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PABLO PICASSO: GUERNICA

Pablo Picasso's Guernica is at once the most monumental and comprehensive statement of social realism and dramatic manifesto against the brutality of war. The 11 feet tall mural was painted to make a statement about the bombing in the town of Guernica in the year 1937 before World War II. This painting has made an unforgettable impression on the thousands who have seen it. Guernica is more than just a painting, it is very allegorical and it has numerous symbolisms, which express the reaction of society at this time.

Picasso used a combination of expressionist and abstract techniques as a violent protest against the cruel and inhuman act of violence. Expressionism is a term used to describe works of art and literature in which the representation of reality is distorted to communicate an inner vision. The expressionist transforms nature rather than imitates it. The way you look at this painting is very crucial in the way you depict it. The motion that the painting should be viewed is in a triangular motion with everyone running away from the burning building where the one man is dying. The principle action of the painting beings in the lower right, where a woman dashes forward, her hands waving in despair. The triangular action then proceeds to the top at the point where the lamp, the horse's head, and

the eye come together. From this climax, the viewer's eye moves downward to the head of the dismembered warrior at the lower left. This path shows in a sense how Spain was beginning to change for the worse by fascism. The horse with the spear in its back signifies victimized humanity overwhelmed by brute force. The motif of the shrieking mouth is represented in that of the screaming woman with her dead child at the left, the face of the solider below, and the victim of the flames at the right. The bull, standing for brutality, is the only triumphant figure in this symbolic struggle between forces of darkness and those of light, between barbarism and civilization.

It employs all the exaggerations, distortions, and shock techniques developed by expressionistic drawing. The painting contains somber shades of mourning, black, white, and gray. This makes the mood more dismal and somber which adds a more dramatic affect to the painting. Each of the figures in the painting describes a different aspect of what was going on in Spain during this time. For example the Bull in the top left side represents the brutality of what was happening to Guernica. It has his head turned away from the killing because it humiliates him. This figure is the only one that is standing tall without any harm to him watching over the scene. While the bull is watching over this, the horse howls the anguish of death. The horse represents the people of Guernica, and with the fall of the horse comes the fall of Spain. This painting shows how the mind of Picasso worked and how he was feeling towards what happened. During this time in his life Picasso was very unhappy personally so he wanted to generate his

unhappiness in this painting. He did not want to complete the painting and sharpen his message until his emotions had been let out and declared on the painting. He tired to communicate to the viewer the affects of fascism and war and how it affects everyone. By using the horse and the bull, which is a trademark symbol of Spain, he delivered a powerful message against fascism. Anyone who looks at this painting all can see the brutality and the anguish that the people of Guernica went through during this time.

A viewer may look at this painting and think nothing if it, they may just think it's a group of animals and people in pain but there is so much more to that. A viewer must be able to look at this painting and look at each figure and see what they stand for. Each figure has a significant meaning to it. The lamp, which is being held up above the whole scene, represents truth and it represents the impossibility of denying what has just happened. It looks as if the eye with the bulb in the middle was the light of truth but since the bombing occurred the woman holding the lamp is trying not to let Guernica be overcome by darkness. The woman looking at the light also represents the people looking up at truth and demanding answers to why this has happened to them as innocent people. The woman holding the lamp is shining the light down at the scene so that everyone can see the tragedy of Guernica. This way no one can deny or hide what happened in Guernica. The many expressions of every figure in the painting show the state of Spain during the time of the bombing. The bull which is the symbol of Spain and the symbol of the brutality in politics during this time stands tall and strong

but it also looks confused as if it doesn't know what is going to happen to Spain and its people. All of the actually people portrayed in this painting are all the innocent masses of people that were blindly attacked by the bombings and the uncertainty of the government toying with its citizens. The woman crying, holding her dead baby, the man burning in the building and the dismembered body of the soldier represent the mental and physical pain that many endured. The woman holding the lamp is a symbol of hope that Spain will not die and that it shall overcome these tribulations. The expression on her face is one of despair and of awe to what has happened to her town. But she also is the one that represents the many people who want to save Spain. The main theme of the painting is that warfare and the way that politics in some European countries were killing and destroying innocent people and towns. Picasso made this painting in order to get his message across about antifascism and to stop the wars that were happening. This painting of Guernica was placed in a Spanish Pavilion where thousands of people could pass by and not deny what had happened.