

**The Nineteenth  
Century:  
Birth of the  
“isms”**

**Neoclassicism**

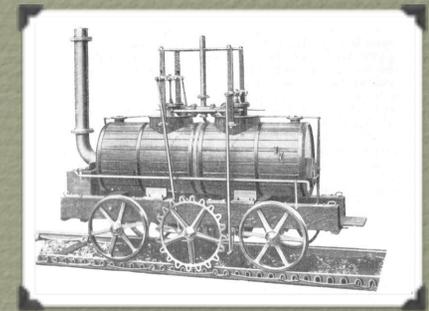
- For Western civilization the nineteenth century was an age of **upheaval**. The church lost some of its power, monarchies toppled and new democracies suffered growing pains.
- Unfamiliar forces like **industrialization and urbanization** made cities bulge with masses of dissatisfied poor people. The fast pace of **scientific progress** and unrestrained **capitalism** also caused confusion.
- The art world of the 1800s consisted of many different styles (also known as “periods” or “movements” in art.
- These art movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century are known as the beginning of the “**isms**” (beginning with “Neoclassicism” and ending in “Symbolism”)



A Watt steam engine, the steam engine that propelled the Industrial Revolution in Britain and the world

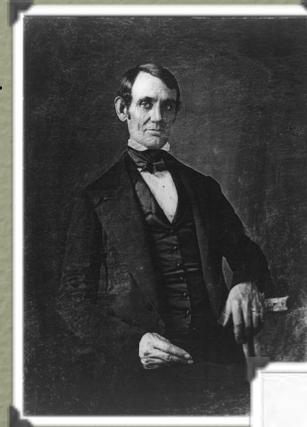
# 19<sup>th</sup> Century Timeline

1807 ● Fulton invents Steam boat



1825 ● First railroad is built in England

1837 ● Daguerre invents **photography**



The first photograph ever taken of Abraham Lincoln was a daguerreotype taken by Matthew B. Brady in 1846.



1876 ● Bell patents telephone

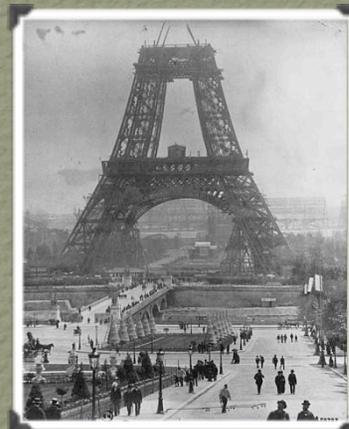
1879 ● Edison invents electric light

1881 ● Population in Paris hits 2.2 Million

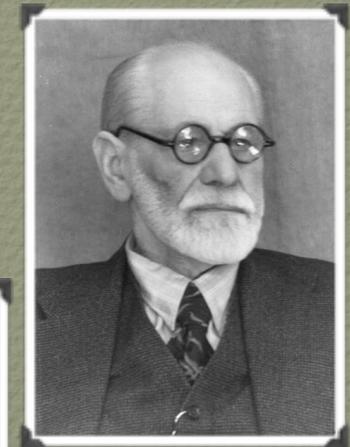
1885 ● First skyscraper built in Chicago &  
First motorcar is built



1889 ● **Eiffel tower** is built



1895 ● Freud develops  
psychoanalysis



## Neoclassicism: Greek & Roman Fever

**TONE:** Calm,  
rational

**SUBJECTS:** Greek  
& Roman history and  
mythology

**TECHNIQUE:**  
Drawing with lines,  
no trace of  
brushstrokes

**ROLE of ART:**  
Morally uplifting,  
inspirational

**FOUNDER:** David  
(pronounced “Dah-  
Veed”)

- From about 1780-1820, Neoclassic art reflected classical themes from **Greek and Roman art**
- This revival of classicism was a direct reaction against the **Rococo** period before it (Rococo art was decorative and frivolous)
- The Neoclassical style in art is considered “**orderly**” and “**serious**”
- Leaders of art schools in Europe preached that **reason**, not emotion, should dictate art
- They emphasized drawing and line, which appealed to the **intellect** rather than to the senses (like colour)
- The neoclassic style consisted of severe, precisely drawn figures that appeared in the foreground without the illusion of depth (just like Roman relief sculpture)
- Backgrounds often contained Roman and Greek architecture (**columns**)
- Brushwork was smooth and polished & compositions were **simple**

# What makes this a Neoclassical Painting?

Roman  
clothing/  
scenes



Roman  
architecture  
(columns)

Emphasis  
on outlines  
of figures  
& no  
brush  
strokes

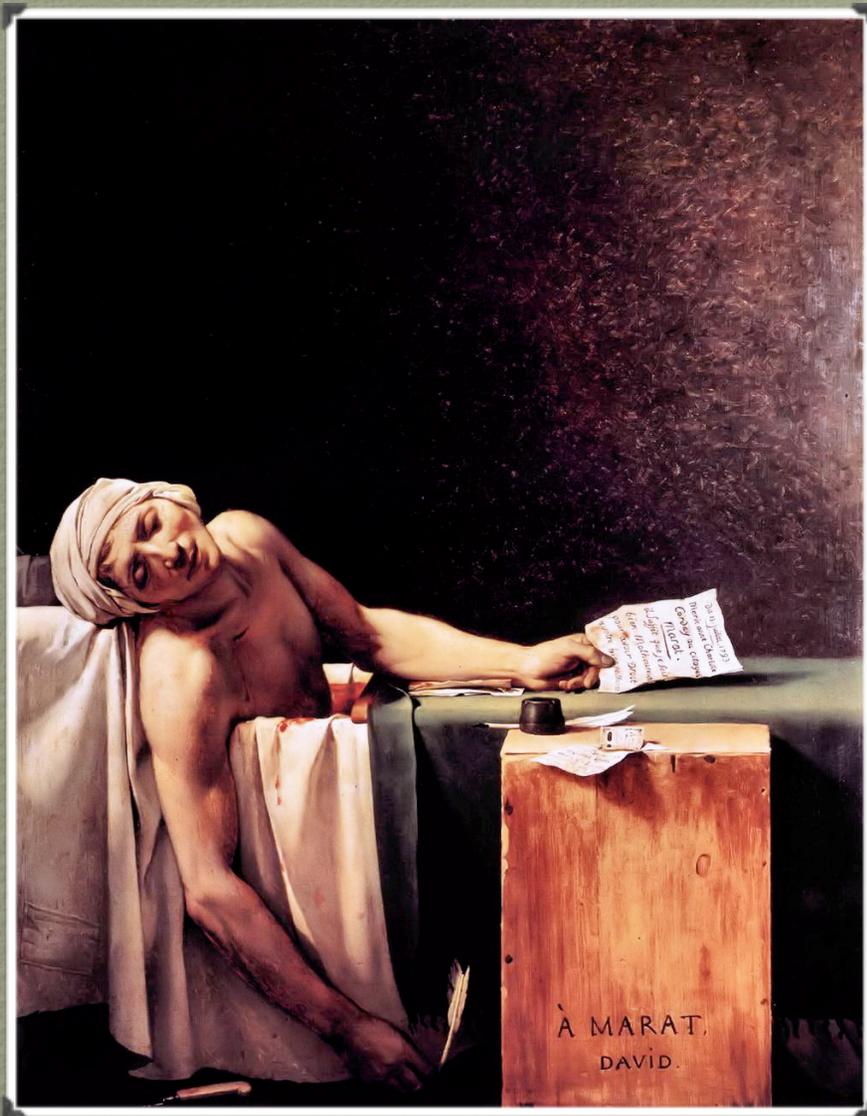
David, *Oath of Horatii*, 1784, oil on canvas, Louvre, Paris.

- On a trip to Rome, David first saw **Classical** art
- He avidly drew hands, eyes, ears and feet from every classical sculpture he encountered



David, *Oath of Horatii*, 1784, oil on canvas, Louvre, Paris.

- In “Oath of Horatii” three brothers swear to defeat their enemies or die for Rome= **heroic theme**
- There is a **contrast** in this painting between the men’s straight, rigid contours and the soft, **curved shapes** of the women
- The men bravely prepare for battle while the women weep passively in the corner
- David arranged each figure like a **statue**, spot-lit against a plain background with **classical architectural features**
- To assure **historical accuracy** he dressed dummies in Roman costumes and made Roman helmets



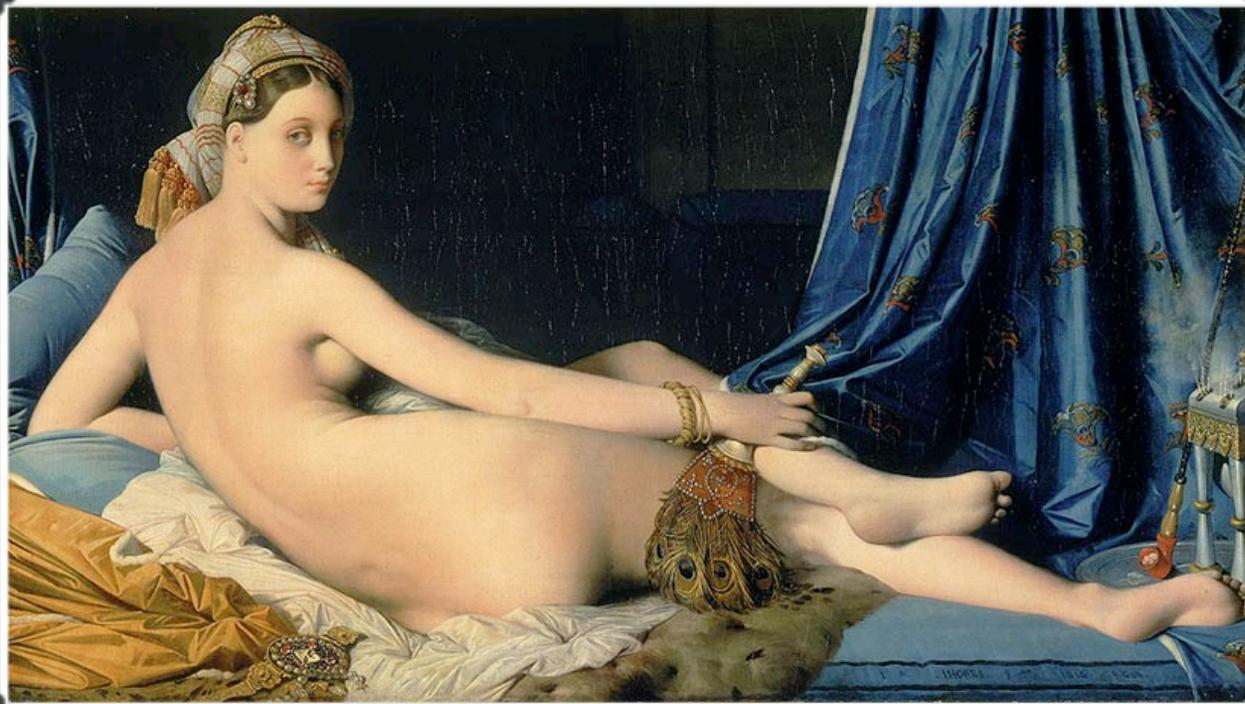
David, *Death of Marat*, 1793, oil on canvas.

- Marat, a close friend of David, was a radical revolutionary **stabbed** to death by an enemy while he was in his bathtub
- Right after the murder, David rushed to the scene to **record what he saw**
- David portrayed Marat in a **Saint-like pose** against a dark background
- David was a supporter of the **French Revolution** (trying to overthrow the Monarchy)
- David's art became the official model for what **French art** should be during the time period



Ingres, *Portrait of the Princess de Brogile*, 1853,  
oil on canvas.

- An infant prodigy at the age of 11, Ingres attended art school and at **17** was a member of David's studio
- Ingres never let his **brushstrokes** show saying paint should be as **smooth** "as the skin of an onion"
- Ingres portrait paintings were **precise, detailed and balanced** compositions
- He portrayed ideal beauty but was able to capture physical appearance with **photographic detail**
- In this painting he paid fastidious attention to the crisp **drapery**, soft ribbons, fine hair and delicate flesh without the hint of a brushstroke



Ingres, *La Grande Odalisque*. 1814, oil on canvas.

### ODALISQUE:

A reclining female nude.

Named after the Turkish word for a harem girl (prostitute), the odalisque is a reoccurring figure in the history of Western art.

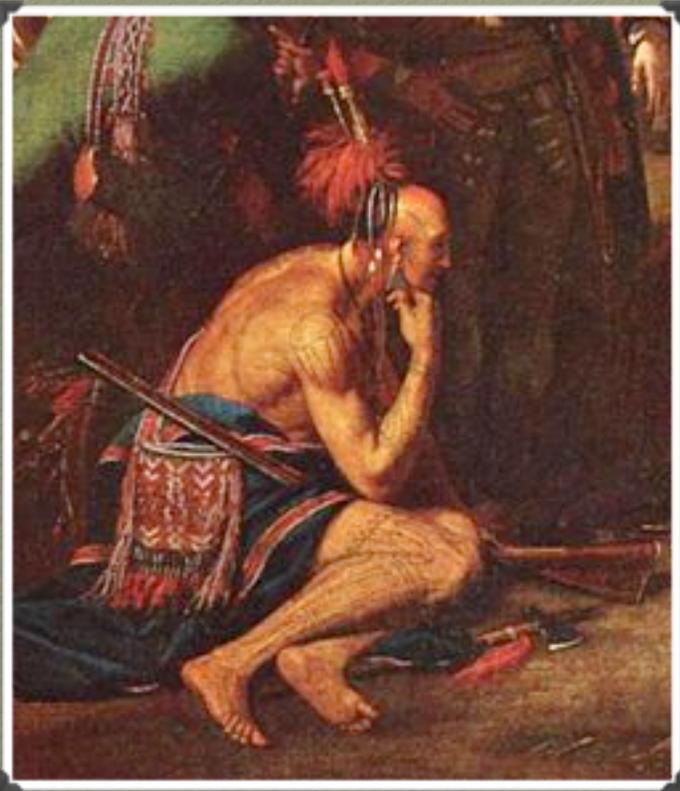
- Ingres was a master of the **female nude**- he was attracted to the **erotic subject** of the harem girl
- He drew on past works for inspiration like Titian's "Venus of Urbino" (Renaissance)
- Critics attacked this painting for its **small head and long back** (possibly influenced by the Mannerism period's "Madonna with the Long Neck")
- The odalisque meets the viewer's **gaze**
- Although Neoclassical in style, this painting draws on themes used in Romanticism (another movement of the 19th century)

- The founding of the **American republic** coincided with the popularity of Neoclassicism
- The style suited the North American colonies since the new country based its culture on European tradition
- The first **American-born** painter to win international acclaim was Benjamin West
- He was most famous for his paintings of **battle scenes**
- The painting depicts the final moments of James Wolfe (a General) during the 1759 **Battle of Quebec** (Wolfe is in a christ-like pose referencing religious paintings from the Gothic and Renaissance periods.)
- The depiction of the Native American warrior in the painting — kneeling with his chin on his fist, looking at General Wolfe — has been analyzed in various ways. In art, the touching of one's face with one's hand is a sign of **deep thought and intelligence**



*Benjamin West. The Death of General Wolfe, Oil on canvas, 1770; 152.6 x 214.5 cm; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.*

## The Nineteenth Century and the Concept of the “Noble Savage”



- When Europeans colonized new countries they encountered the **indigenous people** of the places (Native American, Africans, etc...)
  - Although Europeans recognized these people to be human beings, they had no plans to treat them as equals politically or economically, and also began to speak of them as **inferior** socially and psychologically.
  - Europeans developed a notion of "the primitive" and "the savage"- a Eurocentric idea that viewed Europeans as superior to other cultures
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- The idea of the "noble savage" established certain “exotic” (=non-European) humans as **morally superior** (perhaps as a way to feel good about all of the injustices that they inflicted on the indigenous people)
  - In the 20th century, the concept of the noble savage came to be seen as **racist** and condescending