



PAINTING OLD AGE: PICASSO

Pablo Ruiz y Picasso was born in Malaga, Spain, on October 2, 1881. He started painting when he was ten years old. In 1904 he moved to Paris, where he went through what is known now as his 'Blue Period'. During this time he used mainly different shades of blue and portrayed beggars¹, alcoholics, and prostitutes.

Fernande Oliver influenced the mood of his work from dark and gloomy blues to light and happy reds and pinks which led this period in time to be called the 'Rose Period'. At this time he

Painted many pictures of a circus that he visited often during his stay in Paris. In 1906, Picasso moved to Gosol, Spain, where he changed his style. His new works were influenced by Greek, Iberian, and African art. He began to use more geometrical figures in his artwork. Between 1908 and 1911 Picasso and George Braque painted landscape paintings in a new style which was termed 'cubism' by a critic who described the work as being made of 'little cubes'. They created this style by breaking down and analyzing objects, using mainly browns and other muddy colours. In 1912, Picasso began to paste paper and pieces of oilcloth to his paintings and then paint either on them or around them. These were his first collages. This technique is called synthetic cubism and is a more decorative, colourful style of art.

Many of the pictures painted during this period have a surrealist feel² to them. Later in the 1920s he painted neoclassical pictures of women and pictures inspired by Greek mythology. After World War II Picasso moved towards more sombre³ death-like pictures. He died on April 8, 1973.



GLOSSARY

- 1 mendicants
- 2 sensation
- 3 dark

HOW TO DESCRIBE A PAINTING

To describe a painting you need some important technical terms. Here is a useful list.

- **Background:** the surface against which objects are seen.
- **Composition:** the combination of elements in a painting that provides structure to the scene.
- **Focal point:** the area in a pictorial composition to which the eye returns most naturally.
- **Foreground:** the part of a picture depicted as nearest to the viewer.
- **Horizon line:** the line where sky and earth seem to meet.
- **Landscape:** a view of natural scenery.
- **Linear perspective:** real or suggested lines converging on a vanishing point on the horizon line.
- **Middle ground:** the part of a picture depicted as the middle to the viewer.
- **Outline:** an imaginary line which marks the boundary of an object or figure.
- **Self-portrait:** an image of the artist, especially one showing the face.
- **Still life:** a picture of inanimate objects.
- **Warm colour:** a colour which suggests sensations of warmth, such as red or yellow.



Pablo Picasso, The Old Guitarist (1903), The Art Institute, Chicago.

PAINTING ANALYSIS

ACTIVITIES



● Look at the painting *The Old Guitarist* and answer the following questions.

- ① Where is the old man sitting?
- ② What does he look like?
- ③ How is his body represented?
- ④ In this painting there is a contrast between the rigid figure of the old man and the round shape of the guitar. What do you think this contrast may suggest?
- ⑤ What is the dominant colour?
- ⑥ How would you define this colour? Choose among the following adjectives: light – pale – dark – oppressive – bright.
- ⑦ How would you define the general atmosphere depicted in this painting?
- ⑧ What feelings does the painter show towards the poor man? Choose among the following: tenderness – cruelty – solidarity – concern – indifference – compassion – sympathy – love.

SPEAKING

● How is old age represented in this painting?