

111. Slave Ship (Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying, Typhoon Coming On). Joseph Mallord William Turner. 1840 C.E. Oil on canvas.

Form: ROMANTICISM (the SUBLIME)

Abstract, fabricated quality

Makes it difficult to discern the subject matter and the action of the scene

"Turner uses intense colors and turbulent brushstrokes to convey the heightened emotion of the event."

Function:

Wanted to protest any reconsideration on the subject

Prevent slavery from ever becoming a normalized practice in the future with a harsh reminder

To shock the critics and general audience into seeing just how brutal slavery could be, and why it shouldn't ever come back

Tell a story

Moral of the story being you are morally condemned if you participate in such a horrific, dehumanizing practice

Slave ship is doomed to wreck because of the actions of its captain

Communicate sympathy and judgment'



Content:

A ship (slave ship) sailing directly into a storm, abandoning the slaves that were thrown overboard to drown

Fiery sunset, writhing foam and waves

Fish with teeth chomping at the slaves' chained limbs

A wall of water and grey clouds dooming the ship to shipwreck (as punishment and vengeance for the death of slaves; upsetting of the balance of nature)

"Turner's chaotic canvas shows a fierce storm. Body parts, still shackled and being attacked by sharp-toothed fish, can be seen in the central and right foreground."

Context:

J.M.W. Turner (1775 - 1851)

Twenty or so years before Impressionist movement; Turner uses techniques that are not yet popular

Man vs. nature (popular theme during late 1700s and early 1800s)

Slavery was banned in Britain, but not in some of the countries it had colonized (e.g. the United States of America)