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# Understanding Standards

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**Support pack for National course assessment**

**C805 77**

**Art and Design (Advanced Higher):  
Expressive Portfolio evidence**

**Identifier:** Isolation

**This pack contains candidate evidence.  
It must be kept securely.**

This edition: October 2019

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**Please note:**

The materials in this pack were used as part of the (subject) Understanding Standards event in (September 2019).

# Overview

## Purpose

Understanding Standards packs are intended to provide teachers, lecturers and assessors with a clear understanding of the marks that have been awarded to specific examples of candidate evidence and the reasons why these have been awarded. They may be used in centres:

- ◆ to prepare for the assessment of the relevant course component
- ◆ as benchmarks to help assessors judge the evidence produced by their own candidates
- ◆ for training purposes

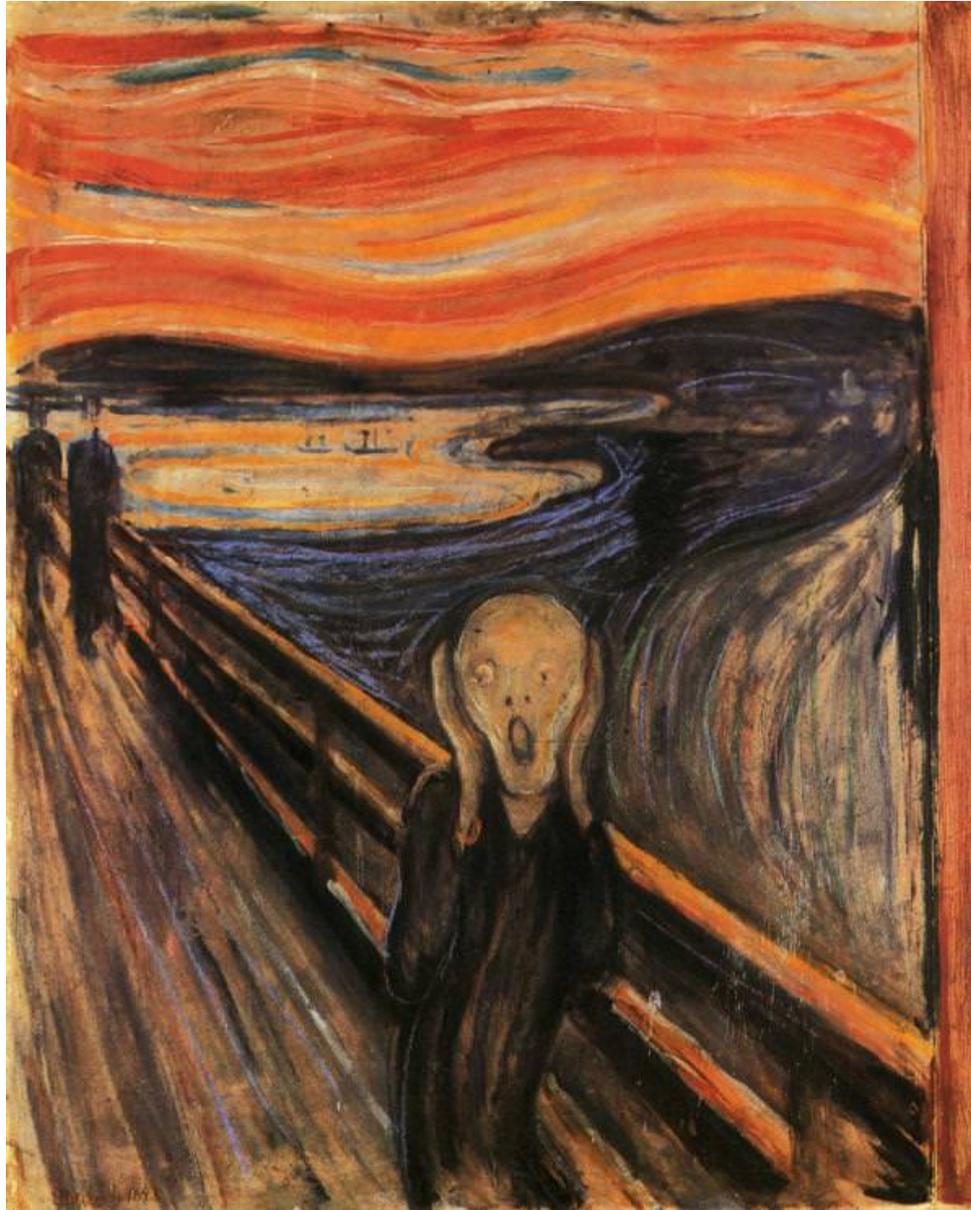
The commentary and candidate evidence in this pack should be read in conjunction with the relevant coursework assessment task and the marking instructions.

# Candidate evidence – contextual analysis

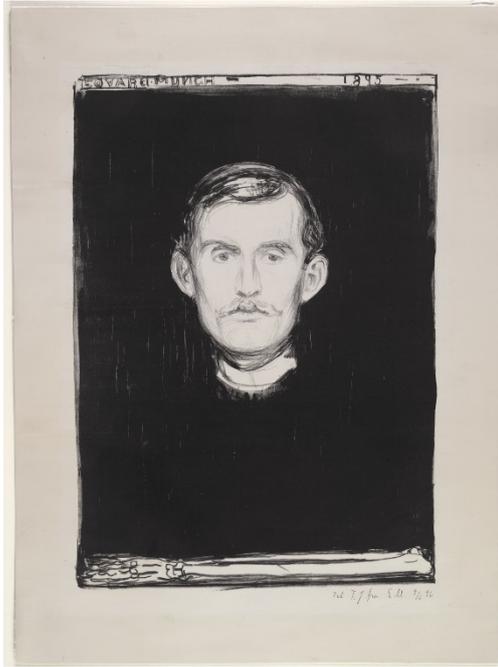
Further expressive portfolio evidence for this candidate can be found here:

<https://www.understandingstandards.org.uk/Subjects/ArtandDesign/AdvancedHigher/ExpressivePortfolio>

**Advanced Higher Expressive Art Contextual  
Analysis**



**The Scream by Edvard Munch:  
an expression of anxiety and despair**

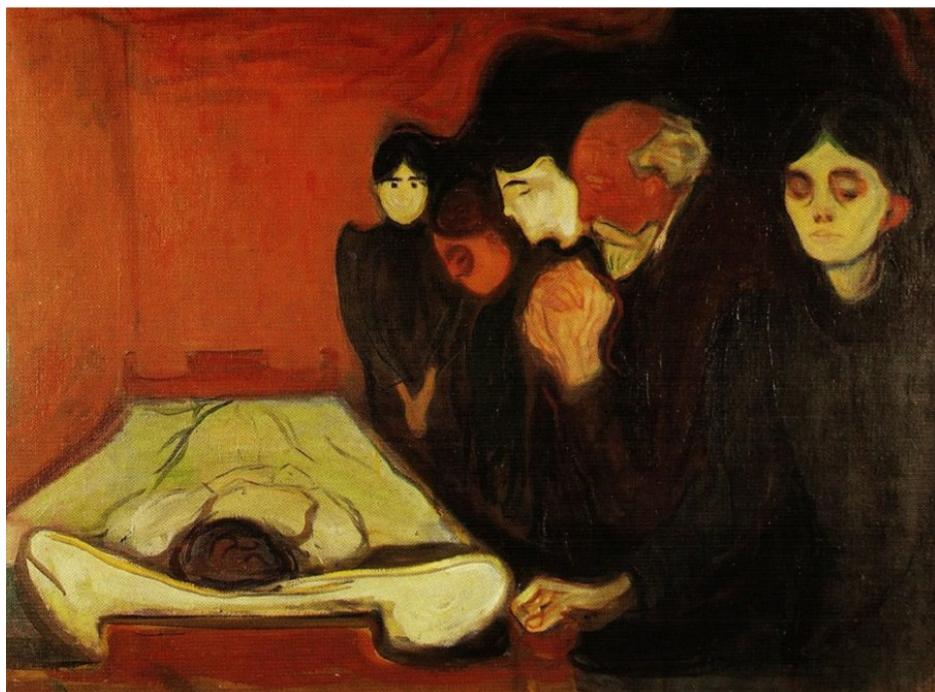


Self Portrait (1895) by Edvard Munch

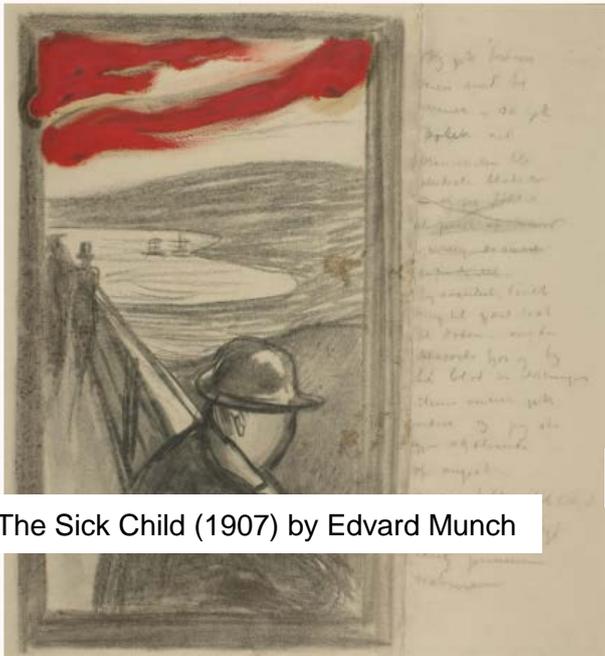
Edvard Munch was born in Løten, Norway. Famous for his intensely emotional and vivid artwork, *The Scream* is his most well-known piece. He expressed his pain and mental illness through his art.

Munch was greatly influenced by the tragic life surrounding him and expressed his torment and pain through his art. His mother dies when he was only five years old, following with the death of his favourite sister when he was thirteen. One of his sisters was also hospitalised for insanity. He grew up in poverty, surrounded by sickness. He himself was a sickly boy and always battled with mental illness. Munch used all this tragedy to form the basis of his art.

These events influenced the scenes and themes of his pieces, focusing on death, pain and anxiety. His life was so painful, allowing him to channel his pain into his art, creating pieces with powerful emotional intensity. The influence can often be seen in his artwork as he uses his family as the subject matter and paints scenes of them dying.



By the Deathbed (1896) by Edvard Munch



The Sick Child (1907) by Edvard Munch

This history of tragedy is expressed in much of his work, but in particular in The Scream – it is the perfect example of his mental illness. Anxiety and his mental state can be seen in the piece straight away by using the expression of a scream, the distorted figure also suggests an unsettled mind. His violent use of red is likely to be influenced by the tragedy he

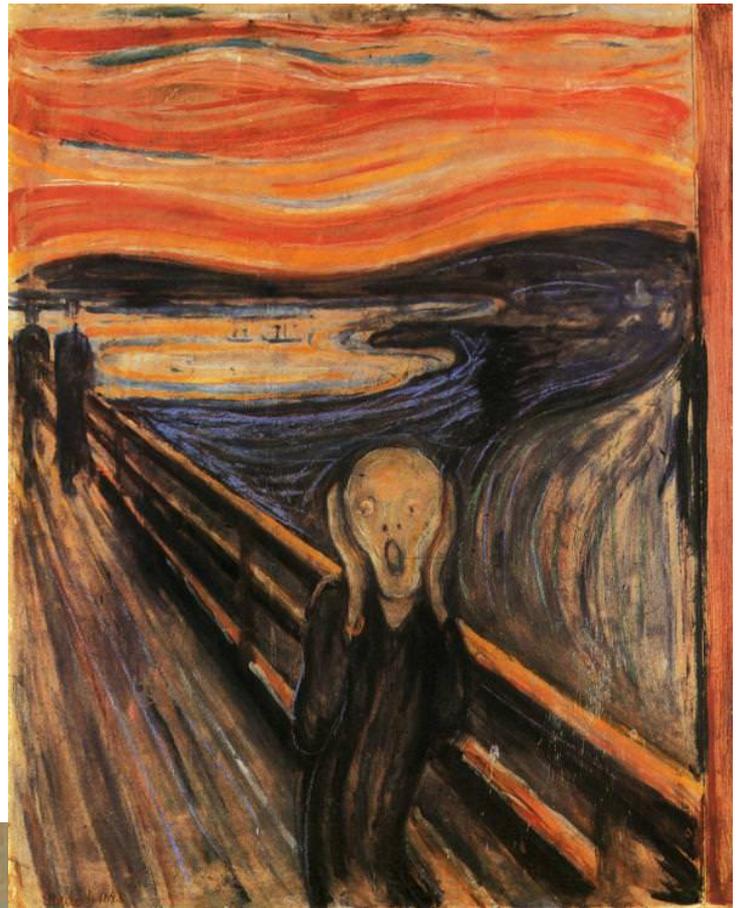
By the eathbed (1915) by Edvard Munch  
disturbed mind due to the tragedy.

Munch knew the importance of his tragic life for influencing his work: 'My fear is

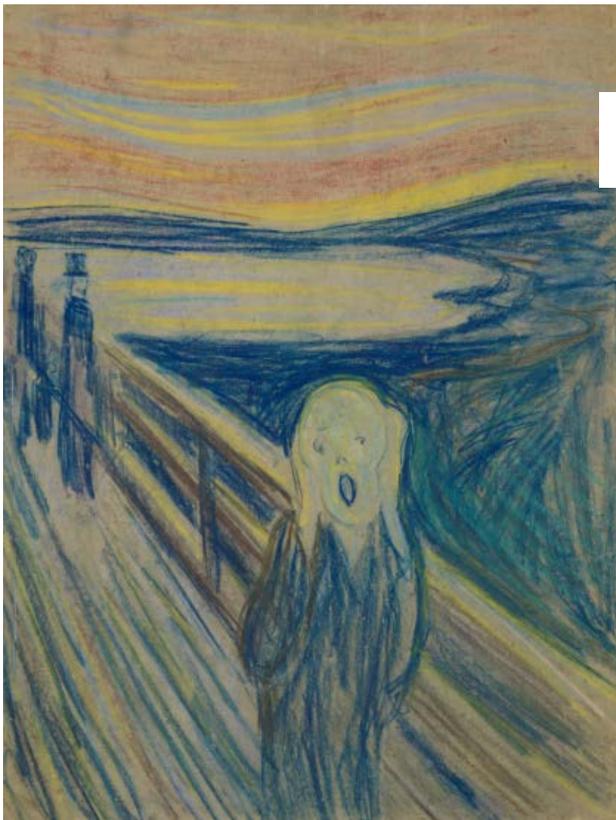
necessary to me, as is my illness', he once wrote. 'Without anxiety and illness, I am a ship without a rudder ... My sufferings are part of my self and my art. They are indistinguishable from me, and their destruction would destroy my art.

Sketch for Despair from 1992  
which has the same background  
and a similar composition to The  
Scream

The Scream exists in different forms; the most well-known is the 1893 tempera, oil and pastel on cardboard. The paint has been applied roughly showing brushstrokes, this creates a messier, unperfected look which showcases the chaotic emotion of the piece. All the swirling is a common techniques he uses in his work. It helps show his personal style and emotion, it is free-flowing and overwhelming. The combination of rough brushstrokes and the swirling technique makes the piece seem unsettling and chaotic which gets across feelings of panic and anxiety. This is successful as he is trying to communicate mental illness in the artwork.



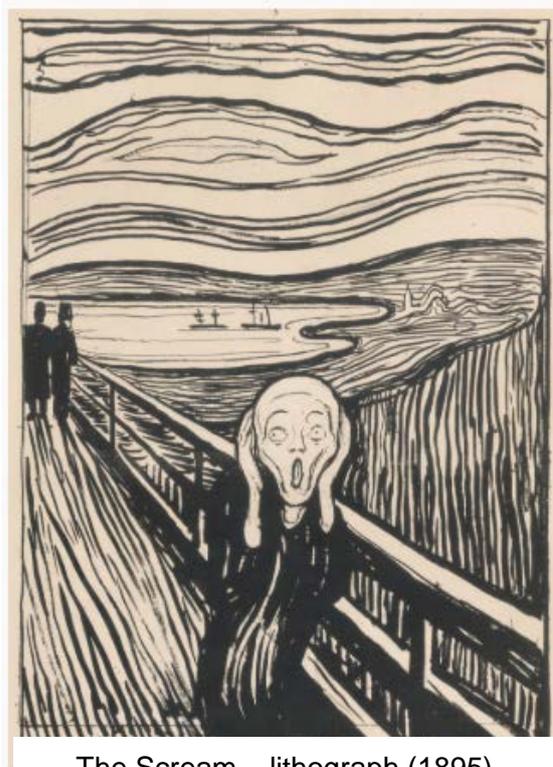
The Scream – tempera, oil and pastel on cardboard (1893)



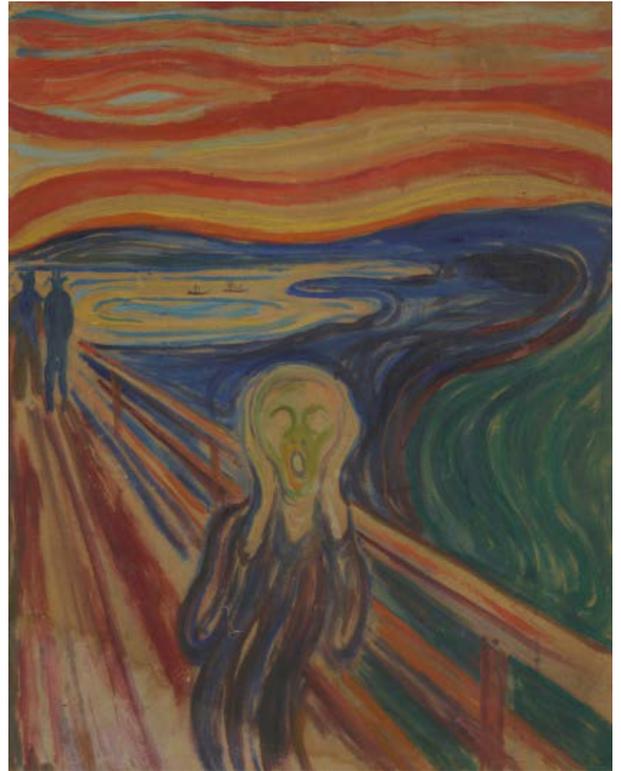
The Scream – pastel on paper (1893)



The Scream – lithograph (1895)



The Scream – lithograph (1895)



The Scream – tempera and oil on paper (1910)

The composition of the scream is well thought out. The foreground is made up of the screaming figure and the focal point is the figure's distorted face. Attention is drawn to the face by the use of light colours which contrast to the dark body and surrounding background, pushing the face forward to stand out. The figure is given a simplified distorted form, by nothing being over-detailed. This creates more focus on the raw emotion of the scream rather than the intricate details. Having the face as the focal point forces the viewer to experience the intense expression on the face, giving a large unnerving impact, and communicating emotions of anxiety to the viewer. The flowing lines connecting with the face enable the eye to be easily led around the painting – following the curves and up the bridge. Balance is created by having the figure in the foreground, the two men on the left, and a powerful dark curve in the upper right.

Line is used very strongly by Munch with both straight and curved lines. The bold curvy lines create a sense of chaos and energy and flow directly into the figure and body of the person. This makes the figure distorted and almost part of the red sky. To contrast this, the straight lines seem to be apart from the figure and the crazy sky. They move away until they disappear creating a strong sense of perspective; this combined with the two men on the bridge and the balance in the artwork suggests the normality of the world outside mental illness.

The swirling lines are typical of Munch and make his work unique and easy to identify. The use of the curves and swirls in *The Scream* create a sense of movement which make it distinct from other artworks. Like seeing a wave, the curves appear to be carrying the scream from the mouth of the figure all the way up and around the piece. This makes it feel like the scream is everywhere and so it creates a really chaotic, overwhelming atmosphere to the piece, as if there is no escape. This helps give the piece a massive impact as it is truly consuming and horrifying to see the scream almost bursting out of the painting. Clearly this works in conveying the anxiety felt by Munch himself as the piece feels very unsettling.

Colour is often used expressively. The greys, blues and blacks of the land and water are colours often associated with a sombre, sad mood. The figure is surrounded by the darkness and shadow with the dark blue and black around him. Light is positioned beside the two men which suggests this figure can't reach the light. This adds to the portrayal of mental illness in the piece and highlights the darkness and isolation of the figure. The sky is a violent sunset – the reds and oranges create a mood of panic as they are colours associated with blood, anger, hell and passion. Munch has used these features together to create a striking contrast, allowing the red sky to stand out and scream at the viewer as it conveys such violent and vivid emotions of terror, creating a frenzied mood. Although this painting is based on a scene from Munch's own memory, the figure bears no resemblance to him. Some people believe it is his sister, since she was being hospitalised nearby for manic depression. However, the figure doesn't exactly look like a woman, it doesn't look like anything but a gaunt foetal creature. It bears no personality of gender, just a distorted face and terrifying scream. The point of this could be to depersonalise the figure, allowing it to be anyone, therefore showing that anyone and everyone can undergo emotional suffering.

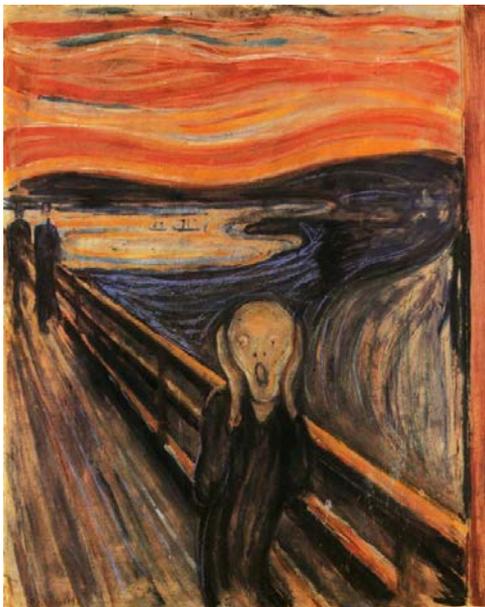
The expression itself naturally is a key feature of *The Scream* – had the face been expressionless, it could have been just a picture of a beautiful sunset. The dictionary definition of 'to scream' is: 'To scream is to utter a loud, piercing cry, especially of pain, fear, anger, or excitement.' It is an action associated with an extremely intense emotion, and automatically you can think of the sound connected with it. The curving lines also appear like a sound wave which helps the sound come to life for the viewer.

Since the figure is stripped of personal detail, all there is to focus on is the screaming expression. Its unique simplicity and portrayal of sound makes the scream feel very real and this gives the piece a lot of dramatic visual impact, therefore, allowing a communication of intense emotion.

By putting so much life and emotions into his work, his artwork is like an autobiography. It is incredibly successful in *The Scream* as the emotions come off so strongly, leaving the viewer feeling anxious themselves. This is the point of communicating emotion. His work influenced the Expressionist movement which is all about representing emotional responses.

Munch was very much influenced by the Post-Impressionist movement. Post-Impressionists, such as Van Gogh and Gauguin had learned to use dabs of colour creating light and shadows from Impressionism. They expanded their artwork by developing their own style, trying new subjects, techniques and shapes. The idea was expressing their thoughts and emotions through art (since the camera had been invented, realism was no longer needed). It can be seen that Munch was influenced by Post-Impressionism in his use of bold colour to emphasize mood and to represent emotion. Anyone could tell a Munch painting by the swirling colour he uses.

Key features of Post-Impressionism are the use of vivid, unnatural colours, visible brushstrokes, and symbolism. We see all of these features in Munch's work and in *The Scream*. Munch uses the bright reds and dark blues in order to help evoke the emotion rather than paint a realistic picture. His brushstrokes are not delicate, allowing passion and movement to come into the piece. Many of his pieces use symbolism with underlying meaning.



The Scream (1893) by Edvard Munch



Starry Night (1889) by Vincent Van Gogh

It is apparent that Munch was heavily influenced by the Post-Impressionists. Comparing *Starry Night* by Van Gogh to *The Scream* shows a similar swirling technique in the sky, close examination even shows that there is a big swirl from the left of *Starry Night*, a similar shape exists from the right of *The Scream*. Van Gogh uses very vivid dabs of paint, showing brushstrokes and Munch adopts this free-flowing brush technique. Both use extremely bright colours although the colour palettes are different. The use of different colours, which is as it should be to reflect the different mood and emotion they want to get across. Both these artworks are based on an event in each artist's life and depict human interactions with nature. *Starry Night* came from Van Gogh's imagination as it wasn't even night-time when he painted it. This influences the idea around Munch's work that art should come from inside the artist, not be a depiction of the external world.

The influence of Post-Impressionism on Munch is clearly very important as the colour proves such a big part in the success of the piece. This applied generally for all of his work, none of it is realistic but focuses on colour being used to create mood and emotion and communicate his mental illness.

Munch was influenced by Post-Impressionist artists such as Van Gogh, but his work was constantly pushing the boundaries of experimentation further. He combined media like oil paint and crayon and used cardboard. He also developed lots of simple etchings and woodcuts. His constant use of bold colour and strong lines inspired the Expressionist movement to a great extent.

## **Sources:**

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Edvard Munch

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Image of Starry Night by Van Gogh

[https://www.moma.org/learn/moma\\_learning/vincent-van-gogh-the-starry-night-1889/](https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/vincent-van-gogh-the-starry-night-1889/)

**Word Count – 1834**