

# The Scream by Edvard Munch

## Print Facts

- Medium: Tempera on board
- Date: 1910
- Size: 83.5 x 66 cm
- Location: Munch Museum, Oslo
- Period: Late Works
- Style: Expressionism
- Genre: Genre Painting
- The Scream in the Munch Museum collection was in the artist's possession when he died in 1944, and part of his great bequest to the City of Oslo. The Scream in the Munch Museum is one of two painted versions of the image. The other is to be found in the National Gallery, Oslo. The National Gallery version is signed and dated 1893, and many scholars believe it to be the first one. Both versions are painted on cardboard, and Munch has also sketched the image on the reverse side of the National Gallery version. In 1895 an important version of the image was produced as a lithograph. There exist two pastels of the image, one belonging to the Munch Museum, the other privately owned but set to go to auction in May 2012. There are also a few sketches related to The Scream on a sheet of paper in the Munch Museum collection.
- A text from Munch's diary in 1892 relates to The Scream: *I was walking along a path with two friends the sun was setting I felt a breath of melancholy Suddenly the sky turned blood-red I stopped and leant against the railing, deathly tired looking out across flaming clouds that hung like - blood and a sword over the deep blue fjord and town My friends walked on - I stood there trembling with anxiety And I felt a great, infinite scream pass through nature.*
- He later described the personal anguish behind the painting, "for several years I was almost mad... You know my picture, "The Scream?" I was stretched to the limit—nature was screaming in my blood..."
- In summing up the painting's impact author Martha Tedeschi has stated: "Whistler's Mother, Wood's American Gothic, Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa and Edvard Munch's The Scream have all achieved something that most paintings—regardless of their art historical importance, beauty, or monetary value—have not: they communicate a specific meaning almost immediately to almost every viewer. These few works have successfully made the transition from the elite realm of the museum visitor to the enormous venue of popular culture."
- The original German title given to the work by Munch was *Der Schrei der Natur* (The Scream of Nature). The Norwegian word *skrik* is usually translated as scream, but is cognate with the English shriek. Occasionally, the painting has been called *The Cry*.
- The scene this painting depicts was identified as being a view from the hill of Ekeberg that overlooks Oslo, the Oslofjord (an inlet in the south-east of Norway), and Hovedøya (one of several small islands off the coast of Oslo, Norway in the Oslofjord).

## Artist Facts

- Born December 1863 in Norway
- Died January 1944 (80 years)
- Inherited his artistic talent from his mother who died when he was five.
- Munch was often ill in the winter so he would entertain himself by drawing.
- His father often read ghost stories to him and tales of Edgar Allen Poe.
- He grew up in a very poor family.
- Munch left technical college where he was studying engineering to become a painter, much to his father's disappointment.
- When he was around 18, he enrolled in the Royal School of Art and Design of Christiania.
- He spent many years painting in Berlin and Paris, but the last two decades returned to Oslo.
- The Nazis labeled his work as "degenerate art", and his paintings were hidden until after the war. Several were never recovered.

## Key Element of Design to Teach

- **Color** is a reflection of light. Color may be described in many ways. Primary colors are red, yellow and blue. Secondary colors are orange, green and violet. Tertiary colors are red-violet, blue-violet, blue-green, yellow-green, yellow-orange, and red-orange. Color can be described as being warm (in the red-yellow range) or cool (in the blue-green range). There are also various color schemes that the artist may use to emphasize certain parts of their work.

## Possible Questions and Suggestions to Teach Color

- What colors do you see in this painting?
- What are the primary colors? (Use the color wheel to help teach students.)
- Can you see primary colors in this painting? Where?
- What are the secondary colors?
- Can you see any secondary colors in this painting? Where?
- Are they warm or cool or both? (Help the kids learn warm vs. cool colors.)
- The warm colors, orange, yellow and red, move forward, but the water that is blue and green recedes into the background. (Have students close eyes and then open to find out what they see first – the man screaming.)
- There are many complementary colors in this painting. (Orange/Blue, Yellow/Violet, Red/Green) Point out to students that they are opposite each other on the color wheel.
- Put food coloring in water to show students the primary colors. Pour water from two primary color cups into a third clear cup to show the new secondary color that will be created from mixing them. Pour all of them into one cup to show that you get a neutral brown when they are all mixed together.

## **Keywords**

- Primary colors, secondary colors, complementary colors, color wheel

## **Other Possible Questions and Suggestions**

- What do you see in this painting?
- How do you think this man feels? (scared, upset, nervous) How do you feel when you look at this painting? Change his mouth to a grin using the small transparency in the packet. How do you think this man feels now? (surprised, silly, kind of like a clown, like laughing) How do you feel when you look at this painting now?
- Talk about what our eyes and eyebrows do when we get scared or surprised. (Eyes get big and round and eyebrows raise up.) The man in the Scream has big round eyes and raised eyebrows. Have the students try to make the same facial expression as the man is making. What happens when we are angry? (eyebrows go down in the center) Have students make a made face.
- What kinds of lines do you see in this painting? Straight or curvy?