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## Masterpiece: *The Scream*, 1893 by Edvard Munch

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Keywords: Expressionism, color  
Grade: 5th Grade  
Month: May  
Lesson Expressionist Self Portrait

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### Meet the Artist:

- 1863 - 1944. Born in Norway and was often ill as a child, had to deal with a lot of illness and grief in his family.
- Considered one of his country's greatest artists. He was a painter, lithographer, etcher and wood engraver.
- Played a vital role in the development of the Expressionism movement. His works were considered "objectionable" and provoked outrage during the late 1800's but he was a major influence on other artists and he later gained fame and respect of art critics.
- His art is reflective of his own unhappy life as well as the basic fears and anxieties of mankind.
- Munch stated, "We want more than a mere photograph of nature. We do not want to paint pretty pictures to be hung on drawing room walls. We want to create art that arrests and engages. An art created of one's innermost heart."
- Munch died shortly after his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. He willed over 20,000 works of art to the city of Oslo (capital of Norway) which built a museum in his honor.

## KEY WORDS -

**Expressionism** - a style of art in which the artist tries to express certain feelings about something. The artist is more concerned about having their painting express a feeling than in making the painting look exactly like what they are painting.

**Color** - discuss the use of color to show emotion. It will not be realistic, but are based upon the feelings of the artist.

### Possible Questions:

- Do you recognize this painting?
- What do you think of this painting? How would you describe it?
- What do you think the artist is trying to convey? (an emotion)
- How did Munch use color to set the mood? (Discuss how the colors are not realistic, but based on emotion)
- Do you like it? Why or why not?
- Refer to the background information to pose more questions and encourage discussion of the painting.
- What colors represent what feelings to you? Happy, Sad, Fear, Excitement, Pain, etc
- Do you like the title? Would you give it another name? (The Scream was originally titled *Despair*.)

**\*Background information of the painting:** usually used as background information if time permits or if you have an extra inquisitive class. Otherwise, leave out. It is interesting information though.

"The Scream", also known as "The Cry" is often described as the first expressionistic painting, and is the most extreme example of Munch's "soul paintings." It is his most familiar painting. The scene, and in particular the foreground figure are grotesquely distorted and done in unrealistic colors. There are four versions of the painting.

**Munch's source of inspiration:** Munch wrote, " I was walking along a path with two friends - the sun was setting - suddenly the sky turned blood red - I paused, feeling exhausted, and leaned on the fence - there was blood and

tongues of fire above the blue-black fjord and the city - my friends walked on, and I stood trembling with anxiety - and I sensed an infinite scream passing through nature." This quote has led some to believe that the person in the painting is not screaming, but reacting to the scream passing through nature.

In 2003, astronomers identified the time that the painting depicted - the eruption of Krakatoa in 1883 caused unusually intense sunsets throughout Europe, which Munch captured in the painting. The central figure in the painting was thought to be inspired by a mummy that Munch had seen at a museum before he painted "The Scream."

At some point while the painting was on display, a vandal wrote, "This was painted by a madman" on a red strip in the sky. The painting has been stolen twice - in 1994 and 2004. It was found again, just this August of 2006. The damage was apparently minimal.

The scream has been used in advertising, cartoons, television and movies. In the horror movie, *Scream*, Ghost face wears a Halloween mask that looks like the central figure in the painting. In *Home Alone*, Macaulay Culkin's pose in front of the mirror is also of the same figure.

### **ACTIVITY: Expressionist Self Portrait in Crayon Resist**

**Materials:** white construction paper, crayons, watercolors, cups for water

- 1) Ask for suggestions of different kinds of emotions and write them on the board (happy, sad, surprised, mad, etc.)
- 2) Hand out supplies. Remind them to write their name and their teacher's name on the back of the construction paper.
- 3) The students will pick an emotion and draw a self-portrait with crayons in a very exaggerated manner - they want to "express the feeling" as in the expressionist style, rather than make their face look real. Make sure they press rather hard with the crayons. The colors they use are not to be realistic, but instead reflective of the emotion.
- 4) They will "wash" over the entire picture with watered down watercolor - have them choose only one color that will compliment the colors of their crayons. If they used dark crayons, use a light watercolor, etc. so that their portrait will stand out.

### Art Masterpiece - 5<sup>th</sup> Grade – The Scream – May

Today in art masterpiece your child participated in learning about the artist Edvard Munch and his work of art titled The Scream. The students learned expressionism as a style of art in which the artist tries to express certain feelings about something. The artist is more concerned about having their painting express a feeling than in making the painting look exactly like what they are painting. Students were asked to choose an emotion and draw a self portrait in an exaggerated manner. Take a moment to discuss your child's art masterpiece with them today.



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