

Modernism DBQ

Directions: Use Documents 1-12 to answer the following question. The documents have been edited for the purpose of this exercise. Your teacher may provide additional instructions and advice to use when answering the question below.

Prompt: Analyze the ideas and influence of the various modernist works of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Background: From the 1850s through the 1920s, a variety of new ideas were introduced to the intellectual world that reflected the rapid changes that were a part of European history during this time period.

Document 1

Source: Auguste Comte, French philosopher and founder of positivism, 1856.

...Progress is always the object of Order.....Progress then is in its essence identical with Order.....A nation that has made no efforts to improve itself materially, will take but little interest in moral or mental improvement.

Document 2

Source: Herbert Spencer, English philosopher, sociologist, and biologist, *The Principles of Ethics*, 1887.

Intelligence is, in its every act, carried on by discrimination; and has advanced from its lowest stages to its highest by increasing powers of discrimination. It has done this for the sufficient reason that during the evolution under all its forms, increase of it has been furthered by practice or habit as well as by survival of the fittest; since good discrimination has been a means of saving life, and lack of it a cause of losing life.

Document 3

Source: Claude Monet, leading Impressionist painter, "*The Artist's Garden at Vétheuil*," 1880.



Source credit: Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington

Document 4

Source: Friedrich Nietzsche, German philosopher responding to the ideas of positivism, *The Gay Science*, 1882.

That our actions, thoughts, feelings, and movements enter our own consciousness—at least a part of them—that is the result of a “must” that for a terribly long time lorded it over man. As the most endangered animal, he needed help and protection, he needed his peers, he had to learn to express his distress and to make himself understood, and for all of this he needed “consciousness” first of all, he needed to “know” himself what distressed him, he needed to “know” how he felt, he needed to “know” what he thought. For, to say it once more: Man, like every living being, thinks continually without knowing it; the thinking that rises to consciousness is only the smallest part of this—the most superficial and worst part—for only this conscious thinking takes the form of words, which is to say signs of communication, and this fact uncovers the origin of consciousness.

Document 5

Source: Emile Durkheim, French sociologist and founder of modern sociology, writings, 1890s.

We thus arrive at the point where we can formulate and delimit in a precise way the domain of sociology. It comprises only a limited group of phenomena. A social fact is to be recognized by the power of external coercion which it exercises or is capable of exercising over individuals, and the presence of this power may be recognized in its turn either by the existence of some specific sanction or by the resistance offered against every individual effort that tends to violate it.

Document 6

Source: Hamlin Garland, American novelist, recorded his reaction to his first encounter with impressionist paintings at an 1893 Chicago exhibition (World’s Fair), 1894.

They select some moment, some centre of interest,—generally of the simplest character. This central object they work out with great care, but all else fades away into subordinate blur of color, precisely as in life.

Document 7

Source: Max Weber, German sociologist responding to the possibilities of reason and logic, “Objectivity” in *Social Science and Science Policy*, 1904-05.

Naturally, it does not imply that the knowledge of universal propositions, the construction of abstract concepts, the knowledge of regularities and the attempt to formulate “laws” have no scientific justification in the cultural sciences.

Document 8

Source: Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger, leading French Cubist painters, *Cubism*,* 1912

The artist, having discerned a form which presents a certain intensity or analogy with his pre-existing idea, prefers it to other forms, and consequently for we like to force our preferences on others – he endeavours to enclose the quality of this form (the unmeasurable sum of the affinities perceived between the visible manifestation and the tendency of his mind) in symbol likely to affect others.

* manifesto about Cubism

Document 9

Source: Guillaume Apollinaire, French poet of Polish descent, friend and colleague of many leading Cubist painters, pamphlet, 1913.

While the goal of painting is today, as always, the pleasure of the eye, the art-lover is henceforth asked to expect delights other than those which looking at natural objects can easily provide.

Document 10

Source: Paul Klee, Swiss artist, lecture regarding the development of modern art and role of the artist, 1924.

First, he does not attach such intense importance to natural form as do so many realist critics, because, for him, these final forms are not the real stuff of the process of natural creation. For he places more value on the powers which do the forming than on the final forms themselves.

He is, perhaps unintentionally, a philosopher, and if he does not, with the optimists, hold this world to be the best of all possible worlds, nor to be so bad that it is unfit to serve as a model, yet he says:

‘In its present shape it is not the only possible world.’

Document 11

Source: Bronislaw Malinowski, Polish anthropologist who spent the war years (WWI) studying native tribes in the Melanesian islands, discussing why he does not accept Freudian theory wholeheartedly, *Sex and Repression in Savage Society*, 1927.

As an anthropologist I feel more especially that ambitious theories with regard to savages, hypotheses of the origin of human institutions and accounts of the history of culture, should be based on a sound knowledge of primitive life, as well as of the unconscious or conscious aspects of the human mind. After all neither group-marriage, nor totemism, neither avoidance of mother-in-law nor magic happen in the “unconscious”; they are all solid sociological and cultural facts, and to deal with them theoretically requires a type of experience which cannot be acquired in the consulting room.

* Spiritual connection or kinship with other physical beings (non-human)

Document 12

Source: Sigmund Freud, Austrian psychologist and neurologist, *Civilization and its Discontents*, referring to the advances in the natural sciences in the previous decades, 1930.

Men are proud of those achievements, and have a right to be. But they seem to have observed that this newly-won power over space and time, this subjugation of the forces of nature, which is the fulfillment of a longing that goes back thousands of years, has not increased the amount of pleasurable satisfaction which they may expect from life and has not made them feel happier. From the recognition of this fact we ought to be content to conclude that power over nature is not the only precondition of human happiness, just as it is not the only goal of cultural endeavor; we ought not to infer from it that technical progress is without value for the economics of our happiness.