



Art History

English Lessons



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Toulouse Lautrec

Toulouse Lautrec and the depiction of Parisian nightlife

Henri Toulouse-Lautrec, born on November 24, 1864, in Albi, France, is renowned for his vibrant and dynamic depictions of Parisian life during the late 19th century. Despite his short body due to a medical condition, his influence on the art world was great. He is best known for his posters and paintings that present the lively atmosphere of Parisian nightlife, including scenes from cabarets, theatres, and dance halls.

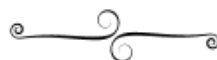
Lautrec's art is thought to be one with the Montmartre district of Paris, a bustling area known for its bohemian culture and entertainment venues. His work often featured performers, musicians, and dancers, reflecting the lively and often chaotic energy of the time. One of his most famous works is the poster for the Moulin Rouge, the famous Parisian cabaret, which shows the iconic can-can dancer La Goulue in a lively and exaggerated pose.



Toulouse-Lautrec was a student at the prestigious École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, where he developed his unique style. He was influenced by Impressionism but went beyond its techniques by focusing on bold colors and simplified forms. His use of vivid, often unnatural colors and strong lines made his work stand out and provided a new way to represent modern life.

His prints and posters were particularly notable for their graphic quality and ability to capture the essence of Parisian entertainment with a focus on the present and movement. Lautrec's work not only documented the culture of his time but also conveyed a deep empathy for the people he portrayed, from performers to everyday individuals.

Toulouse-Lautrec's life was marked by personal struggles, including health issues and alcoholism, which affected his later years. Despite these challenges, his artistic legacy remains significant. He passed away on September 9, 1901, but his work continues to be celebrated for its contribution to modern art and its vivid portrayal of a unique period in Parisian history.





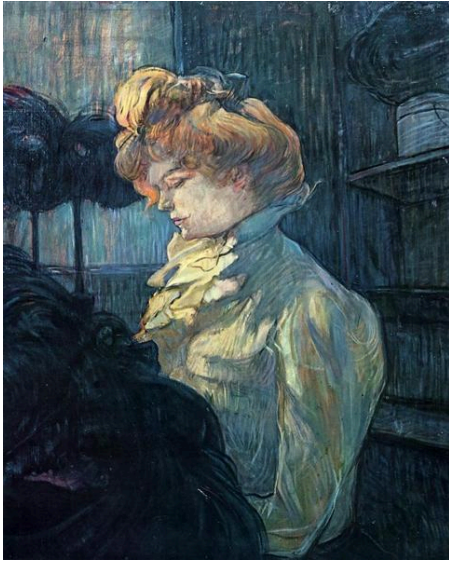
After carefully reading the text, choose the correct answer below:

- 1. What was Henri Toulouse-Lautrec best known for?**
 - a) Abstract sculptures
 - b) Vibrant posters and paintings of Parisian nightlife
 - c) Traditional landscape paintings
- 2. In which Parisian district did Lautrec often set his scenes?**
 - a) Le Marais
 - b) Montmartre
 - c) Saint-Germain-des-Prés
- 3. What is one of Lautrec's most famous works?**
 - a) The Starry Night
 - b) The Mona Lisa
 - c) The Moulin Rouge poster
- 4. Which artistic movement influenced Toulouse-Lautrec's work?**
 - a) Cubism
 - b) Impressionism
 - c) Surrealism
- 5. What distinctive style did Lautrec use in his art?**
 - a) Soft colors and detailed realism
 - b) Bold colors and simplified forms
 - c) Black and white sketches
- 6. Where did Lautrec study art?**
 - a) The Academy of Fine Arts in Florence
 - b) The École des Beaux-Arts in Paris
 - c) The Royal Academy of Arts in London
- 7. What aspect of Parisian life did Lautrec's art often show?**
 - a) Political events
 - b) Everyday activities in rural areas
 - c) Nightlife and entertainment
- 8. What personal struggles did Toulouse-Lautrec face?**
 - a) Financial problems and unemployment
 - b) Health issues and alcoholism
 - c) Artistic rivalry and criticism





Look at the paintings of Lautrec below and answer the questions that follow:



A) How do the paintings make you feel? Why do you think this is?

B) Do you like the style of Lautrec? Why/why not? Is there anything you find annoying?

C) Now focus on the last painting which is called “ At the Moulin Rouge, the dance”. Look at the painting for 1 minute and write down 6 things that you can notice. Focus on colours, shapes, objects, people.

1

2

3

4

5

6

D) Now look at the painting again for another minute trying to spot six more things to write down:

1

2

3

4

5

6

E) Was it more challenging or easier the second time? Did you find anything surprising or anything you hadn't noticed the first time?

F) If this painting was the beginning of a story you had to write, what would be the end of your story? Write the final paragraph:



Answers to the text:

1. b) Vibrant posters and paintings of Parisian nightlife
2. b) Montmartre
3. c) The Moulin Rouge poster
4. b) Impressionism
5. b) Bold colors and simplified forms
6. b) The École des Beaux-Arts in Paris
7. c) Nightlife and entertainment
8. b) Health issues and alcoholism



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

[Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec](#) (1864 – 1901) was a French painter, printmaker, draughtsman, caricaturist, and illustrator whose immersion in the colourful and theatrical life of Paris in the late 19th century allowed him to produce a collection of enticing, elegant, and provocative images of the modern, sometimes decadent, affairs of those times. **(information from Wikiart).**

Paintings

You can see Lautrec's work online here:

<https://www.wikiart.org/en/henri-de-toulouse-lautrec/all-works#!#filterName:all-paintings-chronologically,resultType:masonry>

The first painting is called "The Milliner" (1900) and you can see it in the museum of Toulouse Lautrec in Albi, his home town

The second painting is a poster called "Le divan Japonais" (1892-3) and you can see it in the National Library of France

The third painting is called "At the Moulin Rouge, the dance" (1890) and you can see it in Philadelphia museum of Art

<https://philamuseum.org/collection/object/82776>



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