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# Rococo Style

The period in European art history that became known as Rococo was unusual. It wasn't mainly a style of painting, sculpture, or even architecture. Rococo, originally, was a style of decorating.

It was begun by members of the aristocracy in France who wanted elegance and style but were tired of the dark, serious Baroque style that had been in fashion for some time. They began to furnish their homes with a new, glittering, picturesque look.



Walking into a room decorated in the Rococo style was like walking right into an elaborate work of art. Everything in the room contributed to the full effect, and visitors could spend all day just admiring all of the creative touches in the room.

The walls and doors were divided into panels, and each panel was decorated with low relief carvings. These decorative designs featured leaves, vines, shells, and other organic designs in swirling patterns. Painted in gold, they stood out like jewels on the white walls. Other colors

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used in the room were light and bright. Bright pastels replaced the earlier dark color palette. Mirrors in elegantly carved and gilded frames added to the total effect.

There were no simple furnishings in the room; each piece of furniture was a unique, ornate creation. The arms, legs, and backs of chairs were all carved in flowing designs from nature. Upholstery was richly patterned and colored.





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That was just the beginning. Every space in the room boasted yet another ornate work of art. There were tapestries, small paintings, silver pieces, and porcelain sculptures everywhere.

Small porcelain figures were especially popular. They were perfect examples of the Rococo style. In fact, during this time period, the ancient art of porcelain manufacture was rediscovered. Porcelain craftsmen were free to use their imaginations to create fanciful sculptures. Some were delicate and pretty; others were more playful and imaginative. Figures that showed great attention to details and gorgeous pastel colors were highly prized.



If a whole room full of Rococo seems like too much for you, how about just one piece? Picture this modern-day Rococo-style clock for sale on the internet. It consists of a small round clock face set in a large porcelain sculpture and is made to sit on your mantle.

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The clock face features delicately painted flowers and gold Roman numbers. The hands are scrolled metal. The clock face is set in a shiny gold frame. Every bit of the clock's surface is covered with curving designs, and the clock sits on four gold feet.

Some people called Rococo a feminine style. Others said that it showed the cheerful, positive outlook of the age. In England, they called it the French style. Some people loved Rococo, while others thought that it was a bit much. **What do you think?**

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### Questions

1. The Rococo era came just after the \_\_\_\_\_ era.  
A. Baroque  
B. Modern  
C. Classical  
D. Medieval

4. Which word best describes the Rococo style?  
A. classical  
B. ornate  
C. simple  
D. dark

5. \_\_\_\_\_ was an element of the Rococo style.  
A. gilding  
B. light, bright colors  
C. designs of leaves, vines, and shells  
D. all of the above

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6. Which of the following would most likely be in the Rococo style?

- A. a smooth, shiny black and chrome desk
- B. a wooden chair with simple straight arms and legs.
- C. a fancy porcelain sculpture with lots of details
- D. a castle with knights and armor

7. Which word does not describe the Rococo style?

- A. ornamental
- B. picturesque
- C. elaborate
- D. uncluttered

8. Which shapes would be least likely to appear in a Rococo style design?

- A. leaves and shells
- B. shapes from nature
- C. curved shapes
- D. geometric shapes

### **Writing Responses**

⇒ Suppose that you were designing a small display entitled "Rococo Style" for a classroom museum. What would you include in your display? Describe the objects, colors, shapes, and other details that you would include. You might want to draw a picture of your display, too.

⇒ Write a paragraph comparing and contrasting the Rococo style to another style of decoration. You might compare it to the style you have in your home, a style that you have seen on TV, or a style from another time period.