Form:
continuous narrative, like fresco, or friezes
rhythm between warm and cool colors
weird multi-perspective view in background

Symbolism:
colors play an important role
2-dimensional
symbolic meaning, expressive, non-naturalistic

Function:
enigmatic, multiple philosophical interpretations
essentially a private work, whose meaning was only known most personally to Gauguin himself

Content:
Tahitian natives in scenes that show the stages of life (from right to left): infancy, adulthood, old age
figures are partially unclothed, dressed in a non-western fashion

sea, mountains, volcanoes
figures are out of proportion

Context:
Painted while living on the island of Tahiti from 1891-1903.
Felt it was his finest work and that he "shall never do anything better, or even like it"
He went from a "Sunday Painter" (amateur) to a professional when his job as a stockbroker failed
Finished in a month and then went to the mountains and allegedly tried to commit suicide