

**MODERN ART:
SALVADOR DALÍ:
SURREALIST MASTER**



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Description

Through an examination of both primary and secondary sources on the subject, including various types of visual media in addition to electronic and written sources, Students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain the basics of Surrealism as it developed as a movement in the aftermath of the Great War, how surrealism served as a vehicle for the rejection of traditional bourgeois culture, how Salvador Dalí specifically fit into the surrealist movement, and how he influenced other artists over the span of his long 20th century career.

Subjects

Art

Grade Level

11-12

Duration

90 minutes

Tour Links

- Dalí Theatre and Museum, Figueras, Spain
- Dalí Universe, London
- Dalí Universe, Venice
- Museum of Modern Art, New York

Essential Questions

- Who was Salvador Dalí?
- What is Surrealism? How did it develop as a reaction to Bourgeois culture in Europe? Why was Dalí drawn to it?
- Why is Dalí the most famous Surrealist Artist of the 20th century?

Academic Summary

Surrealism is destructive, but it destroys only what it considers to be shackles limiting our vision.

Salvador Dalí, Declaration, 1929

The one thing the world will never have enough of is the outrageous.

Salvador Dalí, date unknown

His paintings are among the most famous of the twentieth century. Haunting, nightmarish and yet often playful, his dream-like visions have spoken to millions across the globe since he burst on the scene in the years following the Great War. His career spanned almost seventy years and thus his artwork can be seen in museums and exhibits across the world. Today he is seen as the very voice of Surrealism. His name was Salvador Dalí.

Dalí was born in Figueras, a small city about an hour north of Barcelona on the northeast coast of Spain. Even as a child, the young Dalí seemed to have a knack for artistic expression, something his mother encouraged. By his mid-teens, Dalí early artistic works were being exhibited in Figueras and Barcelona.

In 1922, Dalí moved to Madrid to attend the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, where he was exposed to new and revolutionary artistic and psychological ideas. Surrealism, a cultural and artistic movement that developed out of the chaos of the Great War and heavily influenced by Sigmund Freud's writings on the human psyche and dreams, was born in the hands of Dalí and his Madrid contemporaries. Surrealists believed that traditional bourgeois culture itself was absurd, and they sought to turn convention on its head by delving into the bizarre and leading the world into a new state of consciousness.

In 1931, Dalí produced his most famous painting, *The Persistence of Memory*. At only 10 x 13, the painting is one of his smallest, but its images are some of the most iconic in 20th century art. *Persistence of Memory* shows a series of watch faces "melting" across a theoretical, almost cartoonish, landscape. Ants and a "fading" creature are in the picture as well. These themes of combining representations of "hard" lines with "soft" images would be often repeated in different works in his subsequent years, and would become part of Dalí's artistic signature. The painting, now housed at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, brought Dalí great success in the United States.

Over the next fifty years, he continued to create whimsical, often fantastic, eccentric pieces that he believed bridged the gap between dreams and reality. Over the years, some people were shocked and offended by some of the graphic imagery of some of his work, but Dalí shrugged off his critics by questioning whether their own inner demons were really at the heart of such criticism. In 1960, the artist, ever the self-promoter, began working on his own museum in Figueras. He moved into a specially designed apartment in the structure in 1984, spending his last five years there as his health deteriorated. He is buried in the museum's crypt.

Today, Dalí's influence on modern and contemporary art is unquestioned. Images from his paintings and sculptures such as the melting clocks can be found around the world.

His use of “mirror” images and surrealistic fantasy characters in art is commonplace in today’s society. He is said to have inspired Andy Warhol and other pop artists. Salvador Dalí spent a lifetime trying to shock the world out of its reliance on traditional societal norms. Today’s society seems more and more accepting of the fantastical and outlandish (take a look at such artists as Lady Gaga). Perhaps Dalí succeeded. Through an examination of both primary and secondary sources on the subject, including various types of visual media in addition to electronic and written sources, students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain the basics of Surrealism as it developed as a movement in the aftermath of the Great War, how surrealism served as a vehicle for the rejection of traditional bourgeois culture, how Salvador Dalí specifically fit into the surrealist movement, and how he influenced other artists over the span of his long 20th century career.

Objectives

1. Students will identify, analyze, understand and be able to explain the basics of the surrealist movement as it developed in the aftermath of the Great War.
2. Students will identify, analyze, understand and be able to explain how surrealism in general tried to serve as a vehicle for the rejection of traditional bourgeois culture and specifically how Salvador Dalí fit into that artistic genre.
3. Students will identify, analyze, understand and be able to explain how Dalí influenced modern cultural and artistic trends over the span of his long 20th century career.

Procedure

I. Anticipatory Set

- Writing / Question: What does bizarre mean? Can bizarre be beautiful? (5 min)
- Handouts – Copies of the primary sources and readings from the websites listed. (5 min)

II. Body of Lesson

- Lecture / PPT – Brief overview Surrealism and Dalí. (20 min)
- Video – Dalí and Surrealism (10 min)
- Independent Activity – Students read the primary sources and articles on Surrealism and Dalí, taking notes as appropriate. (20 min)
- Suggestion: Have the students read some of the articles for homework.
- Suggestion: Break students into groups and assign different articles to each group.
- Group Activity – Socratic Discussion: Surrealism and Salvador Dalí (20 min)

III. Closure

- Assessment – Essay / DBQ: Explain in detail the basics of Surrealism as it developed as a movement in the aftermath of the Great War, how surrealism served as a vehicle for the rejection of traditional bourgeois culture, how Salvador Dali specifically fit into the surrealist movement, and how he influenced other artists over the span of his long 20th century career.

Extension

On tour: Dalí Theatre and Museum, Figueras, Spain

While on tour in Northeast Spain, students can visit the Dalí Theatre and Museum in Figueras (about an hour north of Barcelona), where they can see for themselves an incredible collection of the artist's work. Called the largest surrealist object in the world, the museum was designed and built by Dalí himself in the early 1960s on the grounds of the former municipal theater in the city. When his health deteriorated, Dalí moved into an apartment at the museum. He died there in 1989 and is buried in the crypt. Please see the links below for the museum's website.

Web Links

Lesson Plan Websites

- www.ngv.vic.gov.au/dali/salvador/resources/daliandsurrealism.pdf
Dalí under the Microscope (web resources) – from the National Gallery of Victoria (Australia)
- www.salvador-dali.org/museus/figueres/en_index.html
Dalí Theatre and Museum (official website)
- www.cusd80.com/cms/lib6/AZ01001175/Centricity/Domain/3086/6th-6-Dali_Persistence-of-Memory_Sixth.pdf
Art Masterpiece: Persistence of Memory, 1931 by Salvador Dalí (worksheet)
- www.biography.com/people/salvador-dal%C3%AD-40389
Salvador Dalí (website) – from the Biography Channel
- www.museothyssen.org/microsites/exposiciones/2013/surrealismo/index_en.html
“Surrealism and the Dream” (article) – from the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum in Madrid
- www.delsearegional.us/Academic/Classes/highschool/finearts/gualtieri/colored%20pencil/Salvador%20Dali%20powerpoint.ppt
Salvador Dalí PowerPoint
- www.surrealists.co.uk/dali.php
Salvador Dalí (website) – from The Surrealists Website (UK)
- www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/1168-2
The Persistence of Memory (PowerPoint) – from the Modern Art Museum in New York
- www.philamuseum.org/micro_sites/exhibitions/dali/
Dalí (website) – from the Philadelphia Museum of Art exhibit on the artist
- www.teachingchannel.org/videos/choosing-primary-source-documents?fd=1
Reading Like a Historian: Primary Source Documents (video). Great 2-minute video on how to incorporate primary sources into the Common Core and history classes. From Shilpa Duvoor of Summit Preparatory Charter High School in Redwood City, CA. Highly recommended for teachers.
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=OkGfWZfRzWM
Modern Masters – Salvador Dalí (video) – This 1 hour BBC documentary on Dali is probably too long for most in-class showings, but it’s well worth watching, even if it needs to be done as an out-of-class assignment. Highly recommended for all students and teachers.
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=_ST52WsmUIM
Get Surreal! With Salvador Dalí (video) -- From the Dalí Museum, this 10 min video is appropriate for all classes.
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=6mp-fBJNQmU
Salvador Dalí, The Persistence of Memory, 1931 (video) – from Khan Academy, this 6 minute video discusses surrealism and Dali through his most famous painting.

Background Information

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salvador_Dali
Salvador Dalí – Wikipedia article
- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surrealism>
Surrealism – Wikipedia article
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Persistence_of_Memory
The Persistence of Memory – Wikipedia article

Other Relevant Passports Lesson Plans

- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/france/interwar-europe-lost-generation-hemingway-sun-also-rises
Interwar Europe – Hemingway: Sun Also Rises
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/germany/interwar-europe-remarque-all-quiet
Interwar Europe (1919-1939) – Remarque: All Quiet on the Western Front
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/germany/weimar-gropius-bauhaus-and-internationalism
Walter Gropius and the Bauhaus: International Art and Architecture in the Weimar Republic
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/switzerland/interwar-europe-dadaism
Interwar Europe (1919-1939) – Dadaism: Rejecting Modernity's Chaos

Key Terms

- Avant-Garde
- Salvador Dalí
- Surrealism
- Vanguard

