the art produced by French and foreigner artists living in France at the time of the Vichy regime? These are some of the thoughts I will pursue in my unit. I hope that students will be enriched not only by the beauty and power of these artists’ *œuvre*, but by their thought, their courage and will. Furthermore, it is my hope that this unit will be valuable to not only art history courses, but to history courses which focus on European history of the 20th century as well. In terms of lesson plans, students will learn how to “read” a painting, a sculpture or other object of art, in ways that help them to learn about a different culture as well as their own. And, since war has been and continues to be a real presence in the impressionable lives of our young, we will investigate the influence of war on the visual arts of *this* country.

I was fortunate to find several biographies and histories of this period in the history of France during the Second World War. The work by Michèle Cone, *Artists Under Vichy*, offers an in-depth study of not only the artists who were caught in the web that was the Nazi Occupation, but of the attempts and successes of those willing to risk their lives to save them. Jules Prown’s book, *Art as Evidence*, helped me to understand by close analysis the works I will describe in this unit. And, in addition to books of exhibitions and collections of artists’ works, I found several relevant videos (*The Train, The Sorrow and the Pity*), that will serve to supplement my unit. I hope that this study will be of use in history and art history, as well as French classes.

## Background

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The French Assembly had been the soul of political life in France during the three French republics. This was summarily dismissed after the Armistice. Now, the French government would rule from Vichy, a town that, previous to 1940, had generally been known for its healing spas. Vichy lay just south of the line that divided the country into the free and occupied zones (see map).<sup>vii</sup> This line was real; members of the newly formed government had to ask the German occupiers for permission to cross the line, if they needed to visit or consult with their subordinates still in Paris. Needless to say, trips were strictly limited, and forbidden to Jews.<sup>viii</sup>

For those in the art world, those who owned and ran galleries in Paris and elsewhere, permission would be needed, too, before an exposition could be held. Such was the new, drastically altered atmosphere in France. What was needed was approval from the German “Propaganda-Abteilung,” the right arm of Hitler’s plan for the removal of all decadent art in France. It was through that arm that all functions regarding exhibitions, from

advertising to specific works of art to be displayed would be handled. German *referats* -- spies, basically -- made a visit to the gallery to grant their yea or nay.<sup>ix</sup> An interesting development occurred: the number of galleries that opened during the first three months of the occupation nearly doubled! And, by the end of that first year -- 1941 -- the Orangerie, the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, and the Musée Galliéra had had their first expositions. The newly completed Palais de Tokyo hosted shows from the Salon des Artistes Français, the Salon des Tuileries, the Salon d'Automne, and the Salon des Indépendants, made famous by the Impressionists of the previous century. It seemed that galleries were popping up everywhere, in spite of the stranglehold. The new Jeunes Peintres de Tradition Française had their show in May of that year. These "young painters of the French tradition" would typify the art that was to come, to be heralded, by the new Nazi regime in France. No artistic exhibition held in a venue governed by the new French administration would allow Jewish artists to exhibit, however. Actually, this new administration would not allow Jews to exhibit anywhere in France. Picasso, himself, though not a Jew, was forbidden to show his work as well. He was not only a representative of the "degenerate art" held so odious to Hitler, but was already considered a subversive painter after the unveiling of his "Guernica" at the Paris Exposition of 1937. (This will be discussed and included as a lesson plan later on.) Those artists who had emigrated to France, mostly Jews, were blacklisted by the Vichy government, so none of their works would be allowed to hang in any permanent collections. As far as private collections were concerned, those in houses confiscated by the Germans when Jews were routed out and deported, much of that work was burned or otherwise destroyed. Jews were madly trying to safeguard their work through dealers in America and elsewhere, though the difficulties this presented -- cost, connecting with a buyer (or simply a willing contact), finding someone who would act as go-between -- were enormous. I will focus on certain "survival networks" such as the American Rescue Committee later on.

The appearance of some of the "jeunes peintres" came as a result of the vacuum created by the persecution of their former contemporaries (and rivals!) in art. They had already arrived on the art scene in the 30's and, although they were champions of the avant-gardism that Hitler condemned, they were more than willing to moderate their artistic zeal in order to gain visibility and notoriety. They would work towards a more "moderate vanguardism."<sup>xi</sup> Still, in order to display one's work, artists were required to sign a humiliating statement declaring that they were truly French and not Jewish. Most found this shameful, but did so anyway. Simone de Beauvoir, who was teaching at a high school at the time, but who would later work for the Resistance movement, said: "I found it repugnant to sign, but no one refused: for most of my colleagues as well as for me, there was no alternative."<sup>xii</sup>

Despite the seemingly lively appearance of the Paris art world, conditions were hardly comparable to what had been. Galleries that formerly welcomed new artists from abroad were disappearing quickly. Those, which had become showcases for Surrealist art (as the Galerie Pierre, Jewish owned) were closed, as directors fled to safe countries or were sent to concentration camps in Germany. Some tried to sell their galleries, or tried to create fictitious bills of sale to non-Jewish family members so as not to be "Aryanized" by the new state. Failing that, an interim administrator would be installed until someone sympathetic to the German interests could buy the business. What transpired from the confiscation of many of these galleries was a blatant offering of mediocre, "middle-of-the-road" <sup>xiii</sup> art. This was to be called the *juste milieu*, and represented a turning away from modernism and towards a more rustic depiction of family life, love of the French soil and wholesome bodies.

## Artists in hiding

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It might be interesting at this point to see what was happening in the provinces of France during the Occupation. Many artists who figured they were a part of the “Judeo-Marxist-decadent”xiv list stayed in what was still the free zone of France. They, Jewish artists, Surrealists (and all other modern artists for that matter, considered subversive because their unconventional art challenged the German society’s established values) and resisters to the Nazi occupation, had sought refuge just a couple of steps ahead of the German troops in France.

In Grasse, a small but beautiful section of Provence in the south of France, Hans Arp, his wife Sophie and the recently widowed Sonia Delaunay became ensconced. Near there, in 1940, the great Jewish painter Marc Chagall purchased an abandoned religious girls’ school at Gordes. The German Jewish refugee, Wolfgang Wols, found a short and tenuous reprieve from persecution in Cassis, also in Provence. He was to find “at Cassis, the stones, the fish, the rocks, the salt of the sea and the sky seen through a magnifying glass made me forget human relevance, invited me to turn my back on the chaos of our acts, showed me eternity in the small waves of the port repeating themselves without repeating themselves.”xv

Further south near Marseilles was the beautiful Villa Air Bel. Interestingly, this villa had been rented for the staff of the American Rescue Committee, and headed up by the young American representative, Varian Fry. He arrived in late summer of 1940 with the hope of rescuing those artists, writers, philosophers and scientists who were in danger of persecution and deportation by the Nazis. The Germans were already in the process of routing out French dissidents and other German, Austrian, and Polish refugees in France, who had fled their native countries in fear for their lives for being critical or openly engaging in what the Nazis considered “subversive” activities. Fry’s charge was to provide these artists with money and visas, or to set up secret escape routes across the Pyrenees into Spain. Once there, he had the even greater task of procuring visas for them to the United States. Often, neither Spain nor France was willing to oblige his requests; many, therefore, were trapped in what would amount to a waiting and hoping state of limbo. He had arrived with \$3,000.00, a rather huge sum of money in 1940, with a plan to rescue as many refugees as possible in the span of just three months. His work continued for more than a year and was fraught with difficulties and failures, though he was able, in the end, to insure the escape of more than 1,500 people and helped another 2,500 with financial aid and support. Fry said, “Among the refugees caught in France were many writers and artists whose work I had enjoyed... Now that they were in danger, I felt obligated to help them if I could; just as they, without knowing it, had often in the past, helped me.”xvi

Villa Air Bel quickly became a refuge for its famous “guests,” among whom were André Breton -- the writer, poet and artist -- and many other Surrealists from the School of Paris days. During this time, sentiments ran the gamut between outright terror of ruination or worse (the deportations had not yet become a reality in the outlying provinces of France) and a more wait-and-see attitude, held by many who were simply unwilling to believe that the Vichy government would, eventually, capitulate entirely to Nazi demands. People would not believe that Pétain would destroy France, and continued to hope for a bearable solution, in spite of Fry’s pleas and promises and the reality of the line between free and occupied France. Chagall was approached by the Rescue Committee, and encouraged to emigrate to America. He did not want to leave France: “Are there trees and cows in America too?xvii Others, like the Consuelo de Saint-Exupéry asked, “Why leave? If we all leave, where will France be?”xviii André Masson, too, had been implored to leave the country but replied “I prefer to wait, to swarm in the fatal earthquake.”xix Though he was not Jewish his wife was, so many felt that he would

be deemed guilty by association. He took his family to the small village of Montredon, near Marseilles, with the plan and hope of being close to its large port if or when the time demanded. Masson was a friend of Breton and in the drawing Masson's portrait of Breton xx we see how terribly conflicted Breton was. It depicts two heads, oddly connected in the back, with one face looking ahead -- perhaps to emigrating to America -- and the other, with eyes closed -- choosing to stay in France. Breton chose to emphasize, however, that during this time the horror that was happening to France was not to be an end of the human spirit. He said, "It appears to me that the task of intellectuals is not to let this purely military defeat, for which intellectuals are not responsible, attempt to carry with it the debacle of the spirit."xxi In hopes of keeping this spirit alive, he organized a show of refugee artist's works at Air Bel in 1941.

In addition to their continued production of art, artists at Montredon formed an "association d'entraide" (artists offering mutual aid) "Pour que l'Esprit Vive"xxii (so that the spirit will live on). Musical concerts were held there for the people of the surrounding town, and all proceeds gained were given to the artists of the province. Among the artists who performed at no charge were Pablo Casals and Francis Poulenc, who offered songs written to the poetry of Paul Éluard, the great friend and soulmate of Picasso. It seems that artists were coming together to help each other in any way they could. In Marseilles, artist/film director Sylvian Itkine (who was Jewish) founded the Croque (crunchy) Fruit, a restaurant that made candy -- prized at the time when even the basic staples of food were difficult to obtain -- and sold it to help the refugees and Jews who were ostracized by Vichy laws.xxiii André Breton wrote slogans for the Croque Fruit, which held a food fair in Marseilles in September of 1941.

## Picasso and his contribution

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Pablo Picasso was to figure prominently in the saga that was to tell of the artists in occupied France. He was, of course, Spanish, though he had emigrated to France as a very young man, at the age of 18. Picasso had always rejected the more traditional approaches to art, and was forever searching for the new, the untried, what seemed more real to him. For him, art was not merely a reflection of life; it had a life of its own. Picasso brought to art a real sense of freedom and had an unpredictable character, possessed of a new expression, as reflected in every new style he pursued.

He was living in Paris in 1936 when the Spanish civil war broke out. General Franco was the leader of the Spanish Fascists, and was waging a bloody war against the newly elected Republican government of Spain. Nazi Germany supported this Fascist group, and in 1937 German airplanes bombed and destroyed the tiny village, cherished by the Basques, of Guernica in northeastern Spain. The devastation was enormous, and timed to coincide with an hour when many people would be in the streets. All of Europe, at least all of free Europe, was shocked by the carnage. Pictures circulated in newspapers and accounts of the cruelty wreaked upon the villagers inundated the free press throughout Europe and America. Needless to say, the Republicans lost the civil war to the Fascists. Picasso never was to return to Spain, and his work was banned from all expositions there until the end of the Franco regime. At this time, Picasso had been commissioned to paint a mural for the Exposition Universelle in Paris. Although he had been working feverishly trying to create the perfect painting, the events in Spain in 1936 gave him the inspiration he needed for his mural. The painting is over 20 feet wide; Picasso had to rent a special studio just to accommodate its size. And, whereas formerly war had been depicted in a glorious fashion, Picasso's *Guernica* told the truth. (Guernica)xxiv. His painting literally screams with the horror and brutality of the event. Faces in torment, looking up as if to ask for help or



beg for mercy, watching as death rains down upon them from the sky; a mother, holding a dead child turns her head upward in a cry of agony; noble horses and bulls -- perhaps mythological symbols of suffering and brute force - crying out in pain suggest that all of life has been victimized; broken bodies and broken spirits combine to give the overall effect of terror and hopelessness. The garish lighted bulb at the top of the canvas, perhaps alluding to the light of the bombs, seems to blot out the light of the candle -- the one, the only image of hope. Picasso's great masterpiece of war, carrying with it an indictment of man's cruelty to man "...is the mirror-image of a world of atrocity and bestiality from which it is man's duty to emerge."xxv Picasso was careful to make his intentions completely obvious to the viewer. He said, "The war in Spain is the battle of reaction against the people, against liberty. My whole career has been one continual struggle against reaction and the death of art. In ... *Guernica*, ...I am very clearly expressing my horror at the military caste which has plunged Spain into a sea of suffering and death."xxvi The mural was placed in the Spanish pavilion at the Exposition, ironically not far from that of the Nazi pavilion, a tribute to modern technology and weaponry. Once, during the Exposition, a German officer approached him at the pavilion. He asked Picasso "Did you do this?" to which Picasso replied, "No, you did."xxvii Picasso painted the mural in a wash of brown hues, black and white, emphasizing the starkness of the message portrayed. This painting was to be one of the first the artist painted showing or alluding to the reality and terror of war. And, it was to prefigure his paintings throughout the period of Occupation in France. Picasso was often visited -- harassed -- by the Gestapo in Paris. His paintings were slashed or kicked in an attempt to demoralize or terrorize the painter. He had friends in the French police, however, who protected him, even though they were then working for the Gestapo.

In his *Weeping Woman* , [www.homestead.com/hsconline/Kristihtml](http://www.homestead.com/hsconline/Kristihtml),xxviii Picasso honors the woman in *Guernica* who holds her dead child. This portrait recurs in Picasso's work several times. He must have been drawn, fascinated by the heart-rending grief that he expressed so profoundly with his brush. Many feel that this painting of the *Weeping Woman* captures the mood of apocalyptic catastrophe shown in *Guernica* . She bites into a white handkerchief as if to hold herself together, to, somehow, fend off the pain of what she must be seeing. The fact this cameo portrait is in vibrant, clashing colors (all complementary colors) makes it all the more dramatic and emotion-filled.

Here, I would like to analyze this painting in depth, using a method developed by Jules Prown, professor emeritus at Yale University. This method will be included as a lesson plan for use by teachers that will help students gain a clear understanding of any work of art, in any classroom, for any age. The methodology he uses to get at this understanding, to find the information in a given "objet d'art" follows a progression through three separate steps: description, deduction and speculation. The description should include what the viewer sees. The deduction asks the viewer to come to obvious conclusions about the evidence that s/he sees. In the speculation, the observer should be able to form certain hypotheses about what the artist *intends* us to see and know. I include this here to show just how this process evolves, and how we can better see and understand a painting. Students, as well as adults, tend to see a work of art and immediately make an emotional judgement about it: "I hate this," or, "I could have painted this, myself," are casual but powerful indictments of any work of art. Similarly, we say that we "love" a work of art -- which is wonderful -- but, how much better it is when we can become a part of the creative process by understanding exactly what was meant or what the artist hoped to achieved by his or her art. Students can only gain from the ability to analyze or critique a work of art, because what is apparent, what is seen, then lives in the viewer's eye. In addition, the following process will teach students to distinguish between different analytical processes, thus enhancing their writing skills across the curriculum. The following is an example of this process.

## **Weeping Woman. 1937. Oil on Canvas, 23 5/8 x 19 1/4" Private collection, England.**

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### **Description:**

A portrait with a multi-colored face and a green left hand is at the mouth. The right hand is hidden behind the white chin and left hand. The fingernails are yellow. The person is wearing a red hat with a blue and yellow bow and clutching a white handkerchief in the left hand. The figure bites the handkerchief, showing both rows of teeth on the right side. The hair is smooth in colors of blue, purple, green and black. All colors are outlined in black. The hair is of medium length, divided into lines outlined in black and pulled behind the right ear. No hair is seen on the left side. Bangs of red, yellow and black protrude from the hat in a semi-curved fashion of short and even length. The hat is red, blue and yellow, all outlined in black geometric shapes. The right side of the face is bright yellow; the left, greenish/yellow. Purple triangles fall from eyes. Black starred pupils jump from black concentric ovals wherein yellow appears framing thickly eyelashed eyes. Green, purple and yellow fill the space upward towards the slanted, thickly brushed eyebrows. A tear represented by a curving line ending in a circle, flows from under the right eye downward to just beneath the right ear on the side of the face. A curving T-shape fills the void in between. Beneath the T, between the eyes, is a black geometric shape just over the lacy top of the handkerchief. The mouth superimposes the handkerchief, with teeth and lips fully outlined in a bite. A crumpled edge of the cloth protrudes from mouth to the green and yellow left hand. Beneath the mouth the white, right thumb cradles a white chin, outlined in black. Three black lines and a curved one show beneath the white fingernail. Only the right side of the green and yellow neck are visible between thumb and black/brown clothing which leads to the bottom of the picture plane, and extends upward on the right side one third of the way to the top. The clothing is a series of connected squares, rectangles and triangles. Each shape has reddish inlines with tiny white brush strokes.

A black-lined horizontal band of brown with yellow outline on both sides appears from behind the head on both sides, leading upward on the left side of the plane to a point, then moving downward to the edge of the left side. Red is between the band and the clothing. Above the band is a series of eight vertical sections, divided by differing values of oranges, yellows, blues and greens. The four sections directly over the hat are brown.

The figure's face, hair, hat, hand and neck consume the central part of the picture. Clothing beneath extends from the extreme left of the painting to the extreme right, creating a U shape of clothes, each side thicker than at the bottom. This represents the bottom third of the painting with the brown band and upper sections, the top two thirds. Above the band to the left of the face is a section of blue, red and brown, divided from the other sections by a black line, which ends where the band extends downward at a miter point. There, the brown band becomes red to edge of the picture plane.

Lines, angles, triangles, curves, ovals, rectangles and polygons of various shapes and sizes form the construct of the painting. It is a cubist painting, in which shapes are modified and outlined in such a way as to create the image of a woman weeping, while not being realistic.

The textures include that of skin, nails, cloth of the hat, decorative flower, handkerchief and clothing, hair and wood.

### **Deduction:**

The viewer is very close to the figure's face, close enough to touch. It is the face of a woman who is crying,



with face contorted in a tearful grimace. She holds and bites the handkerchief. She is dressed up, with a fancy hat and outfit. Her hair appears combed and neat. Make-up has probably been applied, emphasizing the eyes. She appears youthful, but not childlike; perhaps in her 20's or 30's, judging by the dark hair and unlined face. She seems slender, though we only see her face and part of her upper torso. The scene is sad as we are confronted with the image of the crying woman.

The viewer can sense the tragedy implied in this face. We can imagine that the tear will be wiped away but that the sobbing will continue. We are probably outdoors, judging by the hat, though this might not be the case; perhaps she has just moved indoors. We cannot tell the season by the clothing. Her hidden nose may be red from blowing, face, sore from crying. We cannot tell if there is any noise apart from her crying. Her clothing indicates a comfortable position in life. The hat is a fanciful juxtaposition to the mood, and seems dated by today's standards.

### **Speculation:**

The scene is one of calm devastation. We cannot tell *by the painting* where the woman is, in what country, what town, though we know that she has played a part in the tragedy that occurred at Guernica. Her sorrow is profound and overwhelming. She has witnessed, or been given news that is incomprehensible and beyond tragic, though she seems to implore understanding. She is composed in her grief. Her carefully placed hat and attire suggest a conflict between the beautiful and the unspeakable, as reflected in her face. The scene - clean, bright and organized - plays against her face, which tells of dark chaos. We are intimate witnesses to her grief. In spite of her attempts at beauty, her life is experiencing something ugly.

This type of analysis is one of many important ways of viewing and ultimately understanding a painting. Through this process students will necessarily avoid the tendency to react first, in an emotional way, to what they see. It will represent a way toward a more sophisticated understanding of what the artist intended in the creation of a work.

During the period of Occupation, Picasso was prolific in his studio, albeit cloistered and censored. None of his work was shown, anywhere. Let's take a closer look at a two others. In *Woman with Fish Hat*, xxix from 1942, Picasso picks up the theme of a seated woman in a rather confining, iron chair, as if imprisoned in some sort of iron cage. He had painted several in this same genre, changing values, lines and shapes, apparel, backgrounds, but with the same intense and focused eyes. They seem to stare in accusation and anger, but with sadness, too. In any case, the face is filled with emotional tenseness. The rather peculiar hat, which resembles a platter made of fish with lemon and utensils, makes a humorous intrusion onto the stark portrait. What this may be, though, in addition to the artistic image, is a reference to the food shortage in occupied Paris that year.

In *Still Life with Pitcher, Candle, and Enamel Pot*xxx we see a different Picasso. Here the mood is calm and serene. It is 1945, just months after the liberation of Paris. What Picasso offers in this beautiful still life is the calm at the end of a very long nightmare. We see the candle, perhaps the same candle of *Guernica* , but this time its light illuminates the table of objects, in perfect harmony and balance. This painting was exhibited at the Salon d'Automne of 1944, where Picasso was honored as its most revered and cherished guest. What a tribute to a man who had never capitulated to the hatred of the Nazis, but who stayed the course in the country he had come to love. He was asked at the exposition what sustained him, what had continually sustained him as an artistic witness to the events of the decade. He replied:

What do you suppose an artist is? If a painter, an imbecile who has nothing but eyes, nothing but ears if he is a

musician, a lyre at every level if he is a poet, nothing but muscles if he is a boxer? Quite the contrary, he is a political being, constantly aware of what is going on in the world, whether it be harrowing, bitter, or sweet, and he cannot help being shaped by it. How would it be possible not to take an interest in other people, to withdraw in some ivory tower so as not to share existence with them? No, painting is not interior decoration. It is an instrument of war for offense and defense against the enemy.xxxi

Picasso was able, in this painting, to honor the humble simplicity of everyday things in a way, which elevates each to an almost sacred level. In their modesty and dignity, each object, perfectly placed, is endowed with beauty and an ironic tenderness.

Pablo Picasso is considered one of the finest, and certainly the most prolific painter of the 20th century. His range and styles reflect most of the different schools of modern art. I am hoping to introduce or better acquaint my students with his genius, and to help them see how he invites us to witness his hopes and experiences, as evidence of the reality that he lived and survived.

## Conclusion: After Vichy

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The American and British forces landed on the beaches of Normandy on June 6, 1944. This would mark the beginning of the total liberation of France and, also, the fall of power of Vichy and Hitler's Germany. The American army worked towards gaining a free path into Brittany, while the British forces headed toward Caen. They took the city on July 19th. The Americans were equally victorious in the tiny historic city of St. Lo (this was home to Jacques Cartier in the 16th century). By August 20th, German forces were on the retreat.

After the liberation of Paris on August 25th and the subsequent fall of Nazi strongholds in all areas of France, French artists who had survived the "siege" that was the occupation, who had survived without caving in to Nazi demands, experienced conflicted agendas in the months that were to follow. Needless to say, those who had helped with the efforts of the Resistance, helped fellow artists to hide or escape, or those who had spoken out against the Nazi presence in any form were enormously relieved to have the freedom to create once again. Others were less willing simply to resume their lives, as before -- they were angry. They felt an ever-growing resentment towards their compatriots who had not only forsaken their modernist palette for the just milieu, but who had openly collaborated with the Germans. It is no surprise that Picasso was among this group. In fact, he headed up one of the first committees whose charge it was to name, accuse and, ultimately, castigate said artists. Some were censured; all were "tried." Some of the artists were forbidden to sell, or even show their work for various periods of time, ranging from several months to more than a year. Others lost their positions at prestigious art institutes or universities -- again, for a certain period of time. None would be eligible for state-sponsored prizes (a coup to win, since they virtually assured the artist of fame), particularly those commissions which would be given in honor of the Resistance.xxxii One group singled out was composed of artists who had accepted an invitation by the German Ministry of Propaganda to attend expositions in several major German cities. This was in 1941, at the height of German mischief in France. The trip was well publicized (although few of the artists talked to the press upon their return) and actually affected a smoke screen for a huge German round up of Jews in Paris that fall. Those who had not made the trip were shocked and even ashamed of their compatriots. What made them go? One fact is clear: that they were promised not only to witness the new art created by their counterparts in Germany, but would insure the freedom of other artists, imprisoned in camps.xxxiii Perhaps they felt obligated to go; perhaps they considered

the trip a mission; perhaps they naively wished to demonstrate that art should not be political. Whatever their incentive, these artists would henceforth be considered “collaborators” with the architects of German aggression. And, one might well imagine that the German propaganda machine made great use of this gift to undermine the French resolve. Those artist travelers included Maurice de Vlaminck, André Derain, Charles Despiau, and ten others, including a translator and a representative from the German press.

Other artists were tried during this period of accusation and reprisal. Some artists had family members who were a part of the French police, reorganized after Vichy. Others tried to “make do” by simply accepting the status quo and keeping their mouths shut. Few escaped the purge, however. Resentments still exist in France today.

What is it that makes us act or not act? If we heed the admonition of Jean-Paul Sartre, we are ultimately responsible for our actions; it is those actions that make us human, that confirm our existence. So, whatever motivations lead us, the ramifications thereto may result in a hard lesson to learn. As a teacher, lessons are grist for the mill. The example of what happened to a country whose integrity, whose culture, whose heritage was trampled by a stronger, malevolent force, can provide us all, at any age, with lessons for life. In the classroom, the opportunity to examine history with art, culture with events, people with governments can be made to open eyes and build impressionable characters. I look forward to having this opportunity to try.

## Lesson Plans: I

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### Focus and Review:

Students have studied the history of the period before and during the Occupation of France, with a focus on the artists of that time and the art they produced.

### Objectives: (Learning Outcomes) At the end of this lesson:

Students will demonstrate their knowledge of this history by producing a research project on one artist examined.

Students will choose one work of art and analyze it artistically.

Students will study the painting and provide evidence of what the artist intended us to learn about the climate in which the painting was conceived and produced.

Students will present their findings to the class, using PowerPoint, slides or overhead reproductions as desired.

### Guided Practice:

Students will take notes in class on the history of the Occupation of France, the lives of artists who experienced this period and the art that they created.

Students will learn about the artist's techniques and period of art to which s/he belongs.

Students will be led to discuss their findings and conclusions with a partner.

### **Independent Practice:**

Students will research their topic in the library and computer lab.

Students may enlist the help and encouragement from their history, art or French teacher, to better understand the atmosphere of the time.

## **Lesson Plans: II**

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### **Focus and Review:**

Students will study the methodology of object analysis as proposed by Jules Prown in *Art as Evidence*.xxxiv

### **Objectives: (Learning Outcomes):**

At the end of this lesson, students will be able produce a detailed analysis of a painting (of their choosing) beginning with description, proceeding to deduction, and finally providing speculation as to the underlying meaning/desired effect of the painting.

### **Guided Practice:**

The teacher will lead students through an example analysis of Picasso's *Weeping Woman*.

Students will be encouraged to brainstorm about each step as the teacher directs it: what elements should be included where, and so forth.

### **Independent Practice:**

Students will first study a color transparency of *Guernica* in class. Four overhead projectors will be set up to allow for small group observation and note taking.

Students will take copious notes in their analysis.

Students will use a clipboard and paper to sketch the painting in an effort to recognize line and

shapes on the picture plane.  
Students will analyze their chosen painting.  
They will type their analysis of the painting.

### **Evaluation/Closure:**

Students will take turns offering their observations.  
Fellow classmates will be encouraged to critique the observations, add to or contradict them.  
Criteria for success will be:  
    to observe the student's ability to follow the procedure from description through speculation.  
    to observe their correct observations and insight.

### **Materials Needed:**

Clipboard and paper.

### **Interdisciplinary Links:**

In addition to taking notes in class, students will research the background of Picasso and the artist they have chosen, in the books and research opportunities provided by the teacher.  
Students may make use of information and suggestions for research provided by the art teacher and library media specialist.

## Lesson Plan III

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Focus and Review: Students will learn about the Resistance movement in France during the Second World War.

### **Objectives: (Learning Outcomes) At the end of this lesson:**

Students will demonstrate their knowledge of the movement by studying a key town, key player or event in the movement.

Students will research their topic, keeping in mind the objectives, strategies and outcomes of the event/s.

Students will write a paper or give a presentation on their findings, using index cards, to the class.

Students will present their findings to the class.

### **Guided Practice:**

Students will view the films *The Sorrow and the Pity*, and *The Train* in order to see and appreciate the objectives, tactics and outcomes of the Resistance fighters in France during the Occupation.

Students will take notes in class on the films.

Students will be led to discuss their observations in class.

### **Independent Practice and Interdisciplinary Links:**

Students will research their chosen topic in the library and on the Internet.

Students may enlist the help and encouragement from their literature, history, art or French teacher, to better understand the atmosphere of the time.

Students will be encouraged to seek out members of the community with ties to the Resistance movement in France/Europe during the war.

Students will be encouraged to seek out members of university faculties in the area who would have a special knowledge of this period.



## Notes

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iCone, *Artists under Vichy*, p. xv

ii Ibid. p.5

iii Ibid. p.5

iv Ibid. p.15

v Ibid.p.xix

vi Pound, *ABC of Reading* , p. 81

vii Cone, *Artists under Vichy* , p.6

viii Ibid. p.11

ix Ibid.p.12

x Ibid.p.37

xi Ibid.p.13

xii Beauvoir, *Force de l'âge*, p. 478

xiii Cone, *Artists under Vichy* , p. 20

xiv Ibid.p.5

xv Galerie Michel Couturier, *Wols, Cités et Navires* .

xvi Fry, *Autobiography*

xvii Meyer, *Marc Chagall* , p. 431

xviii St-Exupéry, *Oppède* , p. 40

xix Clébert, *Mythologie d'André Masson*, p. 64

xx Cone, *Artists under Vichy* , p. 94

xxi Ibid. p.105

xxii Ibid.p.113

xxiii Cone, *Artists under Vichy* , p.114

xxiv Daix, *Picasso*, p.160-161

xxv Masson, *Picasso* , p. 25

xxvi Jaffé, *Picasso* , p. 114

xxvii Cone, *Artists under Vichy*, p. 149

xxviii Jaffé, *Picasso* , p. 108

xxix Ibid. p. 112

xxx Ibid. p.114

xxxi Jaffé, *Picasso* , p. 114

xxxii Cone, *Artists under Vichy* , p. 78-79

xxxiii Ibid. p. 157

xxxiv Prown, *Art as Evidence* , p. 78-79

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