

Paragraph

The Bald Eagle

- Prior to the bald eagle becoming the national symbol of the United States in 1782, it had already been honored as a prominent creature, along with its cousin the golden eagle, in many Native American cultures. In the Native American tribes that honor the bald eagle, it is largely seen as a messenger between the world of the living and the "spirit" world, carrying prayers from this world and messages from the other. The bald eagle was particularly revered in the Pacific Northwest where the great majority of bald eagles lived and where they shared a fondness for salmon with tribes of that region.
- When the United States, recognizing the strength and power that the bald eagle represented, adopted the bird as its national symbol in the late eighteenth century, it is estimated that there were as many as 75,000 nesting pairs in North America. Most of these pairs were concentrated in what is now known as Canada, and further northwest, in present-day Alaska. However, bald eagles were also found further south, as far as the northern part of Mexico, and while they were primarily seen on the West Coast, they spread their habitats inland across the continent, with sightings all the way to Florida in the southern United States. Bald eagles can establish habitats near most lakes, rivers, and other bodies of water that supply the necessary provision of fish that the eagles require as their primary food source.
- The term "bald" in the bald eagle's name is somewhat misleading, since, in fact, the heads of bald eagles are covered with a profusion of white feathers. Experts speculate that the bird received its odd moniker for one of two reasons: First, the term "bald" originally meant a visible white spot, perhaps in reference to the natural whitening of hair as people age. This definition provides an apt name for the eagle with its white head feathers contrasting sharply with its typically darker-hued body feathers. Another reason that people cite for the name of the eagle is that the multitude of white feathers covering the eagle's head do make it appear bald or without any feathers on its head from a distance.
- The feathers of a bald eagle are fascinating in and of themselves. Each eagle has approximately 7,000 feathers over its entire body, and the feathers are used for several purposes. The most obvious purpose is for enabling bald eagles to fly; the birds use the feathers to help them soar and dive, and also to control their speed and stability as they swoop down on prey or come in for a landing. Yet, the feathers, which are hollow, but surprisingly strong and pliable, serve other purposes as well. They provide waterproof protection from wet weather and greatly assist the eagles in regulating their body temperature during both hot and cold weather. The feathers also act as a source of protection. Eagles will often "puff themselves up," or expand the space between their feathers, in order to make themselves appear larger and more intimidating to their potential enemies. This expansion is also useful during "preening," which is a technique bald eagles use to attract mates. In most cases, especially for males, appearing larger is an appealing characteristic to a potential partner. Humans as well admire the eagle's feathers; they are still prized by Native American tribes, who, even today, award feathers to members of their tribes that demonstrate exceptional strength and courage.
- Though the bald eagle gained national importance as the symbol of the United States, something tragic happened to the vast population that originally numbered well above 100,000. By the early 1960s, the number of nesting pairs had been reduced to an estimated low of around 450. The demise of the bald eagle is generally attributed to the harmful effects of the pesticide DDT (dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane), a chemical used in farming, and of widespread hunting of the bird, for its feathers and other sought after parts.
- As a result of the drastic decline of the bird, the bald eagle is now protected by federal laws. It was originally protected by the Bald Eagle Act of 1940 and later by the Endangered Species Act of 1973. However, it is not just the laws directly related to endangered species that aided in the resurgence of the bald eagle; its resurgence has also been widely attributed to the banning of DDT in 1972. Today there are more than 5,000 pairs of bald eagles, a tenfold increase over the low point of 450, which has led to it being removed from the Endangered Species List, though it is still protected by other laws such as the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.

This question is worth 2 points (2 points for 3 correct answers, 1 point for 2 correct answers, and 0 points for 1 or 0 correct answers).

The bald eagle has been honored in United States history for its unique attributes, yet it has not always been protected.

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Answer Choices (choose 3 to complete the chart):

- (1) Bald eagles were once the most numerous and widespread birds in North America.
- (2) The term "bald" originally referred to a white spot on the top of older eagles' heads.
- (3) The bald eagle is a powerful symbol to present-day Americans, as well as Native Americans.
- (4) The bald eagle, named for the white feathers on its head, has feathers on its body with several useful features.
- (5) Two different pieces of endangered species legislation were enacted 33 years apart.
- (6) Since the extreme decrease in the bald eagle population, due to a pesticide and hunting, legislation has been enacted to specifically protect the bird.

Paragraph

Modernism in Art

- A proliferation of varying styles characterized the world of American art and architecture in the period starting from the late 1800s through the first several decades of the following century. In spite of the fact that these various styles often had little in common with each other, they are traditionally clustered under the label of *modernism*. It is thus rather difficult to give a precise definition of modernism, one that encompasses all the characteristics of the artists and architects who are commonly grouped under this label. Despite this inability to definitively describe what is and is not modernism, modernist works share a few vital characteristics.
- One fundamental characteristic of modernism is a demonstration of progressive innovation. In general, a modernist is someone who tries to develop an individual style by adding to or improving upon the style of immediate predecessors. The modernist belief was in starting with the ideas of the mainstream movement and then innovating from the mainstream to improve upon the ideas of predecessors rather than in breaking away from the mainstream to create something entirely new. However, because there were varying ideas on what constituted the mainstream and because the potential innovations emanating from the mainstream were infinite, modernism under this definition could take a myriad of directions.
- However, a unifying, and central, component of the diversion away from the mainstream involved the artists' reaction to changes in the world around them, particularly changes in science. Thus, modernism includes not just the styles of art being expressed, but also the ideology, or underlying ideas, which brought about the new artistic expression. Modernists were responding to new developments occurring around them, especially scientific discoveries that stripped away previously held notions of reality and its foundations. Prominent and respected scientists of the day, such as Darwin and Freud, made people question the very origins of life and how it should be perceived. Certain longstanding "truths" had been challenged, leaving people far less certain of their vision of the world. Modernists responded to this new age of uncertainty by discarding intellect and replacing it with intuition, perception not based on facts, in an attempt to portray the world beyond its physical surface.
- The biological sciences were not the only field that helped to shape modernist work; advances in technology heavily influenced this period of artistic expression as well. As modernists observed the increased use of machines in both industry and daily life, they took the spirit of innovation responsible for the new devices and applied that in their depiction of art, for pieces they designed for functional use and entertainment. Modernists turned away from traditional conventions of display, instead reworking subjects, colors, and compositions in their attempts to define their own visual expression of the new world around them.
- Another essential characteristic of modernism was the belief that art could and should reflect the reality of modern life and would not, for example, focus on the lives of society's most privileged members or on otherworldly entities such as angels and sprites. Though there was agreement among modernists as to the need for art to reflect modern life, there was far less agreement on what actually constituted modern life. For some it involved advancements in technology and transportation. For others, increased wealth and the subsequent rise in consumerism became their focus. Still others highlighted greater personal freedoms and a sense of shaking off the traditions of the past. Thus, modern artists and architects reflect very different aspects of modern life in their works.
- In addition to the various emphases chosen by individual artists, a reliance on personal intuition as opposed to intellectual rationalization accounts for the great variety of expression throughout the movement. Two different artists could observe the same phenomenon, for example, and note its impact on the life of the general public. Yet, their individual intuitive understanding of the reach of this impact and its importance to the public, along with each artist's preferred medium of artistic expression, would likely result in strikingly different depictions of the phenomenon. Perhaps due to the rapid and varied changes happening in the world around them, the artists and architects of the modernist period cycled through several styles of expression over a relatively short period of time, yet they somehow still managed to convey a strong sense of the reality of the eras in which they lived.

This question is worth 2 points (2 points for 3 correct answers, 1 point for 2 correct answers, and 0 points for 1 or 0 correct answers).

Though modernism in art shares certain characteristics, these characteristics can be difficult to define precisely.

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Answer Choices (choose 3 to complete the chart):

- (1) A reflection of the reality of modern life is one aspect of modernism.
- (2) There is no universal agreement as to exactly what makes up modern life.
- (3) Science and technology had a large influence on modernist expression.
- (4) Modernism stresses the importance of the individual intellect.
- (5) Many different styles are part of modern art.
- (6) It can be difficult to define what the mainstream is.