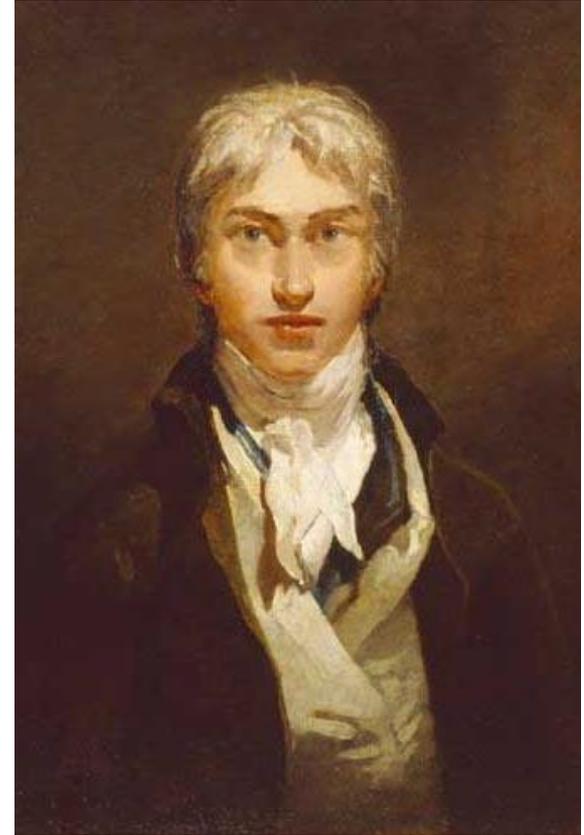


# Joseph Mallord William Turner

(29 November 1789 – 7 August 1862)

Mr [Turner](#) en

Mr [Turner](#) ita



Self - portrait 1799

# Joseph Mallord William Turner

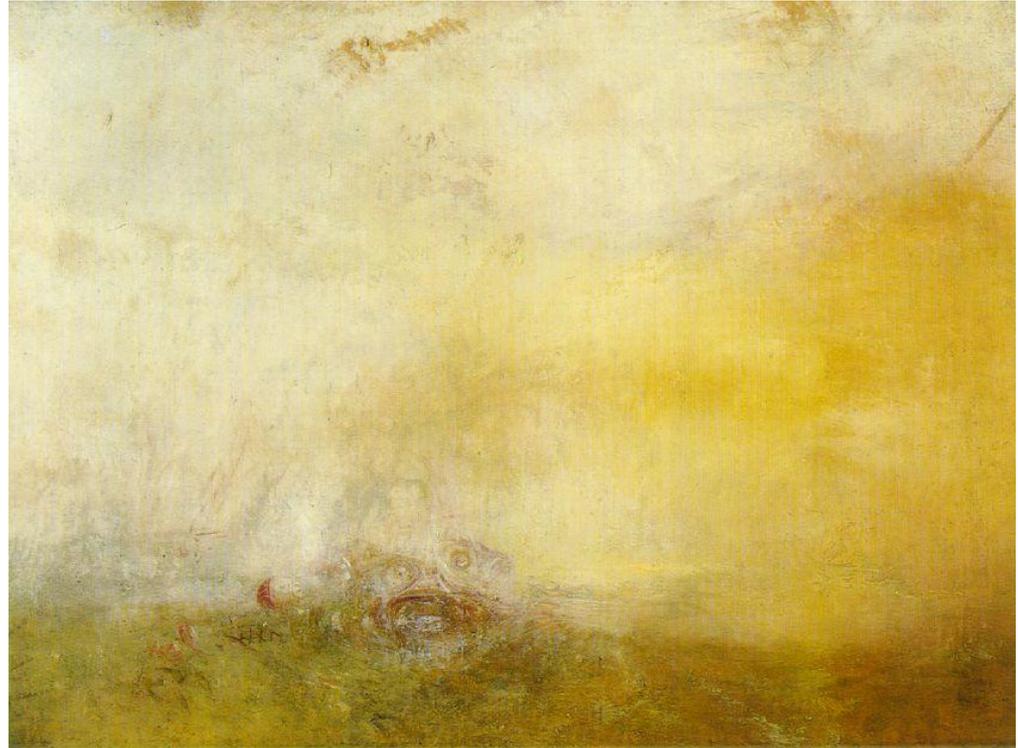
- JMW Turner was born in London, England in 1775.
- He was the son of a barber and wigmaker and started painting at a very young age. His dad would put his paintings in the window of the barbershop to sell!
- At the age of 15, Turner had his paintings shown at the Royal Academy. He became a member of the Academy at 18.
- As an artist, Turner displayed a visible evolution in his painting style throughout his long career. Although his early focus was on the genre of landscape, as his career progressed he began to pay less attention to the details of objects and landscape and more attention to the effects of light and colour. He became increasingly fascinated with natural and atmospheric elements.



*Tintern Abbey 1795*

# Joseph Mallord William Turner

- As he grew older Turner became eccentric (strange). Except for his father, who lived with him for 30 years, he had no close friends. He allowed no one to watch him while he painted. He gave up attending the meetings of the Academy. None of his acquaintances saw him for months at a time.
- He still held exhibitions to show his artwork, but he usually refused to sell his paintings. When he was persuaded to sell one, he was sad and depressed for days after.
- In 1850, he exhibited for the last time. One day, Turner disappeared from his house. His housekeeper, after a search of many months, found him hiding in a house in Chelsea, England. He had been ill for a long time. He died the very next day (Dec. 19, 1851).
- Turner was a brilliant and successful artist. In his lifetime, he created over 20,000 paintings and drawings! When he died, he left all his money to help other artists.



*Sunrise with Sea Monsters 1845*

# *The Shipwreck 1805*

- During the Romantic Period, many artists painted landscapes that usually showed either nationalism (in painting and sketching the land near them) or the exoticism and adventure of far-away places.
- The awesome power of nature was a consistent theme in Turner's works. He often focused on the violent power of the sea and painted many paintings of storms and shipwrecks.
- How does Turner use perspective in this painting? Do you feel like you are looking sideways? How does this painting make you feel?



# Turner's fascination with the sea 1/3

Dreadful catastrophe was a common theme in English romantic art period.

19th century Britain specifically was very familiar with shipwreck as it was a period of great English shipping (Navigation Acts).

Shipwrecks: one of the worst things a human being can encounter. Turner's fascination with man vs. nature is displayed here.

His love for the seaside begun in 1786 as he attended school in Margate. Throughout his lifetime he visited this English seaside town many times.



*The Shipwreck , Tate Gallery 1805*

# Turner's fascination with the sea 2/3

## Composition

The main focus of calamity is towards the center of the canvas. One can feel the movement of the piece as the waves form deadly mountains, the broken ship on a peak, tilting towards the center where the crew awaits their failing destiny.

## Brush strokes

The effectiveness of the lighting in this piece was achieved through Turner's light brush stroke. He has a quick but focused movement, as highlighted by the realism of the crashing waves.

## Color Palette

The blues of the sky and the sea that cover most of the canvas draw attention to the main action of the piece, the browns that make up the struggling ship. The brightest element is the struggling, but shining sail.

## Lighting

The dark sky partners with the dark and furious sea contrasting against the yellow of the sail. The sail is the only object that draws the attention of light. As the sky is dark and gloomy, one wonders the light source that highlights the sail.

In *The Shipwreck* his brushstrokes, color palette and lighting all contribute to show the inferiority of man vs. the raging elements.



*The Shipwreck* , Tate Gallery 1805

# Turner's fascination with the sea 3/3

Describe the structure of the painting:

- It has an upright format
- It is based on horizontal lines
- It is swirling and vortex like

The seascape is:

- Two-dimensional or three-dimensional

Say what particular aspect of the natural world is revealed

Find connections between the painting and *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* by Samuel Coleridge:

*...and now the storm blast came, and it was tyrannous and strong.*

The life boat is...  
by...

The sky is characterized by....

The sea is...

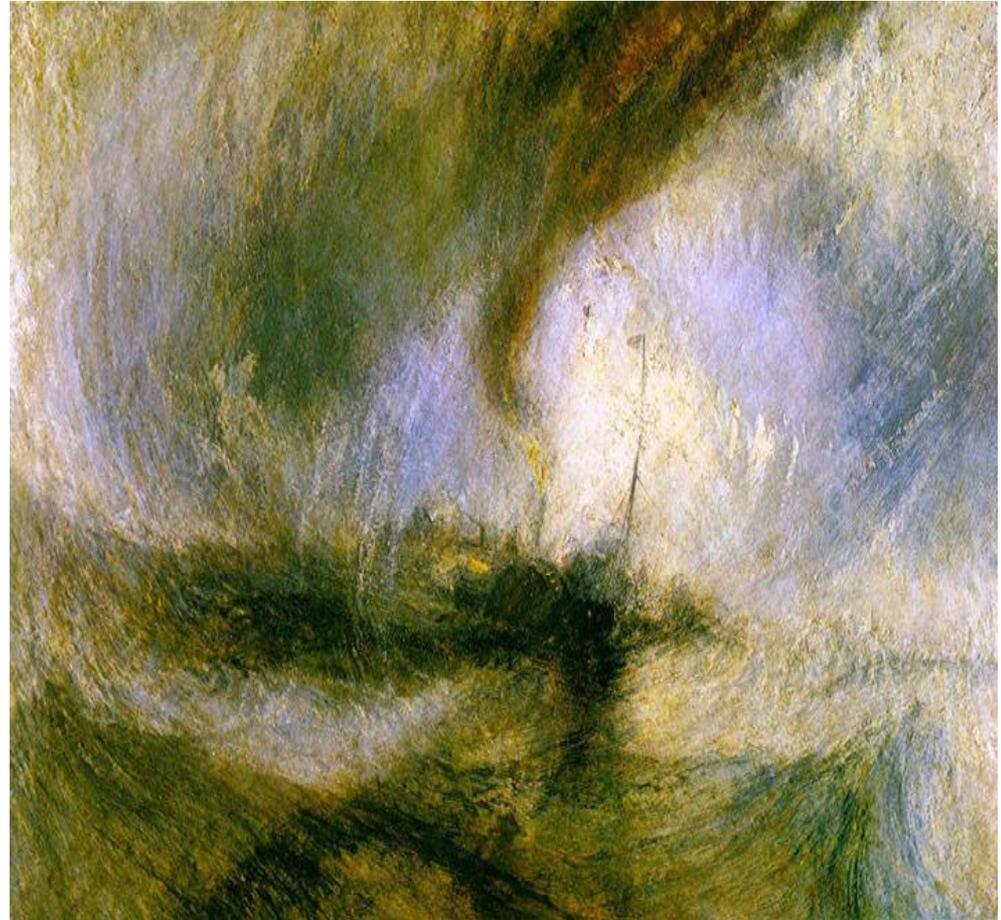


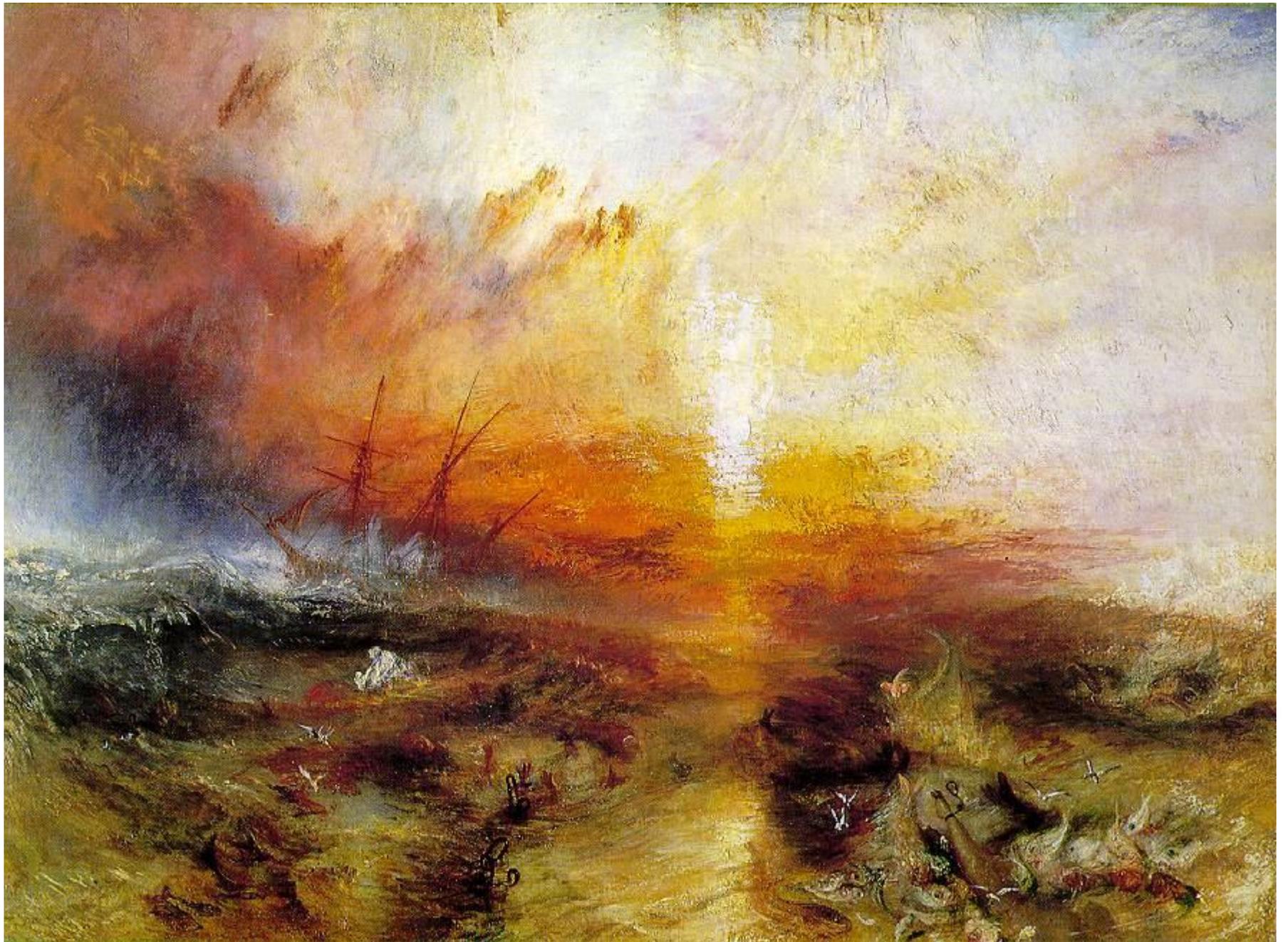
The ship is going to...

Edmund Burke's definition of the Sublime focuses on such terms as Darkness, Obscurity, Privation, Vastness, Magnificence, Loudness and Suddenness and that our reaction is defined by a kind of pleasurable. In romantic landscapes and seascapes the Sublime represents towering mountain ranges, violent storms and seas, volcanic eruptions or avalanches which, if actually experienced, would be threatening.

# *Snow Storm: Hannibal and his Army Crossing the Alps 1812*

- Romantic artists often used nature to express emotions. The natural world was considered a source of mysterious powers.
- Turner liked to paint the destructive powers of nature. This painting is of a snowstorm.
- Does it make you think of a snowstorm? Why or why not? What emotions do you think the artist is expressing?
- The painting on the next slide is known by its short title, “The Slave Ship.” When you look at it, where do your eyes go first?





*Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying - Typhoon Coming On ("The Slave Ship") 1840*

# Rain, steam and speed 1844 1/2

- This painting is known as “Rain, Steam and Speed.” Can you see the train engine? What else can you see?
- The scene is fairly certainly identifiable as Maidenhead railway bridge, across the Thames between Taplow and Maidenhead. The bridge has two main arches of brick, very wide and flat. The view is to the east, towards London.
- Turner is reported to have put his head out a train window during a rainstorm and kept it there for 9 minutes! After, while dripping wet, he kept his eyes shut for 15 minutes. Do you think he was dreaming up this painting?



Turner's distinctive style of painting, in which he used watercolor technique with oil paints, created lightness and atmospheric effects (like weather).

# Rain, steam and speed 1844

2/2

- At that time [railway](#) was crisscrossing the British landscape: a new way of travelling and connecting cities and people to each other and probably the most potent symbol of industrialization
- Turner captures the speed of the train coming towards us, the rain pounding at the train and the bridge as it moves towards us
- Three quarters of the painting is nothing but variations of colors of the sky, the rain, of the atmosphere, and the way the rain dissolves any kind of form.
- The only form that comes out with clarity is the black iron of the chimney: a kind of abstraction that was very brave for the early 19s



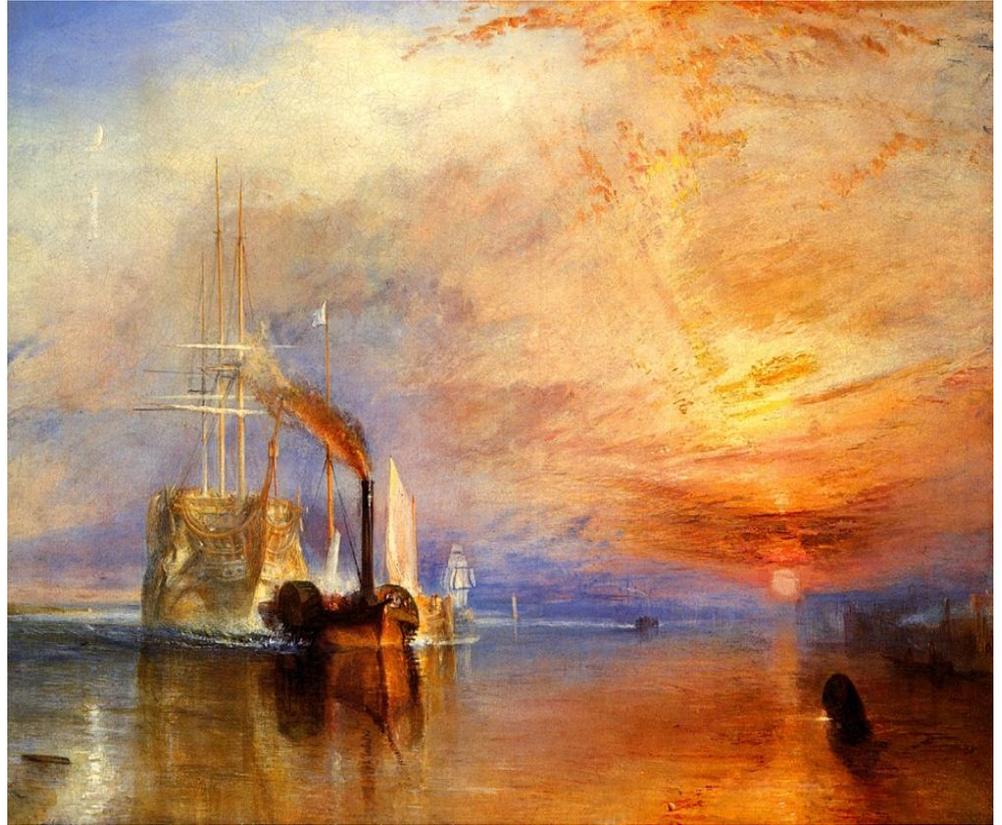
Old stone bridge

Modern industrial brick bridge

Think about what the speed of the train meant: up to that time people had either walked or they had taken a horse (multiple horses if they were lucky). Now, for the first time, people are able to be transported mechanically. Think also of the violence of this iron monster ripping through the landscape, representing the contrast between old rural England and the new industrial England.

# *The Fighting "Temeraire" Tugged to her Last Berth to be Broken Up 1838*

- Turner is often known as the "painter of light."
- How is light presented in this picture? Where is the light coming from?
- What different places does the light "hit"?



## The Lauerzersee, with Schwyz and the Mythen c.1848

- One of Turner's unique qualities is that he did not try to paint exactly what he saw in detail, but rather he tried to paint what he *felt* about a scene. In this, he can be considered an early "Impressionist" painter.
- His best works exhibit a 'glorious, hazy wash of light,' with shapes just kind of *suggested* through the light, with not much detail.
- This is a painting he did after visiting Switzerland. Do you get the "impression" of a lake or mountains in this picture?

