

# Abstract Expressionsim

## Mark Rothko

Born in Dvinsk, Russia (now Daugavpils, Latvia) **Rothko** moved with his family to Portland, Oregon in 1913. His painting education was brief - he moved to New York to study under the artist **Max Weber** and then struck out on his own.

**Rothko** is known for his **abstract expressionism** paintings, but he moved through more traditional styles in his early career, including **Surrealist** paintings in the 1940s. In 1947 he embarked on the first of his large abstract '**colour-field** paintings, formalising their structure further in the 1950s. **Rothko** had huge success with large scale solo shows, but committed suicide in 1970.



Mark Rothko,  
Black on Maroon, 1959.



## Simon Schama on Rothko

"One morning in the spring of 1970, I went into the Tate Gallery and took a wrong, right turn and there they were, lying in wait. No it wasn't love at first site. Rothko had insisted that the lighting be kept almost pretentiously low. It was like going into the cinema, expectation in the dimness.

Something in there was throbbing steadily, pulsing like the inside of a body part, all crimson and purple. I felt I was being pulled through those black lines to some mysterious place in the universe.

**Rothko** said his paintings begin an unknown adventure into an unknown space. I wasn't sure where that was and whether I wanted to go. I only know I had no choice and that the destination might not exactly be a picnic, but I got it all wrong that morning in 1970. I thought a visit to the Seagram Paintings would be like a trip to the cemetery of abstraction - all dutiful reverence, a dead end.

Everything **Rothko** did to these paintings - the column-like forms suggested rather than drawn and the loose stainings - were all meant to make the surface ambiguous, porous, perhaps softly penetrable. A space that might be where we came from or where we will end up.

They're not meant to keep us out, but to embrace us; from an artist whose highest compliment was to call you a human being."

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Written Critique (Use FULL sentence structure, not one word answers)**

Use **6** elements & principles **throughout** the critique. **(Not all in one sentence)**

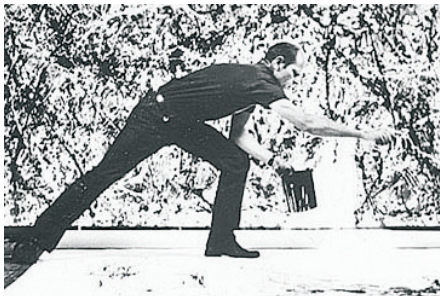
Space, Line, Shape, Form, Texture, Colour, Value, Contrast, Balance, Emphasis, Movement, Rhythm, Pattern, Variety, Unity, Proportion

Description:  
(what is it?)

Interpretation:  
(mood/feeling)

Analysis:  
(how does the  
artist use the  
e & p specifically)

Judgement:  
(artistic merit)



## Jackson Pollock

The **Abstract Expressionist** movement gained ground in America where painters after World War II totally rejected representational painting. **Jackson Pollock** would apply his paint freely to his huge canvasses, splattering and dripping the paint to mimic his own movements.



**K/U**

Connections: /2  
(use **6** e&ps &  
adjectives)

Clarity: /10  
(full sentence form)

**Jackson Pollock,  
Blue Poles, 1952.**

/12