

Brief History of Art and design

20th-21st century

# 01 BAUHAUS

(1919–1960)

READING

for English lesson

BAUHAUS



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LIEPĀJAS MŪZIKAS,  
MĀKSLAS un DIZAINA  
VIDUSSKOLA



SUPŠ:UH



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## READING

### A.READ AND FILL THE MISSING WORDS:

**Gap-Fill Exercise: Bauhaus History** Fill in the blanks with the correct word from the three options provided. Circle the correct answer.

Bauhaus was founded by Walter Gropius, in 1919 in Weimar, Germany. The vision was to unite art, craftsmanship, and technology into a cohesive whole, breaking down barriers between the fine arts and applied arts. They aimed to create functional, aesthetically pleasing designs that addressed the needs of modern society post-World War I. The goal was to educate a new generation of designers who could create objects that were both beautiful and \_\_\_\_\_, reflecting the changing world around them.

- a) utilitarian
- b) ornamental
- c) modular

Post-World War I society faced significant challenges, including economic hardship, social upheaval, and a need for rebuilding. The desire for progress and \_\_\_\_\_ in everyday life became crucial. There was a shift toward mass production and a need for affordable housing and goods. Bauhaus aimed to respond to these demands through innovative design principles, promoting functionality and simplicity.

- a) accessibility
- b) efficiency
- c) ornamentation

Simplicity is central to the Bauhaus philosophy because it emphasizes clarity, functionality, and \_\_\_\_\_. By stripping away unnecessary ornamentation, they focused on essential forms and materials that serve a purpose. This approach not only makes designs more efficient to produce but also allows for a more democratic accessibility in art and architecture.

- a) preservation
- b) accessibility
- c) composition

The Bauhaus attracted a diverse group of influential artists and designers. Key figures included Paul Klee, who explored colour and expression; Wassily Kandinsky, known for his abstract works; and Marcel Breuer, who excelled in furniture design. Other notable members were Mies van der Rohe, who later shaped modern \_\_\_\_\_, and László Moholy-Nagy, an advocate for integrating technology and design.

- a) contemporary
- b) architecture
- c) craftsmanship

This collaboration fostered a vibrant exchange of ideas, driving \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) ornamentation
- b) innovation
- c) accessibility

Paul Klee was a painter known for his whimsical and colourful works, often exploring the relationship between colour and line. While not focused on products, his influence on \_\_\_\_\_ design and form is significant.

- a) urban
- b) graphic
- c) modular

Wassily Kandinsky contributed to abstract art and theory. Like Klee, he didn't create specific products, but his theories on colour and \_\_\_\_\_ influenced various design fields.

- a) composition
- b) preservation
- c) accessibility

Marcel Breuer is famous for his furniture design, particularly the Wassily Chair, which utilized tubular steel and exemplified modernism. László Moholy-Nagy was known for his experiments with photography and light. His work in photograms and branding helped define modern visual \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) craftsmanship
- b) sustainability
- c) communication

Mies van der Rohe designed iconic buildings and furniture, including the Barcelona Pavilion and the Barcelona Chair, which reflect his philosophy of "less is more." The Barcelona Chair has a distinctive curvilinear form, combining stainless steel with leather cushions. It reflects elegance and simplicity, embodying the idea of embracing modern materials while ensuring comfort and \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) accessibility
- b) practicality
- c) aesthetic appeal

The Bauhaus school was founded in Weimar, Germany, in 1919 and later moved to Dessau and Berlin. At its peak, it had around 1,200 students, although enrolment fluctuated over the years. Students typically paid \_\_\_\_\_ fees, though financial support was sometimes available for those in need.

- a) tuition
- b) curriculum
- c) preservation

Bauhaus gained international prominence primarily due to its innovative ideas and teachings, which resonated during a transformative period in design. Following its closure in Germany in 1933 due to political pressures, many Bauhaus faculty and students fled to other countries, spreading its principles globally. Key figures like Mies van der Rohe and Marcel Breuer took positions in the United States, where they influenced American \_\_\_\_\_ and design.

- a) composition
- b) urban
- c) architecture

The regime viewed the Bauhaus as a bastion of leftist ideology and a promoter of what they considered “degenerate” art. In 1933, the pressure intensified when the Nazis gained power, leading to increased hostility toward the school. Ultimately, Gropius and other faculty made the difficult decision to close the Bauhaus in Dessau, with many members subsequently fleeing to escape \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) perception
- b) persecution
- c) preservation

This turbulent period showcases how art and design can be deeply affected by political \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) ornamentation
- b) ideologies
- c) prototypes

Czech Functionalism: This architectural movement drew heavily from Bauhaus ideas, focusing on practicality and modernism. Buildings from this era often feature clean lines, large windows, and a lack of \_\_\_\_\_, emphasizing the philosophy of form following function.

- a) ornamentation
- b) integration
- c) accessibility

Today, Bauhaus continues to receive criticism and debate in various contexts: Some critics argue that Bauhaus’s prioritization of \_\_\_\_\_ can lead to designs that neglect emotional and aesthetic considerations.

- a) sustainability
- b) functionality
- c) homogeneity

## B. Reading:

Bauhaus was founded by Walter Gropius, in 1919 in Weimar, Germany. The vision was to unite art, craftsmanship, and technology into a cohesive whole, breaking down barriers between the fine arts and applied arts. They aimed to create functional, aesthetically pleasing designs that addressed the needs of modern society post-World War I. The goal was to educate a new generation of designers who could create objects that were both beautiful and utilitarian, reflecting the changing world around.

Post-World War I society faced significant challenges, including economic hardship, social upheaval, and a need for rebuilding. The desire for progress and functionality in everyday life became crucial. There was a shift toward mass production and a need for affordable housing and goods. Bauhaus aimed to respond to these demands through innovative design principles, promoting functionality and simplicity. We believed that good design could improve quality of life and foster community.

Simplicity is central to the Bauhaus philosophy because it emphasizes clarity, functionality, and accessibility. By stripping away unnecessary ornamentation, they focused on essential forms and materials that serve a purpose. This approach not only makes designs more efficient to produce but also allows for a more democratic accessibility in art and architecture. In a rapidly changing society, simplicity helps people connect with their surroundings and with each other.

The Bauhaus attracted a diverse group of influential artists and designers. Key figures included Paul Klee, who explored colour and expression; Wassily Kandinsky, known for his abstract works; and Marcel Breuer, who excelled in furniture design. Other notable members were Mies van der Rohe, who later shaped modern architecture, and László Moholy-Nagy, an advocate for integrating technology and design. This collaboration fostered a vibrant exchange of ideas, driving innovation.

Paul Klee was a painter known for his whimsical and colourful works, often exploring the relationship between colour and line. While not focused on products, his influence on graphic design and form is significant.

Wassily Kandinsky contributed to abstract art and theory. Like Klee, he didn't create specific products but his theories on colour and composition influenced various design fields.

Marcel Breuer is famous for his furniture design, particularly the Wassily Chair, which utilized tubular steel and exemplified modernism.

László Moholy-Nagy was known for his experiments with photography and light. His work in photograms and branding helped define modern visual communication.

Mies van der Rohe designed iconic buildings and furniture, including the Barcelona Pavilion and the Barcelona Chair, which reflect his philosophy of "less is more."

Wassily Chair by Marcel Breuer: This chair features a sleek, modern design crafted from tubular steel. The seat, back, and arms are made of leather or canvas, creating a visually light and minimalist effect. Its innovative use of materials showcases the Bauhaus principle of functionality.

**Barcelona Chair by Mies van der Rohe:** This chair has a distinctive curvilinear form, combining stainless steel with leather cushions. It reflects elegance and simplicity, embodying the idea of embracing modern materials while ensuring comfort and aesthetic appeal.

**Kandinsky and Klee's artworks:** While not products in the traditional sense, their paintings utilize bold colours and abstract shapes, influencing design principles in graphics, textiles, and architecture through their exploration of form and colour relationships.

These products and artworks exemplify Bauhaus's push for innovation while maintaining usability and beauty.

**Bauhaus Dessau Building:** This architectural masterpiece designed by Walter Gropius, represents the fusion of function and modern design. Its glass facade and open floor plan exemplify the principles of transparency and utility.

**Fagus Factory:** Designed by Gropius and Adolf Meyer, this factory is renowned for its functional design and large glass windows, emphasizing light and space in industrial architecture.

**1926 Model Kitchen:** Created by the Bauhaus student Hilde Reiss, this model kitchen emphasized efficiency and modern conveniences, reflecting the aim to improve everyday life through design.

**Poul Henningsen's PH Lamp:** While not originally part of Bauhaus, it embodies the principles of light design and functionality, influencing many Bauhaus designers.

These products showcase the diverse impact of Bauhaus on architecture and everyday objects.

The Bauhaus school was founded in Weimar, Germany, in 1919 and later moved to Dessau and Berlin. At its peak, it had around 1,200 students, although enrolment fluctuated over the years. Students typically paid tuition fees, though financial support was sometimes available for those in need.

Students varied in age, often ranging from young adults in their late teens to those in their twenties or thirties seeking to change their careers. They were drawn to the Bauhaus to study innovative design, craftsmanship, and the integration of art and technology.

The school offered certificates upon completion of various courses, but it did not confer traditional degrees like a university. Instead, the focus was on practical skills and creative thinking. What specific aspects of the Bauhaus education model do you find most relevant to modern education?

The tuition fees at the Bauhaus varied over the years and by location, but they were generally modest to make the school accessible to a wider range of students. In the early years, fees could be around 100 marks per semester, which was considered affordable at the time. However, specific amounts could vary based on factors such as the student's financial situation and the particular program of study.

The goal was to foster a diverse community of artists and designers dedicated to innovative practices.

Bauhaus gained international prominence primarily due to its innovative ideas and teachings, which resonated during a transformative period in design. Following its closure in Germany in 1933 due to political pressures, many Bauhaus faculty and students fled to other countries, spreading its principles globally.

Key figures, like Mies van der Rohe and Marcel Breuer, took positions in the United States, where they influenced American architecture and design. Others found homes in countries like Switzerland and Israel, establishing schools that continued the Bauhaus philosophy.

This global movement contributed to the establishment of modernist design as a dominant force in the 20th century.

Political pressures that led to the closure of the Bauhaus stemmed primarily from the rise of the Nazi regime in Germany during the early 1930s. The Bauhaus, with its progressive ideas, emphasis on modernism, and embrace of multiculturalism, was seen as a threat by the Nazis, who favoured traditional values and art forms.

The regime viewed the Bauhaus as a bastion of leftist ideology and a promoter of what they considered “degenerate” art. In 1933, the pressure intensified when the Nazis gained power, leading to increased hostility toward the school. Ultimately, Gropius and other faculty made the difficult decision to close the Bauhaus in Dessau, with many members subsequently fleeing to escape persecution.

This turbulent period showcases how art and design can be deeply affected by political ideologies.

Bauhaus had a notable influence in Czechoslovakia, particularly in architecture and design, especially in the 1920s and 1930s. Czech architects such as Karel Capek, who was also a writer, and Hübšch's protégé, were instrumental in integrating Bauhaus principles.

One of the significant figures was architect and designer Adolf Loos, although his work predates Bauhaus, he laid the groundwork for modernist architecture in the region.

The Bat'a Building in Zlín, designed by architect František Lydie Gahura, reflects Bauhaus ideals in its functionalist approach and simplicity, closely aligned with the school's ethos.

Additionally, the Villa Müller, designed by Loos, exemplifies the spatial and functional clarity that Bauhaus promoted, although more aligned with the Vienna School.

The influence also extended to design fields such as furniture and graphic design, with Czech artists adopting and adapting Bauhaus concepts to local contexts.

In Czechoslovakia, the Bauhaus movement inspired a unique blend of modernism and local tradition. Architects and designers were drawn to its principles of functionalism, simplicity, and the integration of art with everyday life.

Karel Capek: While primarily known as a writer, Capek contributed to the cultural discourse of modernism, promoting innovative thinking that influenced architecture and design.

Adolf Loos: Although often associated with the Vienna Secession, Loos's ideas on spatial design and material honesty had a lasting impact on Czech architecture and echoed Bauhaus principles. His Villa Müller in Prague, built in 1930, exemplifies functional aesthetics with its innovative use of space and meticulous attention to materials.

František Lydie Gahura: He designed the Bat'a Building in Zlín, connected to the Bat'a shoe company. This structure exemplifies functionalism, featuring an open layout, glass facades, and an emphasis on light—hallmarks of Bauhaus design.

Czech Functionalism: This architectural movement drew heavily from Bauhaus ideas, focusing on practicality and modernism. Buildings from this era often feature clean lines, large windows, and a lack of ornamentation, emphasizing the philosophy of form following function.

In addition, several design schools and exhibitions in Czechoslovakia promoted Bauhaus ideals, fostering a vibrant community of artists and designers. The legacy of Bauhaus continues to inspire contemporary Czech architecture and design today.

### **Bauhaus faced several criticisms during its time, reflecting the broader socio-political and cultural climate:**

1. **Ideological Opposition:** Critics, particularly from more traditional and conservative factions, viewed Bauhaus as subversive for its modernist ideals. The emphasis on simplicity and functionality was seen as a rejection of historical styles and craftsmanship, leading to accusations of cultural elitism.
2. **Political Opposition:** As the Nazi regime rose to power, Bauhaus was labelled as a promoter of communist and leftist values. The school's progressive ideas on art and design clashed with the Nazi ideology, which favoured classical and nationalist themes.
3. **Perceived Lack of Craftsmanship:** Some traditional artisans and craftspeople criticized Bauhaus for prioritizing mass production over individual craftsmanship. They believed that the school's focus on industrial processes undermined the value of artisanal work.
4. **Abstract Art Critique:** Some members of the art community perceived Bauhaus's experimental and abstract approach as disconnected from reality, arguing that it lacked emotional depth and failed to address social issues effectively.

### **Beyond the criticisms already mentioned, Bauhaus designs faced remarks regarding their aesthetic qualities, particularly:**

1. **Perceived Lack of Warmth:** Critics often described Bauhaus architecture and furniture as cold and impersonal. The reliance on industrial materials, such as steel and glass, was seen to give creations a stark, utilitarian feel that lacked the warmth and character found in traditional, handcrafted designs.
2. **Monotony:** Some observers felt that the emphasis on minimalism led to a monotonous aesthetic across various structures, making urban landscapes feel uniform and devoid of individuality.

3. **Detachment from Human Experience:** Bauhaus's focus on functionality and rationalism sometimes came at the cost of emotional resonance. Critics argued that the designs failed to account for human needs, comfort, and sensory experiences, making spaces feel uninviting.
4. **Neglect of Ornamentation:** While the rejection of ornamentation was a core principle, some believed that the absence of decorative elements stripped buildings and objects of cultural and historical context, leading to a sense of sterility.

### **Today, Bauhaus continues to receive criticism and debate in various contexts:**

1. **Overemphasis on Functionality:** Some critics argue that Bauhaus's prioritization of functionality can lead to designs that neglect emotional and aesthetic considerations. This has sparked discussions about balancing form and function in contemporary design.
2. **Cultural Homogeneity:** Critics point out that Bauhaus promotes a kind of aesthetic uniformity that can overlook local cultural contexts and identities. There's an ongoing conversation around how modernism, influenced by Bauhaus, often results in similar-looking buildings globally.
3. **Neglect of Human Scale:** Some argue that many Bauhaus-influenced structures can feel large and impersonal, lacking a sense of intimacy or connection to the surrounding human environment. This raises questions about how architecture can better engage with human experience.
4. **Sustainability Concerns:** In the context of today's environmental challenges, some critics argue that Bauhaus, with its industrial methods, may contribute to unsustainable practices. There's a growing emphasis on eco-friendly materials and designs that prioritize sustainability alongside functionality.
5. **Limited Scope of Impact:** While Bauhaus influenced the field of architecture and design significantly, critics assert that its principles have been diluted in commercial contexts, often resulting in designs that mimic its forms without any of the underlying philosophy.

These critiques reflect broader shifts in society's values concerning design, emphasizing the need for inclusivity, sustainability, and emotional resonance in contemporary practice. What aspects of modern design do you think should prioritize to address these critiques?

## **You've raised important points that reflect ongoing debates within modern architecture.**

Firstly, many modernist designs, influenced by Bauhaus, do often appear more suited to open spaces rather than integrating seamlessly into existing urban or rural contexts. This can lead to a sense of disconnect between the built environment and the landscape, which is a valid concern for architects today.

Secondly, the issue of affordability is critical. While the original Bauhaus vision emphasized mass production to make design accessible, many contemporary "modern" homes can be prohibitively expensive. The focus on unique forms, high-quality materials, and technological integrations contributes to rising costs, limiting access to many.

These challenges highlight the need for a renewed commitment to Bauhaus principles of functionality and community-oriented design. Architects are increasingly exploring sustainable practices that prioritize local materials, adaptable designs, and community needs. This can help ensure that modern architecture remains relevant, inviting, and accessible while respecting its surroundings.

## **Bauhaus significantly influenced various fields while having a limited impact on others:**

### **ART FIELDS INFLUENCED BY BAUHAUS:**

1. **Furniture Design:** The Bauhaus revolutionized furniture design, emphasizing functionality, simplicity, and the use of modern materials. Iconic pieces like the Wassily Chair exemplify this blending of form and function.
2. **Architecture:** Bauhaus architects adopted clean lines, open spaces, and an integration of materials, shaping the modernist architectural landscape we see today. This approach has profoundly influenced urban design and residential architecture.
3. **Graphic Design:** The school played a pivotal role in modern graphic design, emphasizing typography, layout, and the use of asymmetry. Prominent figures like Herbert Bayer contributed significantly to this field.
4. **Textile Design:** Bauhaus influenced textile design through patterns and material experimentation, merging art and industry. Designers like Anni Albers explored weaving techniques, integrating artistic expression with practical applications.

### **ART FIELDS LESS INFLUENCED:**

1. **Traditional Fine Arts:** While painting and sculpture saw some influence, many traditional artists rejected Bauhaus ideas, favoring expression, ornamentation, and emotional depth over the school's minimalist approach.
2. **Craft Art:** Areas such as pottery and woodworking often retained a focus on craftsmanship and traditional techniques, which sometimes conflicted with Bauhaus principles prioritizing mass production and industrial methods.

3. **Cultural and Figurative Arts:** These areas often focus on narrative, symbolism, and cultural storytelling, which can clash with the Bauhaus emphasis on abstraction, functionality, and a universal visual language.

The varying influences stem from differing philosophies: while Bauhaus sought to unify art with everyday life and industry, other fields retained traditional approaches focused on personal expression or cultural narratives.

**Name Origin: The term “Bauhaus” translates to “building house” in German and reflects the school’s focus on architecture and design.**

1. **The Bauhaus Logo:** The original logo, designed by Herbert Bayer, featured a simple geometric design, emphasizing the school’s commitment to modernity and simplicity.
2. **Short Lifespan:** Despite its profound influence, the Bauhaus only existed for 14 years (1919-1933) but left a lasting legacy on art, design, and architecture.
3. **Color Theory:** Paul Klee’s work was influential in the exploration of color theory within Bauhaus, with his famous saying, “Color is the keyboard, the eyes are the harmonies, the soul is the piano with many strings.”
4. **Student Diversity:** The Bauhaus attracted students from diverse fields, including painters, sculptors, architects, and even engineers, fostering a rich multidisciplinary environment.
5. **Famous Alumni:** Besides the well-known figures like Gropius and Breuer, other notable alumni include artist Josef Albers, who went on to teach at the Black Mountain College in the U.S.
6. **Bauhaus and Design Competitions:** The Bauhaus often participated in design competitions, showcasing innovative ideas. One such design, the Fagus Factory, won acclaim for its groundbreaking architecture.
7. **Global Impact:** Although it originated in Germany, Bauhaus ideas significantly influenced design movements worldwide, including the International Style in architecture.
8. **Closure Under Pressure:** The Bauhaus faced political pressure from the Nazi regime, forcing it to close its doors, but many members continued to spread its philosophies globally, especially in the U.S.
9. **Bauhaus Still Relevant:** Many design schools today reference Bauhaus principles in curriculum and practice, underscoring the movement’s ongoing relevance in contemporary design.

**ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS , SHARE WITH YOUR PARTNER:**

1. Bauhaus aimed to combine art, craftsmanship, and technology. How do you think this approach influenced modern design, and do you see any similar movements or schools of thought today?
2. Simplicity was a core principle of Bauhaus. In what ways do you think minimalism helps or hinders the emotional or functional aspects of design in our current society?
3. Bauhaus sought to create affordable, functional designs for post-war society. In what ways do you think modern architecture and design could address current societal challenges, such as sustainability and affordability?
4. Many critics of Bauhaus felt its designs were cold and lacked warmth. How important is emotional resonance in design, and how can functionality and warmth be balanced in architecture or products?
5. Bauhaus had a significant influence on architecture, graphic design, and furniture. Why do you think its impact was less pronounced in fields like traditional fine arts and craft art?
6. Bauhaus was criticized for prioritizing industrial production over individual craftsmanship. Do you think mass production and artisanal craftsmanship can coexist in modern design? Why or why not?
7. Given that Bauhaus designs were criticized for lacking cultural context and being uniform, how important do you think it is for design to reflect local traditions and cultures in a globalized world?
8. Many Bauhaus designers fled Germany due to political pressure from the Nazi regime. How do you think political and social ideologies can impact art and design, and can art be truly separated from politics?