Student name: Group:

Art movement .....Abstract Expresionism XX c.
Timeframe.....1943 – 1965
Topic Focus.....The Emotional and Expressive Content in Abstraction

Teaching material: The instructor will provide video materials for educational purposes. ~15'

Background information: Abstract Expressionism (AE) emerged from diverse, overlapping influences during a time of significant societal and artistic change in the United States. Many leading artists began their careers in the 1930s, marked by the Great Depression. This crisis gave rise to two prominent art movements: Regionalism and Social Realism. However, these failed to satisfy the desire of a new generation of artists for richer, more meaningful content. They sought a balance between social responsibility and personal expression, avoiding constraints of provincialism and overt political messaging. The Depression also spurred initiatives like the Works Progress Administration (WPA), a federal program offering employment to the jobless. Many future AE artists participated, developing their craft and establishing professional trajectories. Breaking with traditional conventions in both technique and subject, these artists created large-scale works reflecting their psyches. Their goal was to access universal human experiences through internal exploration. The movement emphasized spontaneity, improvisation, and the artistic process over rigid compositional rules. Although AE resists stylistic categorization, works can be grouped into two tendencies: Dynamic Gesture and Color Field Abstraction. In both, imagery was predominantly abstract. Even when inspired by visual realities, AE artists leaned toward abstraction, emphasizing form, texture, and emotional depth over representational accuracy.

Discussion question: Is Abstract Expressionism purely an emotional and intuitive form of art, or is there a logic and method behind its apparent abstraction? (10')

Main Activity: The core focus of Abstract Expressionism is exploring emotions and feelings through abstract forms and intuitive gestures. Central to the movement is its emphasis on creative freedom and spontaneous expression, rejecting strict rules or preconceived techniques. The movement can be divided into two primary currents:

- **Lyrical Expressionism or Color field abstraction:** Centered on the artist's emotions and subjective experiences. This style is more reflective and intellectual, often featuring expansive fields of color to evoke mood and contemplation. Examples: Helen Frankenthaler and Mark Rothko
- **Gestural Expressionism or Dynamic Gesture:** Highlighting the physical movements and gestures of the artist in creating the artwork. This approach is characterized by vigorous, energetic brushstrokes and a focus on the physical act of painting. Examples: Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning

Group Activity**:** Provide students with a list of prominent artists and key works associated with each current. Discuss how these works reflect the underlying principles of Abstract Expressionism.

Relevant Texts: *The Irascibles* – A 1950 New York Times article featuring a photograph of prominent Abstract Expressionists, including Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, and Willem de Kooning. This article coined the term "The Irascibles" and helped generate public interest in the movement.
American Action Painters – A 1952 essay by art critic Harold Rosenberg that introduced the term "Action Painting" to describe the process-driven style of many Abstract Expressionists. Rosenberg argued that the act of painting itself was a form of self-expression, emphasizing the importance of the process over the final product.

1. On Abstract Expressionism.

3. Key words and key artworks and artists

2. On the tendencies.

4. Summary to the sesión. Conclusion