The Baroque Age by Gema de la Torre is licensed under a
Creative Commons Reconocimiento-NoComercial 4.0 Internacional License

Unit 8 – The Baroque age

Index

1. Society....2
2. Political Systems....2
2.1. Absolutism....2
2.2. The Parliamentary Systems....4
3. International Relations....5
3.1. The Thirty Years' War (1618-1648)....5
3.2 The Franco-Spanish War (1648-59)....5
4. The Scientific Revolution....5
4.1. New Philosophical Movements....6
Empiricism....6
Rationalism....6
4.2. Development of Science....6
5. Baroque....7
5.1. General Introduction....7
5.2. Architecture....7
Rome....8
France....8
Hispanic Monarchy....8
Madrid....8
5.3. Sculpture....8
Rome....9
Hispanic Monarchy....9
5.4. Painting....9
Italy....9
The United Provinces (also called The Netherlands)....10
The Spanish Netherlands (also called Flanders)....10
England....10
The Hispanic Monarchy....11
Analysis of a work of art....12

The Baroque Age by Gema de la Torre is licensed under a
Creative Commons Reconocimiento-NoComercial 4.0 Internacional License

1. Society

The society of the 17th century was very similar to the society of the 16th century and previous centuries. The society was divided into three estates (estamentos).

First estate: Clergy	Privileged Groups
Second estate: Nobility	
Third estate: Peasants, artisans and bourgeoisie	Non-Privileged Groups

- The privileged estates didn't pay taxes, possessed most of the land and had military, economic, politic and religious power.
- The non-privileged estates was formed by the rest of the population. They were socially inferior and had few rights.

In general it was a static society and you belonged to one group or other depending on your birth.

Although the nobility and clergy maintained their power, the bourgeoisie became very influential. Trade and business increased during the 17th century and thanks to that bourgeoisie prospered during this period.

2. Political Systems

There are two main political regimes in Europe, which are completely opposed. By one side we have the Absolutism, and by the other side we have the Parliamentary Systems.

2.1. Absolutism

During the 17th century most of the European states were ruled by absolute monarchies. Because of this the 17th century is known as the century of Absolutism.

Here you have its most important characteristics:

- The Theory of Divine Right: this theory explains that the power of the king comes directly from God, and the king is only responsible before

The Baroque Age by Gema de la Torre is licensed under a
Creative Commons Reconocimiento-NoComercial 4.0 Internacional License

God.

- Concentration of Power: the king controls the three main powers, that are the executive power (it executes the laws), legislative power (it makes the laws), and judicial power (it imparts justice).
- Centralised Power: the kings developed a profesional and efficient bureaucracy. It was composed by civil servants that worked directly for the king and new institutions that represented only the interests of the king.

Thanks to this new measures the king could collect taxes more effectively and have his orders obeyed in all his kingdom.

The Parliaments or "Cortes" that were the only limitation to the power of the king were rarely convoked by the kings.

Louis XIV was the best example of an absolute monarch. He ruled in France from 1643 till 1715. He was known as the "Sun King", he controlled the three powers (executive, legislative and judicial), created an efficient bureaucracy and a modern tax system.

Absolutist Philosopher

The main supporter of Absolutism was the clergyman Bossuet. Here you have some texts of his works:

Rulers act as the ministers of God and as his lieutenants on earth. It is through them that God exercises his empire. Consequently, as we have seen, the royal throne is not the throne of a man, but the throne of God himself.

The person of the king is sacred, and to attack him in any way is sacrilege.

The royal power is absolute.

The prince needs render account of his acts to no one.

The Baroque Age by Gema de la Torre is licensed under a
Creative Commons Reconocimiento-NoComercial 4.0 Internacional License

2.2. The Parliamentary Systems

In this type of political regime the power of the monarch is limited by the Parliament. The institution of the Parliament represents the interests of the three estates of society (nobility, clergy and third estate) and thanks to that the bourgeoisie could have access to the Parliament and to political decisions voted there.
This system is very rare and is only established in England and in The Netherlands.

England

At the beginning of the 17th century the new dynasty that ruled in England, the house of Stuart, tried to impose Absolutism. This led to a confrontation between the Monarchy and the Parliament and a period of instability.

There were two Revolutions (in 1640 and in 1688) and a succession of important events such as the execution of the king **Charles I** (1649), the Protectorate of **Cromwell**, the restoration of the House of Stuart and after the revolution of 1688 the arrival of a new dynasty (House of Orange) in the figure of **William III of Orange**.

This new king signed the **Bill of Rights**, an important English law that obliged the king to obey laws passed by the Parliament.

This was a very important advance for the Parliamentary system in England. The main supporter of the parliamentarian regime was the English philosopher **John Locke.**

The Netherlands

After the separation of The Netherlands from the Spanish Monarchy they established a Republic, where the Parliament was the most important institution.
The Netherlands will become an important major power and a financial centre during the 17th century and the 18th century thanks to its industrial and commercial activities.
They managed to establish colonies in other continents and control international commerce.

The Baroque Age by Gema de la Torre is licensed under a
Creative Commons Reconocimiento-NoComercial 4.0 Internacional License

3. International Relations

In this period there are two main European conflicts that we have already seen in the unit of the Habsburgs: the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) and the Franco-Spanish War (1648-1659)

3.1. The Thirty Years' War (1618-1648)

It was an international conflict that took place in German territory.

The conflict started as an internal problem between the emperor and the Protestant German princes who were looking for more autonomy.

This local conflict became an international conflict when the emperor received support from Spain, and the Protestan German princes received help from the enemies of the Spanish Monarchy, that were France, England, The United Provinces and also Sweden.

Spain and the emperor were defeated at the famous battle of Rocroi (1643), were the Spanish Tercios were seriously crushed.

The Treaty of Westphalia put an end to this confrontation and the emperor had to accept religious tolerance while the Hispanic monarchy had to accept the independence of the United Provinces.

3.2 The Franco-Spanish War (1648-59)

When the Thirty Years' War was over France and the Hispanic Monarchy continued their confrontations for the European supremacy. After the battle of the Dunes (1658), where the Spanish armies were defeated, Spain and France signed the Treaty of the Pyrenees (1659).

As a consequence of this treaty Spain had to cede to France the **Roussillon** (territory at the North of the Pyrenees) and **Artois** (territory at the South of Flanders).

In this treaty it was also arranged the marriage between Louis XIV and Maria Theresa, daughter of Philip IV.

These events mark the decline of the Hispanic Monarchy and the beginning of the French supremacy.

4. The Scientific Revolution

During the 17th century the great advances in science changed and modernised areas such as physics, medicine, mathematics, astronomy …

The importance of these contributions is undeniable and it is important to

The Baroque Age by Gema de la Torre is licensed under a
Creative Commons Reconocimiento-NoComercial 4.0 Internacional License

learn something about them.

4.1. New Philosophical Movements.

The scientific revolution can not be understood if we don't explain previously the new philosophical movements that made possible a new approach to science.

Empiricism

It's a theory formulated by the English philosopher **Francis Bacon**, that states that knowledge comes only from sensory experience.

He created the scientific method, or experimental method where only through observation and practical experiments scientific laws can be formulated.

Rationalism

This philosophical method was created by the French philosopher **René Descartes**.

In his method he defends the use of reason as the only way to understand reality.

"According to him nothing that cannot be recognised by the intellect (or reason) can be classified as knowledge".

One of his most famous sentences is "cogito ergo sum", that means "I think, therefore I am" (pienso, luego existo).

4.2. Development of Science

In the 17th century we can observe an incredible boom of science.

In **mathematics** we have the great personalities of Descartes, Neper, Isaac Newton and Liebniz. All of them contributed to the improvement and modernisation of mathematics.

In **physics** Galileo discovered the principle of inertia, and Isaac Newton transformed physics with his law of gravitation.

In **astronomy** Galileo and Kepler were going to modernise astronomy. **Galileo** confirmed the heliocentric theory of Copernicus (the planets of the Solar System revolve around the sun). **Kepler** studied the orbits of the planets (he also estated that the orbits were ellipsis and not circles).

Inventions of this period were the telescope, the microscope, the barometer

The Baroque Age by Gema de la Torre is licensed under a
Creative Commons Reconocimiento-NoComercial 4.0 Internacional License

(by Torricelli) and the mechanical calculator of Pascal.

5. Baroque

5.1. General Introduction

Baroque is the artistic style that spread through all Europe in the 17th century. We can find Baroque works of art in many European countries (like Spain, France, Italy, The United Provinces, the Spanish Netherlands...), American countries (México, Perú, Venezuela...), and Asian countries (The Philippines, India -Goa-).

Although in every country the baroque has its peculiarities, there are also some general characteristics that are common in all these countries.

General Characteristics

The baroque artists represent the continuity with the Renaissance and classical antiquity, as they are still using the classical elements. However they transformed these elements and created something new and different.

Some general characteristics are movement, contrast, theatrical display, expression of intense emotions...

5.2. Architecture

In order to create movement curved lines will be used constantly.

We can also find an exuberant and dynamic decoration.

The classical orders are still used but with new dimensions and proportions, new types of columns are created, like the Solomonic Column (with a spiral shaft) and the giant order (a huge column that can occupy all or almost all the height of the façade).

Other elements that we can find are broken pediments, curved pediments, curved façades, curved entablatures, alternation of different decorative elements in order to create movement, alternation of incoming and outgoing structures in the wall (playing with the light), alternation of walls and openings (muros y vanos) ….

Regarding to the floor plan, when in Renaissance we could find centralised and regular floor plans, in the Baroque they will use oval, elliptical and mixtilinear floor plans.

The Baroque Age by Gema de la Torre is licensed under a
Creative Commons Reconocimiento-NoComercial 4.0 Internacional License

Rome

The most famous Baroque buildings can be found in Rome and the most important Roman architects were Bernini and Borromini.

France

In France, the architecture of this period is characterised for having less decoration. Nowadays we can still admire the Palace of Versailles that was built during this period.

Hispanic Monarchy

The 17th century in Spain can be divided into two periods.

- The first half of the century is characterised by a more severe and austere style inspired in the works of the architect Herrera of the 16th century. This style is called Herreran style.
- In the second half of the 16th century we can find a more decorative trend started by the Churriguera brothers, who created the Churrigueresque style. In this style we can observe exuberant decoration, curved lines, alternation of decorative elements, solomonic columns, etc.

Madrid

In the city of Madrid we can still admire and visit some buildings of this period. They can be recognised thanks to the following characteristics:

- The have two colours (red for the bricks and white for the stone, as the stone is more expensive is only used in the basements, the corners, the entrance, the coat of arms and the windows and their pediments).
- The roofs are made with slate.
- The buildings have usually towers in the corners that are crowned (coronados) with lanterns and spires (chapiteles).

5.3. Sculpture

Baroque sculptures express movement, this can be achieved by complex compositions and the representation of the movement itself.

The baroque figures are expressive, as they represent intense feelings, seeking to transmit dramatic scenes through facial expression and gestures.

They also try to be realistic, representing anatomically proportioned figures and

The Baroque Age by Gema de la Torre is licensed under a
Creative Commons Reconocimiento-NoComercial 4.0 Internacional License

human feelings (such as fury, pity, pain, anguish, mercy...)

There is also a sense of theatralisation, as they conceive figures for being displayed in special places. Some examples are the Trevi Fountain, the Ecstasy of Saint Teresa (of Bernini) or the Spanish sculptures for the processions of the Holy Week, etc. (Theatrical effects)

The main subjects were religious and mythological.

Rome

Rome is considered the centre of the Catholic Reformation, as a consequence is also the centre of most of the artistic production of this period.

The most important sculptor is **Bernini**. In his works he represents religious subjects as well as mythological subjects.

His figures are dynamic, realistic and dramatic, with a supreme control of the sculpting techniques.

Some of his works are the Ecstasy of Saint Teresa, Apollo and Daphne, David, Tomb of Urban VIII and portrait of Louis XIV.

Hispanic Monarchy

The sculpture of this period was focused on polychrome wooden religious works that were used in the religious processions.

The sculptures were characterised by realism and expressivity and they were conceived to be seen from different points of view (theatralisation).

Some important artists were Gregorio Fernández (in Valladolid), Martínez Montañés (in Seville) and Alonso Cano (in Granada).

5.4. Painting

The Baroque painting is characterised by its naturalism, realism, expression of intense feelings and movement.

In the formal aspect we can observe strong contrasts of light and shadow (called chiaroscuro), complex compositions and the importance given to colour instead of line for creating the figures.

Italy

In Italy the most important and influential painter was Caravaggio, who created the school of **Tenebrism**. This school is characterised by the following characteristics:

The Baroque Age by Gema de la Torre is licensed under a
Creative Commons Reconocimiento-NoComercial 4.0 Internacional License

- The use of chiaroscuro (a use of dark and light areas in order to create volume), but with a strong contrast between light and dark areas. Usually there is a source of light that creates that contrast between light and dark areas.
- The palette (paleta, gama de colores) of colours is reduced, but inside it we can find a wide range of tones (or shades).
- Use of **naturalism**. Caravaggio conferred to his works a **naturalistic** aspect, using ordinary people for models of his paintings.

This style was specially practised in Spain.

The United Provinces (also called The Netherlands)

The 17th century is considered the Dutch Golden Age of painting, because of the quality of its production and because of the development of new secular subjects.

In The Netherlands a new social group is gaining power. This group is a Calvinist bourgeoisie that is going to demand new subjects and new types of paintings in accordance with their tastes and interests.

These new subjects will be group portraits, still lifes (bodegones), genre paintings of everyday scenes and landscapes.

The most famous painter is Rembrandt, but the works of Vermeer, Frans Hals, Hobbema, Pieter de Hooch, van Ruisdael are real masterpieces.

The Spanish Netherlands (also called Flanders)

most important painter was Rubens, who with his light and colourful brush stroke, Venetian colour (bright colours) and his muscular figures impressed and influenced painters like Velázquez and Van Dyck.

England

The 17th century marks the beginning of the English painting with the key figure of Van Dyck. This painter was formed in the studio of Rubens and later established in England.
He is considered the artistic father of all the most important English painters of the 18th century. His works transmit elegance, joy and are full of light and colour. With his loose brush stroke he managed to construct colourful and elegant figures.

The Baroque Age by Gema de la Torre is licensed under a
Creative Commons Reconocimiento-NoComercial 4.0 Internacional License

The Hispanic Monarchy

The 17th century is considered the Golden Age of Spanish painting, with remarkable figures such as Velázquez, Murillo or Ribera.

- In the **Valencian school** the most important figures were **Ribalta** and **Ribera** (who in fact worked all his life in Naples). These painters were very influenced by the tenebrism and naturalism of Caravaggio. The tenembrism was characterised by a strong contrast of light and dark areas (usually represented by an artificial source of light), and naturalism consisted in representing figures and gestures without idealisation.

The subjects were mainly religious.

- In the **Andalusian school**, in the city of Seville we can find important artists like **Zurbarán** and **Murillo.**
  - **Zurbarán** painted religious subjects but also still lives and portraits. He is very well known for his paintings of the Carthusian monks, representing with great mastery the modesty and austerity of this religious order.
    He was also able to paint elegant and luxurious portraits.
  - **Murillo** is also a very famous baroque artist, very admired in other countries, like the United Kingdom, or USA.
    Murillo is very well known for his paintings representing poor children in daily scenes. He depicts tender and kind scenes with a luminous and loose brush stroke.
    He also painted several Immaculate Conceptions, that was an important Catholic iconography associated with the Counter-Reformation.
  - **Alonso Cano**, from Granada, apart from being an accomplished architect and sculptor, he was also a consummated painter. He was influenced by the Italian tenebrism and he also painted beautiful and kind Immaculate Conceptions.
- In the **school of Madrid** the most important figure is undoubtedly **Velázquez**.
- **Velázquez** managed to become the painter of the royal court. He evolved from a tenebrist and naturalist style to a more luminous and elegant works.
  He used a fluent and light brush stroke and a predominance of colours in order to construct figures and scenes.
  He painted portraits, genre scenes (daily life scenes), mythological paintings, religious works, landscapes, military scenes, nudes ...
  In the 19th century Velázque's artwork is considered to be the model and

The Baroque Age by Gema de la Torre is licensed under a
Creative Commons Reconocimiento-NoComercial 4.0 Internacional License

inspirtion for the impressionism (artistic style of the 19th century).

- Other important artists of the school of Madrid were **Claudio Coello** and **Carreño de Miranda**, both painters during the period of Charles II.

Analysis of a work of art

- Describe what you see from the general to the particular.
  - First the type of work of art (building, painting, sculpture...)
  - Second materials:

Stone, marble, brick,	**Marble, clay, bronze, wood…**	**Support: wall, wood, canvas, paper, card, metal** **Technique: tempera, oil….**

  - Third description of the work of art: architectural elements, scenes, style, formal characteristics.
  - Fourth: deduction of the work of art, author and style and short explanation of the main characteristics of the author and style.