

















## EMOTIONS AND EMBODIMENT

The most worthy achievements and visionary enterprises rest on the actions of passionate individuals. But history shows that “the sleep of reason produces monsters.”

As embodied individuals our animal drives and raw emotions loom large. Higher than the beasts, we do not live only in the now. We anticipate our fortune and our suffering. We are aware of our emotions and what triggers them, but not entirely so. Sometimes, we seem unable to rein them in until after the fact. The biological triggers for our passions are mostly involuntary. They can break through to the surface quite unannounced.

## ARTWORK ACTIVITY

Students work in threes. They are provided with color reproductions of the various artworks. They are asked collectively to identify and write down the emotions evoked by the various artworks. After about 10 minutes the whole class reconvenes. The images are projected on the wall and individual students are called upon to share their findings on a randomly chosen artwork. The teacher makes a cumulative master list on the whiteboard of all the emotions identified.

**Eminent neuroscientist, Antonio Damasio (2003: 39-45) makes a distinction between the “primary emotions,” such as fear, anger, disgust and happiness, and the “social emotions,” such as sympathy, embarrassment and shame. He also identifies “background emotions,” which include: edginess, tranquility and enthusiasm.**

**Damasio, Antonio (2003) *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow and the Feeling Brain*. Harcourt. Orlando, FL.**

Students should make a table with three column headers: “Primary,” “Social” and “Background.” They should:

- Place Damasio’s examples in the correct column.
- Draw a line across the table then attempt to place the emotions listed on the whiteboard from the artwork activity in the appropriate column.
- Draw a second line and write in the appropriate column any other important emotions that are missing.

**Are background emotions similar to moods? Are background emotions the same as personality predispositions?**

## LIST OF ARTWORKS

### 1. Six paintings by Edvard Munch from the Nasjonalgalleriat, Oslo:

*Puberty* (1894-95) Oil on canvas

*Jealousy* (1896) Lithograph

*Madonna* (1894-95) Oil on canvas.

*Vampire* (1893-94) Oil on canvas.

*The Scream* (1893) Oil, tempera, and pastel on cardboard.

*Ashes* 1894. Oil on canvas

### 2. Two marble sculptures by Gianlorenzo Bernini:

*Ecstasy of St. Teresa* (1647-52) in Santa Maria della Vittoria, Rome.

*Damned soul* (1619) Spanish embassy, Palazzo di Spagna, Rome.

### 3. Two oil paintings by Max Beckmann:

*The Night* (1918-19) Kunstsammlung Düsseldorf, Germany.

*Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery* (1917) St. Louis Art Museum.

### 4. Three monumental color field oil paintings by Mark Rothko (1903-1970): *Untitled, Light Red Over Black* and *Untitled*.

“I’m not an abstractionist. I’m not interested in the relationship of color or form or anything else. I’m interested only in expressing basic human emotions: tragedy, ecstasy, doom, and so on.”

### 5. Two oil paintings by Francis Bacon:

*Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion (Central panel of triptych)* (1944) oil on board. Tate Britain.

*Study after Velazquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X* (1953) Oil on canvas. Des Moines Art Center, Iowa.

### 6. Details from three of the frescoes in the Cappella Brancacci, Santa Maria del Carmine, Florence by Masaccio (1424-28)

*Expulsion from the Garden of Eden* (1424-28)

*The Distribution of Alms and the Death of Ananias*

*The Baptism of the Neophytes*