



# Art History

## English Lessons



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# Gustav Klimt

Gustav Klimt was an influential Austrian painter born on July 14, 1862, in Vienna. He is renowned for his distinctive style and is considered a major figure of the Art Nouveau movement. Klimt's work is characterized by its ornate patterns, vibrant colors, and the use of gold leaf. His paintings were often controversial, challenging conventional norms and exploring themes of sexuality and identity. His primary subject was the female body.



He began his artistic career as a decorative painter. His early works included murals and ceilings for public buildings, which helped establish his reputation. However, it was his move towards more personal and symbolic paintings that marked a turning point in his career. His art often featured allegorical and erotic themes, reflecting his interest in exploring human emotions and the complexities of life.

One of Klimt's most famous works is *The Kiss* (1907-1908), a masterpiece that exemplifies his unique style. The painting depicts a couple embraced in a gold-covered kiss, with intricate patterns and a shimmering background. This work is celebrated for its sensuality, beauty, and innovative use of gold. This painting is thought to be an image of him and his companion for many years, Emilie Louise Flöge.

Klimt was also known for his portraits, which often depicted women in elaborate and detailed patterns. *Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I* (1907) is another notable example, showcasing his skill in combining realistic portraiture with decorative elements. The painting features Adele Bloch-Bauer, a wealthy patron, adorned in a golden gown and surrounded by intricate designs.

Throughout his career, Klimt was a central figure in the Vienna Secession movement, which sought to break away from traditional art forms and promote modern artistic expressions. The goals of the group was to provide exhibitions for unconventional young artists. The group's symbol was Pallas Athina, the greek goddess of wisdom, art and just causes. The Secession building, which you can still visit in Vienna, is considered the icon of the movement. Above its entrance there is the phrase "To every age its art. To every art its freedom" (Der Zeit ihre Kunst. Der Kunst ihre Freiheit). The Secession artists hoped to create a new style that owed nothing to historical influence.

His influence extended beyond his lifetime, shaping the development of modern art. He died on February 6, 1918, but his innovative techniques and distinctive style continue to be admired and studied. Klimt's legacy lives on through his captivating and pioneering contributions to the world of art.

"All art is erotic" Gustav Klimt



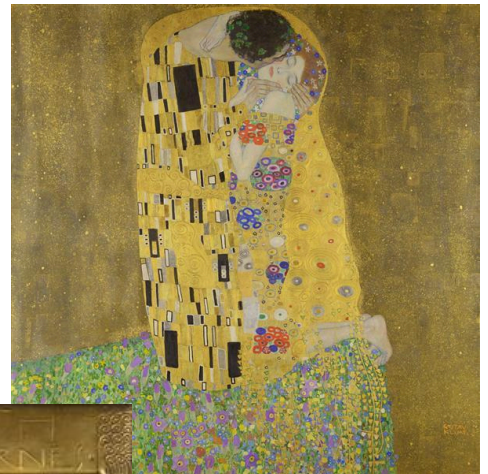
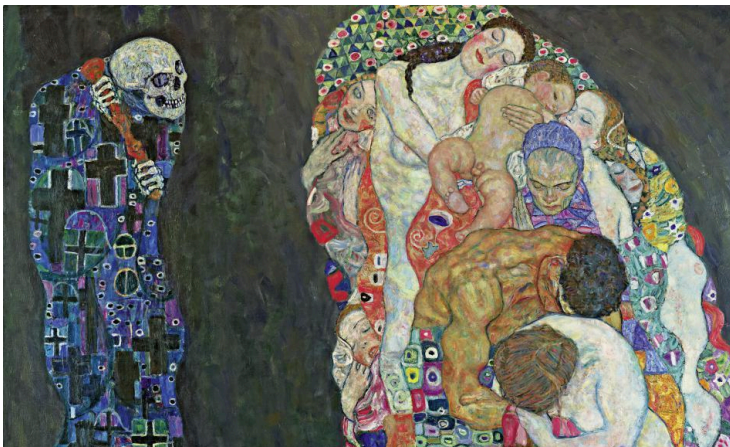


**After carefully reading the text, choose the correct answer:**

1. **What artistic movement is Gustav Klimt associated with?**
  - a) Impressionism
  - b) Art Nouveau
  - c) Cubism
  - d) Surrealism
2. **What was a significant feature of Klimt's artwork?**
  - a) Use of abstract shapes
  - b) Ornate patterns and gold leaf
  - c) Minimalist design
  - d) Black and white tones
3. **In which movement did Klimt play a central role?**
  - a) Vienna Secession
  - b) Fauvism
  - c) Neo-Classicism
  - d) Romanticism
4. **When did Gustav Klimt pass away?**
  - a) 1907
  - b) 1918
  - c) 1920
  - d) 1935



**Look at the paintings of Klimt below and answer the questions:**



**1 Which one do you like the most? Can you describe the painting briefly emphasizing the qualities that made it so appealing to you?**

**2 Are there elements that you dislike in these paintings or that you find surprising?**

**3 Do you like the style of Klimt in general? Why/ why not? What adjectives would you use to describe it?**

**4 If you could ask the artist any question, what would that be?**



**Now watch the video about Vienna modernism and write the four names of the artists that are mentioned**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iiPGOa8KU\\_E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iiPGOa8KU_E)

**If you are interested in learning more about the Vienna Secession movement you could watch this video as well:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uhKAF0itXSk>



**Answer Key for the text:**

1b) Art Nouveau, 2b) *The Kiss*, 3b) Ornate patterns and gold leaf, 4a) Vienna Secession, b) 1918

**Answer for the video:** Klimt, Schiele, Wagner, Moser



For more ideas on how to use masterpieces of Art to teach critical thinking, you can read my blog post here:

<https://www.ruthlessteacher.com/how-to-use-works-of-arts-to-teach-critical-thinking/>

And about the use of images in the language classroom, another of my blog posts here:

<https://www.ruthlessteacher.com/the-use-of-images-in-language-learning/>

I have made a pdf with a set of questions that I use a lot with my students when we study all types of images, you can download it here:

<https://www.ruthlessteacher.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Questions-about-images-in-class.pdf>





## Painter

[Gustav Klimt](#) was an Austrian symbolist painter, whose primary subject was the female body. His paintings, murals, and sketches are marked by a sensual eroticism, which is especially apparent in his pencil drawings. (information from Wikiart).

## Paintings

You can see Klimt's work online here:

<https://www.wikiart.org/en/gustav-klimt/all-works#!#filterName:all-paintings-chronologically,resultType:masonry>

The first painting is called "Death and life" (1910-15) and you can see it in the Leopold museum in Vienna

<https://www.leopoldmuseum.org/en/collection/highlights/146>

The second painting is called "The Kiss" (1907-8) and you can see it in Belvedere in Vienna

<https://www.belvedere.at/en/kiss-gustav-klimt>

The third painting is called "The tree of life" (1909). This is part of a larger frieze from the Stocklet Palace that was destroyed. You can see what is left in the Museum of Applied Arts in Vienna

<https://www.mak.at/en>

The fourth painting is called "Judith and the head of Holofernes" (1901) and you can see it in Belvedere in Vienna

<https://sammlung.belvedere.at/objects/3492/judith>

The fifth painting is called "Medicine" (1910-15). This used to be part of a bigger composition for the ceiling of the University of Vienna which was sadly destroyed

## Video

The video was made by the official Youtube channel of Vienna:

<https://www.youtube.com/@Vienna>



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**Major thanks to:** Canva, Wikipedia and Wikiart, Pixabay, Pexels, Google Fonts and all the museums that host the works of art.

For any questions you may have you can message me at [info@ruthlessteacher.com](mailto:info@ruthlessteacher.com)

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