



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

Guide for Curriculum Unit 02.03.06

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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?

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," 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.

(Recommended for Art History, World/European History, French, and French Art, grades 9-12.)

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