

Expressive Arts

GCSE year 10

Critical Analysis on The Scream By Edvard Munch

Edvard Munch was born on December 12 1863 in Loten Norway. He moved to Christiania, and spent most of his childhood there. Both his mother and his oldest sister suffered from tuberculosis and died before he reached the age of 14. At 18 he became more serious about his art and started attending art school. Edvard finally found a release for the pain he felt from his sister's death. In 1886 he painted "The Sick Child". The painting was so emotionally charged that it received a lot of criticism from the press and the public. However some of his artist colleagues began to recognize his talent. The same year another tragedy struck. His father died in November. Edvard received some scholarships that allowed him to spend the next few years in Paris. Although he would return to Norway during the summer, his style was that of a French Impressionist. In 1892 Munch submitted a series of paintings into a major Berlin art show. His exhibit was titled "The Frieze of Life". This show caused an even larger uproar than his previous work. Edvard became a celebrity overnight and he painted such paintings as "the sick child" "the scream" and "vampire", which showed his true emotion feelings. Edvard Munch had been through a lot of trauma, hurt and heartbreak in his life and his art work and painting helped him to expressive his feelings. I am going to be analysing and studing the Painting "The Scream".

Edvard Munch was an Impressionist painter. Expressionism is movement in the arts during the early part of the 20th century that emphasized subjective expression of the artist's inner experiences. This may be why Edvard Munch had such a talent for this type of art as he had been through so much in his life, and wanted to express his emotion. Expressionism is not an art that is based on reality of something but more on the emotion of the thing. E.g. there is a painting of a man sitting on a chair. But in Expressionist painting the colours, emotion and shapes would show the mans emotions to show a completely different picture and story. This is why Expressionist art is so unique and distinctive as it can tell a whole different story, and show so may different deep emotions and feelings in one painting. Expressionism is one of the most popular types of art in the later 19th and the 20th centuries. It shows an individual, impulsive, self-expressionate piece of art.

Edvard Munch used a range of expressive colours like Reds, dark blues, and oranges. The sky is filled with fiery reds and oranges. This could represent the anger, frustration in the artist life. The ocean is filled with cold blues and greens. This could symbolise depression despair and misery in Edvard Munch's life. There is also a whirlpool in the middle of the ocean. Where there looks like there are a few boats are getting pulled in. I think

this represents that Edvard Munch is stuck in the middle of emotions, fury and anger or depression and misery of the loss of his family. They are both trying to suck him in and he is trying to escape. There are 2 other boats in the picture. I thought that these might symbolise other lives getting pulled into the ocean of depression and this is what I think he is trying to escape. There is a strong diagonal block of brown colour which is the bridge jutting out towards the viewer. The very strong, bold diagonal of the railing is the only stable element of the painting, having a grounding effect to the otherwise chaotic surroundings. The railing is surrounded by rapid swirling motion of the landscape, and the wild colours that Edvard Munch used. I think the swirls add movement and pull you in and around the image while adding a sense of confusion. Munch uses colour quite dramatically in this painting. The loneliness of the figure and the violent swirling colours seem to jump off the painting in a dramatic attack. The vivid blood red of the sky, the yellowish cast to the skeletal face and the dark cold colours of the river, all added to the emotionalism of this piece. This painting is like a brilliant ray of fireworks; the most powerful colours are used to portray rays of emotion that actually reach out to the audience.

No matter where your eye first lands on this piece of art, it immediately is drawn to the central figure. There is so much action going on in this painting, and then amongst all the chaos, standing in the center of the piece is our subject; simply depicted, no extreme facial features, standing, screaming. It's a subject of sheer panic and despair. The painting shows a hairless, broken creature with a head like an inverted pear, its hands clapped in horror to its ears, its mouth open in a vast, soundless scream. This person appears locked in a state of terror frozen by a fear, real or imagined. When I look at it I can see pain and terror in the face, like the world is about to explode. I can see true emotion used here, every possible feeling that one may have is screaming out of this painting.

But I don't believe that the person itself is screaming. It's their inner self, the person they are keeping locked away inside, coming out to show the torment and frustration life can bring onto people. We all know this feeling, and we all hold it inside of ourselves.

What I think is amazing about it, is the fact that it creates multiple meanings, yet gives a mixture of emotion that is recognized and experienced by everyone. The silent scream echoes within the painting and out to the viewer. The two shadowy figures in the background are somewhat mysterious, are they lurking and frightening the screamer or have they passed by and not even noticed the other person's terror. I think that they are symbolising people in the world and our society, who can see that somebody is in desperation and pain, but are too busy with their own lives to care, help or bother. So this may show that his scream from within is from frustration of life.

I believe this picture is set in a nightmare as there are dramatic and emotional colours and is a sense of distress and fear in the painting, but no sense of reality.

This painting therefore relates to dreams and nightmares because this is where it seems it is set. I think that this picture could have been a simple and straightforward picture, but looks like it's been placed into a dream and got mixed around with all the different emotions and feelings that Edvard Munch was going through at the time, then taken back out and

made into a piece of art. This is why it is such a complex and meaningful piece of art. I also believe that Edvard Munch could have believed that he was living in a nightmare at the time when this was all happening as all his loved ones were dying. In dreams and nightmares we all go through in our minds about what's happening in our lives and emotions and how to deal with them. I think in this painting it is a dream of this person being trapped between mixed emotion for the loss of his family, but he keeps it covered up inside and the only place it can come out is in his dreams and art where it is screaming to get out. This is why the painting looks like it could be set in a nightmare, because it has so much emotion and feeling plunged into there. But you have to look deep into it to find the symbols and clues. I can see that he is stuck between anger and depression, and feels lost. So his inside is screaming out to everyone for love and affection but nobody cares knows and notices. So I can sense an emotion of loneliness.

I could use this as a stimulus for my performance by showing how our emotions and feelings are expressed in different and less straightforward ways, to show how you can need help and scream for it from the inside, without anyone knowing. And how in dreams and nightmares we go through our lives in our minds and they might be the only places in the world where we could express our true emotions and feelings. This is in our own minds. So it can show that the mind is one of the loneliest, scariest, and the most amazing place where we can escape to, and where no one else can know what you are thinking. I have seen how to symbolise certain things by colours and shapes and how to give a certain impression and mood. I can see how amazing dreams and nightmares are because they are not in this world, but they are only true portraits of ourselves and our lives so anything is possible and even our darkest and saddest feelings that we bury away inside us can show and come to life in our dreams. I have learnt to make a straightforward piece of art turn into an emotional and deep feeling that every person has different views and feelings about depending on their own lives. I can now see how this piece of artwork is truly individual, remarkable and unique as it shows that emotions of a broken man.

