Spanish Flu Pandemic



0. Spanish Flu Pandemic - Story Preface

1. WAS IT LIKE SARS?

2. ALBERT GITCHELL GETS SICK

3. TO THE WESTERN FRONT

4. SICK SOLDIERS

5. A DEADLY SECOND WAVE without SOCIAL DISTANCING

6. PICTURES OF CHAOS

7. MORE BAD NEWS

8. THE DEAD PROVIDE ANSWERS

9. SWINE FLU (Influenza A H1N1) OUTBREAK of 2009

U.S. Army photograph of the 1918 Spanish influenza ward at Camp Funston, Kansas. Online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

It was a dreadful business.

Isaac Starr, 3rd year medical student
University of Pennsylvania, 1918

When Edvard Munch, the Norwegian artist, created his famous painting *The Scream* (in 1893), he had no idea that within twenty-five years half the world's population would suddenly fall ill. His *Death in the Sickroom* (1895) and *The Dead Mother* (1899-1900) were eerily prophetic of terrible times to come.

The prolific artist, whose works are still studied and admired, was among the sick during the pandemic years of 1918-19. The malady was "Spanish Flu" - the deadliest disease in recorded history.

Munch's *Self-Portrait Spanish Influenza* (1919) depicts an unwell man, but his *Self-Portrait After Spanish Influenza* shows the ravages of illness. At least he survived.

More than 50 million others did not.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Spanish-Flu-Pandemic

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Spanish-Flu-Pandemic

Questions 2 Ponder

How Are Tragedies and Emotions Expressed in Art?

When Edvard Munch became a victim of the Spanish-Flu pandemic, which claimed millions of lives worldwide during World War One, he created two self-portraits.

One - entitled "Self-Portrait Spanish Influenza" (from1919) - depicts an unwell man, but the second - "Self-Portrait After Spanish Influenza" - shows the ravages of illness.

Both are powerful displays of tragedy, coupled with physical and emotional effects of the dreaded disease. Munch used no flattering brush strokes to make himself look good.

Do you think that art can uniquely express illness, tragedies and emotions? Explain your answer.

Does it take an honest artist to be willing to capture how things really are, instead of how we wish them to be? Why, or why not?

Painting a portrait of an ill person is different from photographing the same ill person. Is there a difference, in expressing the truth, between a painting and a photo? If so, what is the difference?

How Does Edvard Munch Express Personal Tragedy in His Paintings?

Late in the 19th century, Edvard Munch created a series of paintings which reflect tragedy and the personal anguish of his subjects. One glance at any of these works, and the viewer instantly understands that something really awful has just happened to the people in the scenes.

What does “The Scream,” a still-famous work which Munch painted in 1893, convey to you?

There is an actual story behind the scream, which Munch relates, but does that story matter to the viewer’s experience with the painting? Why, or why not?

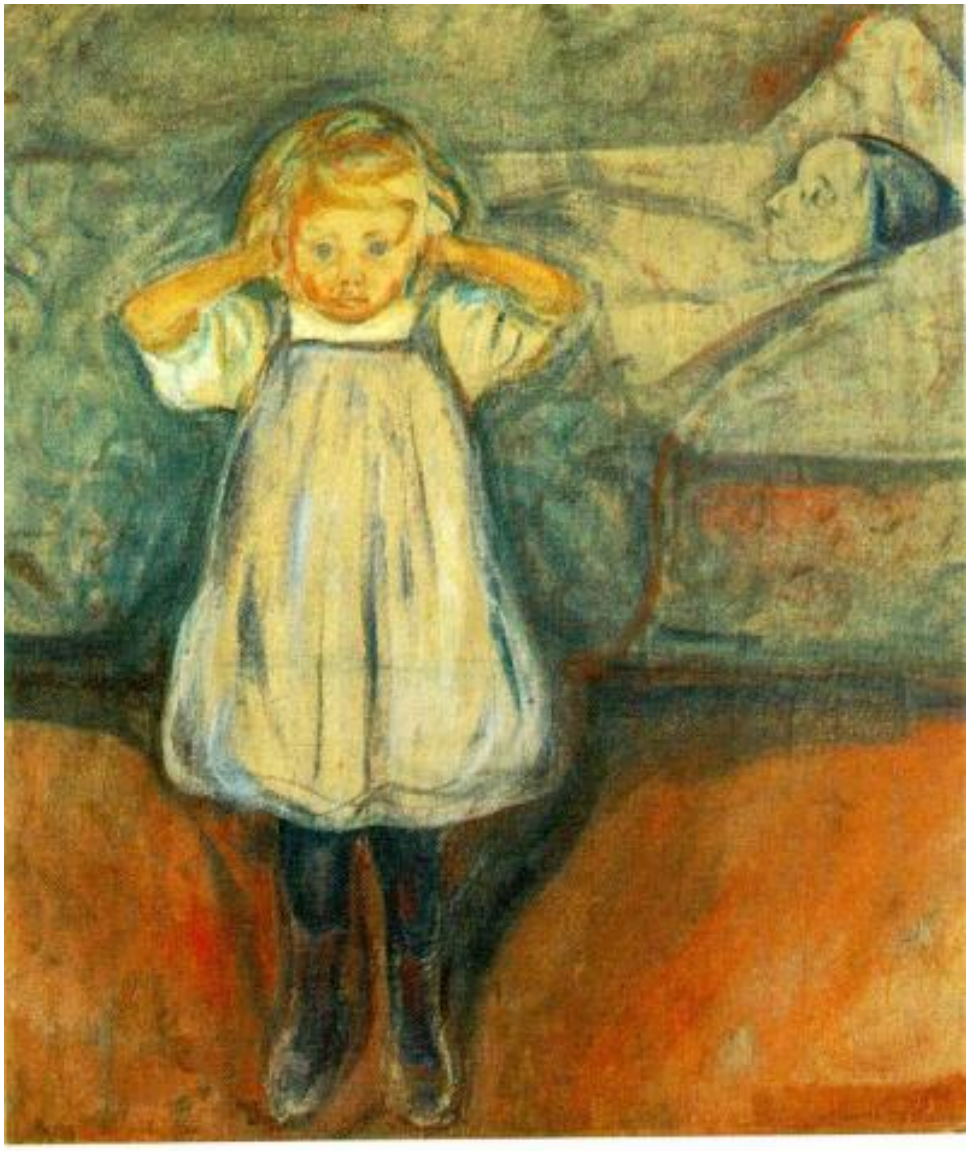
Spanish Flu was not-yet a threat to anyone when Munch painted “Death in the Sickroom,” in 1895, but it was eerily prophetic of difficult days ahead. What does that painting tell you? Are different people experiencing different emotions?



Does it make a difference to you that “Death in the Sickroom” reflects a personal time in Munch’s life - when his sister died? Why, or why not?

If you didn’t know the back story of the painting, would you have any reason to believe that Munch knew the person who had just died? Explain your answer.

What does “The Dead Mother,” which Munch created between 1899-1900, tell you about the loss of a loved one?



Media Stream



Edvard Munch - The Scream
Image, described above, online courtesy Wikipedia.
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Edvard Munch - Death in the Sickroom
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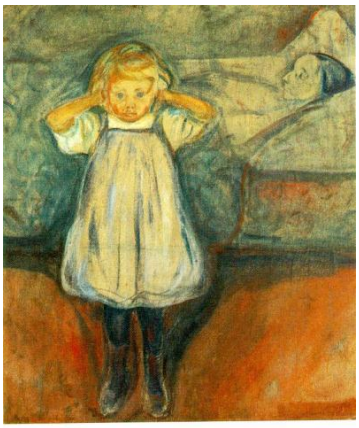

Edvard Munch - The Dead Mother

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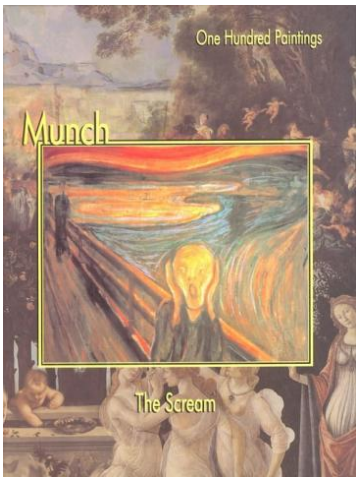

One Hundred Paintings: Munch

Image online, courtesy amazon.com website.
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Edvard Munch - Self-Portrait After Spanish Influenza

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Munch - Self Portrait after Spanish Flu

This self-portrait, which Munch painted between 1919-20, is now owned by the Munch Museum in Oslo, Norway. Image online, via Wikimedia Commons.
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