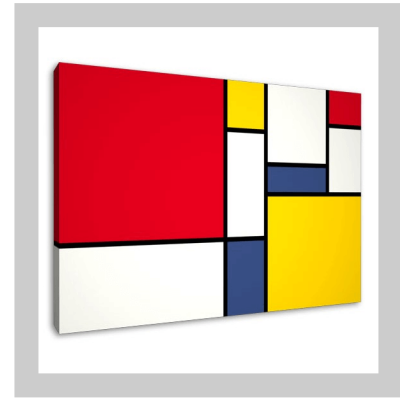


Name _____

Date _____

Piet Mondrian

Like so many other artists of his generation, Piet Mondrian was obsessed with making sense of an increasingly complicated, even labyrinthine, world. Born in the Netherlands in 1872, Mondrian traveled extensively as a young artist before returning to his home country before the outbreak of World War I. During the war years, he met other Dutch artists (notably Theo van Doesburg) who, like him, were appalled by the war and the mechanization of man. Together, they began reimagining art's role in the world. The resulting De Stijl (Dutch for "the style") movement was determined to create a new culture through art, one directed at the universal rather than the individual.



Mondrian's focus was singular: to free art (and, by extension, the world) from the oppression of subjectivity. In his view, art was the interplay of an artist and a subjective observer. This meant that a viewer could largely dictate what a work of art meant and what it was. And without total equality of viewers, not to mention total equality between visionary and viewer, there could be no equality in the world. Thus, Mondrian came up with a new art form: Only primary colors would be used to fill in solid geometric shapes and lines, creating a completely abstract work that could be interpreted by everyone in exactly the same way. Without depicting reality, Mondrian's art would be devoid of any personal experiences or narratives. All of us, in theory, could look at the canvas and see the shapes and colors as the artist intended. Through the simple forms, Mondrian believed he could get closer to expressing real truth through what he called the most "basic forms of beauty."

If this sounds a bit like Fascism, that's because it is. It is a Fascist ideal of art: complete uniformity and objectivity. Thus, it is hard not to feel that Mondrian missed something about art. All art is widely subjective. There is no way of knowing what personal experience, what memory, what scars a person might bring to the art gallery. For God's sake, most of us cannot look at something as ubiquitous as a cloud without disagreement. I might look and see nothing more than a collection of gases, while you might look and see your favorite childhood stuffed animal, or the faces of Mount Rushmore. A yellow square with black lines is no less open to interpretation. Yet despite my obvious reluctance to embrace Mondrian's manifesto, it is impossible not to be overwhelmed by the complex simplicity—a true oxymoron—of his remarkable work. Though I may not see what is intended in his work, I can still be moved by what I see or *think* I see.

- 1) As used in paragraph 1, the word **labyrinthine** most nearly means?
- A. overly complex
 - B. completely trouble
 - C. utterly horrifying
 - D. rigidly strict
 - E. pleasantly surprising
- 2) It can be inferred from the passage that the De Stijl artists saw a correlation between
- A. World War I and objective art
 - B. art and culture
 - C. subjectivity and geometry
 - D. equality and World War I
 - E. truth and aesthetics
- 3) As used in paragraph 1, the word **appalled** belongs to which of the following word groups?
- A. bombarded, assaulted, attacked
 - B. ameliorated, improved, augmented
 - C. shocked, disgusted, horrified
 - D. overwhelmed, dumbfounded, puzzled
 - E. disappointed, upset, downcast
- 4) According to the author, Mondrian helped create the De Stijl movement as a reaction to
- I. World War I
 - II. the mechanization of man
 - III. objectivity in art
- A. I only
 - B. II only
 - C. I and II only
 - D. II and III only
 - E. I, II, and III

- 5) According to the author, Mondrian was all of the following EXCEPT
- A. a Dutch painter
 - B. a founder of the De Stijl movement
 - C. interested in objectivity
 - D. a believer in Fascism
 - E. interested in equality
- 6) Which of the following best describes the function of paragraph 3?
- A. It introduces the author's principal argument about Mondrian.
 - B. It explores a metaphor about Mondrian's work.
 - C. It provides an important detail about Mondrian's life
 - D. It concludes the story of Mondrian's art and life.
 - E. It anticipates a possible question a reader might have about Mondrian.
- 7) On which of the following statements would the author and Mondrian most likely agree?
- A. Subjectivity in art has created inequality in the world.
 - B. The De Stijl ideas are rooted primarily in Fascism.
 - C. There is no true objectivity in anything, including art.
 - D. Primary colors and geometric shapes are impossible to misinterpret.
 - E. Viewing art can be a largely subjective experience.
- 8) The discussion of clouds in the third paragraph serves to
- A. Exemplify a problem with Mondrian's view.
 - B. Inform the reader about an aspect of Mondrian's art.
 - C. Introduce an example of a specific work by Mondrian.
 - D. Describe how some have interpreted Mondrian's work.
 - E. Serve as a metaphor for a perceived problem in the world.

9) Based on its use in the final paragraph, it can be inferred that which of the following is an **Oxymoron**?

- A. soundless rage
- B. pitiful love
- C. anxious apprehension
- D. tedious work
- E. hasty patience

10) Explain in your own words why the author refers to Mondrian's art style as "fascist."

Answers and Explanations

1) A

Core Standard: **Craft and Structure**

Labyrinthine (*adjective*): confusing and intricate

In the first paragraph, the author states that “Mondrian was obsessed with making sense of an increasingly complicated, even *labyrinthine*, world.” The fact that labyrinthine is mentioned after the adverb “even” and the adjective “complicated” implies that labyrinthine is related in meaning to complicate. Even is used to emphasize something surprising or extreme, so it follows that labyrinthine would mean overly complicated or *overly complex*. Thus, choice **(A)** is correct.

Though the first paragraph does describe some *terrible* actions, notably World War I, it does not suggest that the “world” as a whole was terrible. Rather, it states that the world was becoming “increasingly complicated, even labyrinthine.” Thus, labyrinthine has nothing to do with terrible, making choice **(B)** incorrect.

Though the first paragraph does describe some *horrifying* actions, notably World War I, it does not suggest that the “world” as a whole was horrifying. Rather, it states that the world was becoming “increasingly complicated, even labyrinthine.” Thus, labyrinthine has nothing to do with horrifying, making choice **(C)** incorrect.

In the first paragraph, the author states that “Mondrian was obsessed with making sense of an increasingly complicated, even labyrinthine, world.” The author does not imply that the world was growing increasingly *strict*, though, as complicated and strict are not synonyms or near synonyms. Thus, choice **(D)** is incorrect.

The first paragraph describes Mondrian as seeing the world as “complicated, even labyrinthine.” It does not describe any aspect of Mondrian’s world in any positive terms, meaning it would not make sense for labyrinthine to relate to *pleasantly surprising*. Thus, choice **(E)** is incorrect.

2) B

Core Standard: **Key Ideas and Details**

In the end of the first paragraph, the passage states that the De Stijl movement “was determined to create a new culture through art.” The passage goes on to state that Mondrian, a member of the De Stijl, had a goal of freeing art “and, by extension, the world.” Since they thought that a new culture could be created through art, it is clear the De Stijl artists saw a connection between art and culture, making choice **(B)** correct.

The passage implies that the De Stijl movement arose in part because of World War I and that the movement had a goal of creating objectivity in art. However, it does not imply that the De Stijl artists saw a connection between the war and objective art forms, as objective art was their goal. Thus, choice **(A)** is incorrect.

Though Mondrian worked primarily with geometric shapes in an effort to create objective art, the passage does not imply that he (or any of the other De Stijl artists) saw a connection between subjectivity and geometry. Therefore, choice **(C)** is incorrect.

The passage implies that the De Stijl artists were upset about World War I. It also implies that they believed the world did not have equality, as they made a goal of creating a new art form to lead to equality. Thus, the passage might imply that the De Stijl artists saw a connection or correlation between the war and the lack of equality, but it certainly does not imply that they saw a correlation between the war and equality. Thus, choice **(D)** is incorrect.

Though Mondrian’s goal was to get at “real truth” through the “basic forms of beauty,” the passage does not imply that all De Stijl artists saw a connection between truth and aesthetics. Rather, it only implies that one artist of the movement, Mondrian, thought he could create a connection between truth and aesthetics. Therefore, choice **(E)** is incorrect.

3) C

Core Standard: **Craft and Structure**

Appalled (*verb*): greatly dismayed or horrified

In the first paragraph, the author states that Mondrian and other Dutch artists “were *appalled* by the war and the mechanization of man” and that, as a result, “they began reimagining art’s role in the world.” This led to an effort to “create a new culture through art.” One would not make a new culture if the current culture were good, so it would stand to reason that the artists were not happy with the state of the world and especially the war. Thus, choice **(C)** is correct: *appalled* is most similar to *shocked*, *disgusted*, and *horrified*, all of which would likewise imply that the artists did not like the war.

Though *appalled* is used to refer to the De Stijl artists’ responses to World War I, the passage does not imply that the artists participated in the war. As such, *appalled* has nothing to do with words relating to war such as *bombarded*, *assaulted*, or *attacked*. Therefore, choice **(A)** is incorrect.

The passage implies that the De Stijl artists did not like the state of the world and sought to create a new culture as a result. *Appalled* is used to refer to the artists’ responses to the world around them, meaning it would not make sense to imply that they felt the world was improving. As such, words such as *ameliorated*, *improved*, and *augmented*, all of which imply something changing for the better, do not have related meanings to *appalled*. Therefore, choice **(B)** is incorrect.

Though the passage makes clear that the world the De Stijl artists lived in was “complicated,” *appalled* is used to describe their responses or views of World War I. Thus, *appalled* has no relationship to words that imply confusion such as *overwhelmed*, *dumbfounded*, or *puzzled*. Therefore, choice **(D)** is incorrect.

Though the passage implies that the De Stijl artists were *upset* by World War I, it goes farther. If one is merely *upset*, *disappointed*, or *downcast*, one likely merely stays sad. The De Stijl artists, instead, were so *upset* that they attempted to redefine and reinvent culture. Thus, they must have been extremely *upset*, meaning *appalled* (which is used to describe the artists’ reactions to the war) must belong to a group of words that is more extreme in meaning than that presented by choice **(E)**.

4) C

Core Standard: **Key Ideas and Details**

In the first paragraph, the author traces the origins of the De Stijl movement and states that Mondrian and other Dutch artists “were appalled by the war and the mechanization of man.” The war was World War I, which had broken out and trapped Mondrian in the Netherlands. Because they were appalled by the war and the mechanization of man, “they began reimagining art’s role in the world” and created the De Stijl movement. Using this information, we can understand that Mondrian helped create the De Stijl movement as a reaction to World War I and the mechanization of man. This supports **options (I) and (II)**.

Mondrian and other Dutch artists' goal was to create objectivity in art, but De Stijl itself was not a reaction to objectivity, though it could be argued it was a reaction to subjectivity in art. This eliminates **option (III)**.

Therefore **(C)** is correct.

5) D

Core Standard: **Key Ideas and Details**

Each of the answer choices is mentioned in the passage, but the passage never states that Mondrian was himself a believer in Fascism. Rather, in the third paragraph, the author calls Mondrian’s idea “a Fascist ideal of art.” This suggests that the author thinks Mondrian’s art was “a bit like Fascism,” but it does not imply that Mondrian himself was a Fascist. Therefore, choice **(D)** is correct, as it provides the only fact about Mondrian not mentioned in the passage.

The passage makes it clear that Mondrian was a Dutch painter. It states in the first paragraph that he was “born in the Netherlands,” making him Dutch. In the second paragraph, the author describes Mondrian’s new art, art that involved “geometric shapes and lines” and states that “all of us, in theory, could look at the canvas.” These imply that Mondrian painted on a canvas, and, since the question asks for the statement that the passage does not make clear, choice **(A)** is incorrect.

The first paragraph makes it clear that Mondrian and the “other Dutch artists” he met during the war “began reimagining art’s role in the world” which resulted in the De Stijl movement. Thus, it is clear Mondrian helped found the movement. Because the question asks for the statement not supported by the passage, choice **(B)** is incorrect. The second paragraph states that Mondrian wanted “to free art from the oppression of subjectivity,” and the third paragraph makes it clear his goal was “complete uniformity and objectivity.” Thus, it is clear that Mondrian was interested in objectivity. Because the question asks for the statement not supported by the passage, choice **(C)** is incorrect.

The second paragraph states that Mondrian believed that existing art allowed for no “equality of viewers” and believed that, without that equality, “there could be no equality in the world.” In an effort to create equality in the world, Mondrian created his new art form. Thus, it is clear Mondrian was interested in equality. Because the question asks for the statement not supported by the passage, choice **(E)** is incorrect.

6) A

Core Standard: **Key Ideas and Details**

The third paragraph steps away from the biographical details of Mondrian's life and an objective look at his theories on art. Instead, the author introduces his or her own viewpoint on the subject, namely that "Mondrian missed something about art." The author admits his or her "obvious reluctance to embrace Mondrian's manifesto" yet also suggests that Mondrian's work is "remarkable" and, thus, worth discussing. Thus, the third paragraph is primarily used to introduce the author's viewpoint and argument, so choice **(A)** is correct.

Though the third paragraph does make a metaphor concerning clouds, that metaphor is used to suggest that nothing in life can be viewed completely objectively. It is not, thus, a metaphor specifically about Mondrian's work, so the third paragraph's function is not primarily to explore said metaphor. Thus, choice **(B)** is incorrect.

The role of the first paragraph, not the third, is to provide important details about Mondrian's life. No part of the third paragraph provides biographical information, so choice **(C)** is incorrect.

Though the third paragraph is the concluding paragraph, it is not primarily concerned with concluding the story of Mondrian's life. Rather, the author makes his or her own viewpoint on the subject known in the third paragraph. As such, choice **(D)** is incorrect.

Though the third paragraph does open by anticipating a question the viewer might have ("if this sounds a bit like Fascism..."), the focus of the paragraph is to introduce a larger argument about Mondrian's work, not to answer that question. The anticipated question is merely used to introduce the author's own viewpoint. Thus, choice **(E)** is incorrect.

7) E

Core Standard: **Integration of Knowledge**

The author makes it clear the he or she believes viewing art is a subjective experience, stating in the third paragraph that "all art is widely subjective." Mondrian had a goal of making art objective, to, as the second paragraph states, "free art from the oppression of subjectivity." Thus, both the author and Mondrian are in agreement that art viewing is subjective, though only Mondrian thinks that is a problem that can be corrected. Choice **(E)** is, therefore, correct.

Both the author and Mondrian believe that art is subjective. In the third paragraph, the author states that "all art is widely subjective," and the passage makes it clear that Mondrian set out to create an art rooted in objectivity. Mondrian believed that "equality of viewers" could lead to "equality in the world." However, the author never implies that he or she agrees with Mondrian in thinking that subjectivity in art led to inequality or that objectivity in art could lead to equality. Therefore, choice **(A)** is incorrect.

Though the author implies that he or she views Mondrian's ideas as "a bit like Fascism," the author never suggests that Mondrian himself was a Fascist or based the De Stijl ideas on Fascism. Choice **(B)** is, therefore, incorrect because it distorts information in the passage.

The author suggests that “art is widely subjective” and that even something as common as a cloud can be interpreted differently by different observers, but there is no indication Mondrian would have agreed with this. Rather, Mondrian set out to make an objective art, suggesting that he believed there could be complete objectivity in something, namely art. Therefore, choice **(C)** is incorrect.

Though Mondrian believed that primary colors and geometric shapes would be “closer to expressing real truth” and be able to be interpreted by all viewers equally, the author of the passage does not agree. He or she writes, “A yellow square with black lines is no less open to interpretation,” implying that he or she believes that primary colors and geometric shapes are subject to multiple viewpoints. Therefore, choice **(D)** is incorrect.

8) A

Core Standard: **Key Ideas and Details**

In the third paragraph, the author points out flaws in Mondrian’s theories and makes his or her principal argument: that there can be no objectivity in art. The cloud metaphor is used to suggest that there can be no objectivity in anything one looks at, even something as common as a cloud. Thus, in the author’s view, if we cannot agree on what a cloud looks like, how could we all see a work of art in exactly the same way? The cloud discussion is, thus, used as an example of a problem with Mondrian’s view, making choice **(A)** correct.

The passage does not suggest that Mondrian’s art contained clouds or shapes resembling clouds. Thus, clouds are not an aspect of Mondrian’s art, so choice **(B)** is incorrect.

At no point in the passage does the author introduce or describe a specific work by Mondrian. Further, the passage does not suggest that Mondrian’s art contained clouds or shapes resembling clouds. Thus, clouds are not part of a specific piece by Mondrian, so choice **(C)** is incorrect.

The author never describes interpretations of Mondrian’s work. Rather, in the third paragraph, he or she merely explains that there are many ways of viewing them. Therefore, choice **(D)** is incorrect.

The author never suggests that subjectivity in art is a problem. That is Mondrian’s view, not the author’s. Thus, even though the discussion of clouds is used to highlight that there is subjectivity in the world, it is not used as a metaphor of that so-called “problem,” making choice **(E)** incorrect.

9) E

Core Standard: **Craft and Structure**

Oxymoron (*noun*): a figure of speech by which a locution produces an incongruous, seemingly self-contradictory effect.

The author describes the “complex simplicity” of Mondrian’s work and refers to the term as “a true oxymoron.” Since complex and simple are antonyms, it follows that an oxymoron must be a group of words that contradict each other yet form a cohesive phrase. Of the answer choices, only choice **(E)** provides such a phrase: hasty is an antonym of patient, so *hasty patience* is an oxymoron.

The author describes the “complex simplicity” of Mondrian’s work and refers to the term as “a true oxymoron.” Since complex and simple are antonyms, it follows that an oxymoron must be a group of words that contradict each other yet form a cohesive phrase. *Soundless rage* is not an oxymoron then, as soundless is an antonym to loudness, not rage. Rage can be silent or loud. Therefore, choice **(A)** is incorrect.

The author describes the “complex simplicity” of Mondrian’s work and refers to the term as “a true oxymoron.” Since complex and simple are antonyms, it follows that an oxymoron must be a group of words that contradict each other yet form a cohesive phrase. *Pitiful love* is not an oxymoron then, as love is an antonym of hate. Love could be pitiful or joyous. Therefore, choice **(B)** is incorrect.

The author describes the “complex simplicity” of Mondrian’s work and refers to the term as “a true oxymoron.” Since complex and simple are antonyms, it follows that an oxymoron must be a group of words that contradict each other yet form a cohesive phrase. *Anxious apprehension* is, thus, not an oxymoron. In fact, anxious and apprehensive are near synonyms, as both words would imply that someone is nervous about or reluctant to do something. Thus, choice **(C)** is incorrect.

The author describes the “complex simplicity” of Mondrian’s work and refers to the term as “a true oxymoron.” Since complex and simple are antonyms, it follows that an oxymoron must be a group of words that contradict each other yet form a cohesive phrase. *Tedious work* is, as such, not an oxymoron. Work is often tedious, as the words are not antonyms of any kind. Thus, choice **(D)** is incorrect.