

*Indeed it is of the essence of man . . . that he can lose himself in the jungle of his existence, within himself, and thanks to his sensation of being lost can react by setting energetically to work to find himself again.*

JOSÉ ORTEGA Y GASSET

## Unit 2 - Art and Human Nature Opening Project

In unit two we will explore the concept of human nature. Human nature can be defined as the “essence” of what it means to be human. While over the course of the first unit we will explore six possible approaches taken by philosophers over several thousand years and divergent cultures to this question, we will start by trying to sort out our own thoughts about what is the essence of being human.

### The Task

1. In your groups, discuss what it means to be human. Appoint one member of the group to take down the key ideas that emerge from your conversation. Your discussion should address, but not be limited to the following questions:
  - What is essence of humanity?
  - Are humans inherently inclined toward good or evil?
  - What characteristic is most critical to establishing what it means to be human?
  - What are the most critical features of human life?
  - What is the purpose of humanity?
  - Are there any central conflicts, ironies or paradoxes that define the human condition?
  - What makes us who we are?
  - What are humans not?
2. Using the art resources available on the resources page of the website, explore how human art expresses the concept of human nature. Identify one work of art that your group feels makes the best and clearest expression of what it means to be human (based on your discussion).
3. Based on your chosen work, answer the following questions:
  1. What is the essence of humanity and how does this work directly and or symbolically reflect that essence?
  2. What is the defining characteristic of the human condition and how is this characteristic demonstrated directly or symbolically by the chosen work?
  3. What is the essential conflict or paradox of human existence. Boil this down to a sentence and then explain how the chosen work demonstrates this conflict
  4. Does human nature make humans unique? Again, explore this question in the context of your chosen work.
  5. Identify three words that most clearly convey human nature and can be related to your chosen work.
4. Using the work and your responses to the questions above, create a poster which explains what human nature is. The chosen art work should be reproduced on a full 8.5 x 11 sheet of paper (approximately). The three words from question 5 should be arranged above and to the sides of the work. Question 1 should be answered in neat writing (you may also print it) below the work. The other questions should be answered on a single sheet of paper that is attached to the back of the poster.
5. Be prepared to present your theory of human nature using your poster as a visual aid

### Dates

Monday - Discuss key questions and identify your group's work

Tuesday - Complete poster and decide how you will present your theory of human nature

Wednesday - Presentation of posters and discussion of human nature

### Grading

Poster will be worth 3 annotations, and will be graded using the following criteria:

- Use of your chosen work as a central metaphor throughout your explanation - 33%
- Artistry and design of your poster (again, this should be defective of your theory) - 33%
- Presentation - Professionalism, enthusiasm and not simply reading what you have written on the poster will be considered - 33%