

Expressionism and impressionism

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Expressionism and Impressionism Paul Cezanne's painting *The Bay from L'Estaque* is a post-impressionist painting presenting a landscape scene that looks over a golden-roofed village to a blue bay beyond and the far green hills on the other side of the water. The houses and fields are suggested in differing shades of gold and red with a small curl of white smoke, presented more like a scribble, coming from one of the chimneys. Although the houses are defined enough to tell what they are, they are not so defined that there is a clear line of separation between the homes and the fields. Likewise, the hills on the other side of the bay are merely suggested by their outward form, tending to adopt the same blue hues as was used in washing the sky. In keeping with the impressionist tradition, Cezanne was clearly trying to capture a sense of what this place looked like at this time of year under this light and convey an impression of the serene loveliness of the location. At the same time, though, he was working out the use of primitive forms in serious art that marked him as a post-impressionist painter and helped gain him the recognition of bridging the way for the later cubists.

Wheatfield with Cypresses by Vincent Van Gogh is an expressionist painting depicting two cypress trees standing in a field of wheat, just as the title suggests. The brightly lit landscape is covered by a swirling mass of clouds in a sky that seems eternally blue. The scene depicts a golden wheatfield interrupted by a set of wind-swept green bushes in its center to provide balance and a pair of flame-like cypresses standing proudly to one side. This is backed by small green foothills and then blue-tinged mountains rising to back the cypress trees. In the extreme foreground, a glimpse is given of a spring-green field filled with wild flowers in the bottom right corner. Another

vividly green bushy area surrounds the two cypress trees, providing a solid base to the narrow triangular trees as well as the first of a flowing succession of horizon lines leading the eye by steps up the height of the trees. This vivid green also works to highlight the black areas of the trees themselves that so fascinated the artist. It is full of hectic brushstrokes and heavy impasto that conveys a sense of the emotion of the artist. For example, his deep loneliness can be seen in the importance he placed upon pairing the various elements of the work. His restless energy can also be seen in the continuously curving lines of bushes, grasses, trees, hills, mountains and clouds. I love this painting because of its hopefulness, its energy and its expressive qualities.