

# Romanticism

1790 – 1850

# Definition

- Romanticism refers to an artistic and intellectual movement that stressed **strong emotion**, **imagination**, **freedom from** Neoclassical “**correctness**” in art forms, and **rebellion** against **social order**.

# Emphasis on...

- Romanticism exalted individualism, subjectivism, irrationalism, imagination, emotions and nature
- It valued **emotion over reason and senses over intellect**
- Artists had a role of an ultimate creator who **ignored established rules**, which they felt were too strict, formal, and traditional

# Theodore Gericault, Raft of the Medusa, 1819



In June of 1816, the ship Medusa, carrying nearly 400 people, hit a sand bar and everyone was forced to abandon ship. The wealthy were given space on lifeboats while the rest, 149 people, were forced onto a makeshift raft which was tied by a rope to one of the lifeboats. At some point, the raft was either intentionally or accidentally cut loose.

What followed was a two week nightmare of stormy seas, brutal murders, insanity and cannibalism. Just 15 men survived the ordeal. The tragedy became a major scandal since no particular rescue efforts were made by the French.



Gericault had thoroughly researched the subject by interviewing the survivors, going to hospitals and morgues to study the dying and the dead (and even severed body parts which he let decay in his studio), and he set a raft out to sea to see how it rode the waves.



The style relies on the drama and fluidity of the Baroque movement and utilizes loose brushstrokes, sharp contrast of light and dark, and dramatic poses. Gericault was influenced by Neoclassicism and therefore painted idealized, muscular bodies. There are no real heroes, instead we have victims...people who are literally cast off because they exist on the lower rungs of society.

# Francisco Goya, The Third of May, 1808, 1814



He is known for his scenes of violence, especially those prompted by the French invasion of Spain.

This painting is set in the early hours of the morning and centres on two masses of men: one a rigid firing squad and the other a disorganized group of Spanish captives held at gun point.

In the centre is a brilliantly lit man kneeling amid the bloodied corpses of those already executed. His pose and gesture recall the death of Christ.

# Goya: Cronos Devouring His Son, 1821



Goya depicts the Greek myth of Saturn (god of time), who, fearing that he would be overthrown by his children, ate each one upon their birth.

It has also been interpreted as a conflict between youth and old age as well as an expression of what humanity is capable of.





**Neoclassical Art**



**Romantic Art**