

Sample essay on neo-classical and romanticism

[Art & Culture](#), [Painting](#)



Neo-classical is a form of art that was dominant in Europe in the 18th Century. This art form was founded on the desire to re-create the spirit and forms of art from ancient Greece and Roman antiquity. The main characteristic of neo-classicism was Herculaneum. Artists in the neo-classical era ensured that their work had moral and aesthetic implications.

Romanticism was the form of art that followed after the neo-classical era, this form of art was different as it was more complex than other art forms that came before it. Artistic freedom was the main feature of Romanticism and emphasis was put on originality, authenticity and self-expression. This discourse will discuss in detail various artists from both eras and their notable works.

Jacques-Louis David was one of the most influential persons in France in the 19th Century. He was also a notable artist of the Neoclassicism era. His influence came about because he was a teacher to a large number of pupils in his salon painting school, where he taught art. David was a friend of Maximilien Robespierre a member of the Jacobin Club, who was propagating the formation of a republic during the French Revolution. As a French Republican, David supported Robesppirre during the French Revolution. He was also a member of congress that made politic decisions in favor of the republicans. As an artist, David used his paintings to express his political opinions and as a way to gain support for his Jacobin Club. One of his paintings that was believed to be a Republican symbol during the Revolution period was, The Lictors Brings to Brutus the Bodies of His sons, that depicted Brutus, a Roman leader who had killed his sons who had tried to overthrow the state in to restore the monarchy, making Brutus a hero of the state. The

royal court did not want propaganda that would agitate the public, so they banned the display of painting, an act that was received with a lot of resistance. This made David and his republican counterparts to gain political mileage as when the painting was finally displayed, art students were the ones who guarded it.

Angelica Kauffman was one of the best known female painters of the neo-classical era. Her career started in Britain, though she was an Austrian native and ended in Rome. As a painter Angelica was best known for her depiction of historical figures like William Shakespeare. Some of her paintings were also of classical nature and covered allegoric subjects. For this reason, she was primarily identified as a history painter. Most of her works were initially not well received in Britain prompting her to move to Rome where history painting was more appreciated. History painting was considered elusive for women as practical classes require student to paint a nude male model.

Angelica Kauffman however was able to overcome this hurdle and was able to obtain her training making her one of the most recognized female painters of her times. Angelica was instrumental in enhancing history painting in her era and became a major protagonist of the art, making it accessible to women.

Benjamin West, an Anglo-American artist, was considered a historical painter. His works were mainly on historical events that revolved around the American war for independence. The most popular of his works was The Death of General Wolfe in 1770. The painting was set on the French and Indian war and showed General Johnson helping a wounded French officer from the tomahawk of a North American Indian. This became one of the

most reproduced painting of the time. Benjamin concentrated on historical events that were taking place around his environment while he was staying in America, Britain and in Italy.

Eugene Delacroix was born in Paris in 1798. He was a romanticism painter who was influenced by Greek culture and art. At that time, France was supporting Greece in the war of independence against the Turks. Delacroix was also supporting the Greek people and he expressed his support in most of his paintings. The most notable of these paintings were *Massacre at Chios* and *The Greece exploring on the ruins of Mossologhi*. In the *Massacre at Chios*, he showed sick dying Greek citizens about to be killed by the Turks. This was to show his sympathy to the Greek people in their war for independence from the Turks. In *The Greece exploring on the ruins of Mossologhi*, Delacroix painted a woman in Greek clothing, with her breast exposed, her hands raised half way and in an imposing posture at a place called Mossologhi. This was an important setting in the Greeks war of independence as they were able to capture it from the Turks. This painting was made as a way of celebrating the Greece victory and total independence from the Turks rule. Delacroix started producing romantic paintings after a trip in England, where he was able to interact with the works of other romantic painters like Thomas Lawrence and Richard Parkes. He started by creating lithographs and later on started making painting like, *the combat of Giaour and Hassan* and *the Woman with Parrot*. In these paintings, he was able to explore themes on violence and sensuality. The painting that accurately captured the theme of romance was *the Death of Sardanapalus*. This painting depicted the Assyrian king Sardanapalus watching his guards

killing his concubines, servants and animals after he gave them the order to do so. In this painting, Delacroix used color and exotic costumes to bring out the tragedy. Through his painting, Delacroix was able to bring out variety of themes like fantasy, tragedy and lust especially in the Death of Sardanapalus. As one of the images shows a nude woman struggling to save her life from the guards who are holding her in a sensual manner but still, wants to kill her.

Like Delacroix, Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes was also a romantic painter. He was from Spain, where he spent most of his life. His works were notable as he documented the Peninsula war while in Madrid and was able to come up with a master piece that was known as Desastres de la Guerra. The most famous of his paintings was the clothed and the nude maja which depicted the same woman in clothes and while nude. He however came up with other paintings that were said to be communicating shortcomings in the reign of Charles IV. This was captured in the Charles IV and his family. The was a painting of the royal family, most interpreters think that this was a social satire as it lacked visual diplomacy. Goya in this painting positioned the queen, Louisa in the middle as it was believed that in king Charles reign, she was the one with the real power. On the painting hanging on the background, shows Lot and his daughters which was meant to emphasis that corruption and decay truly existed in king Charles's palace. This was taken as a true representation as Goya was a close friend to the royal family.