

# Abstract Artist Fact Sheet

**Mark Rothko**  
**1903 - 1970**



Mark Rothko was born in Russia in 1903. He and his family moved to Oregon when he was 10 years old. His father died shortly after he moved to America and young Rothko had to work very hard to help support his family. Rothko did well in school and earned a scholarship to Yale University but he left after two years.

Rothko moved to New York to study Design. He made friends with many young people who wanted to be artists and they spent a lot of time thinking of new ways to express themselves. At first, Rothko did not make a lot of money as an artist and he had to work as a teacher of painting and sculpture to earn a living.

Like most abstract artists, Rothko began with 'representational' paintings that clearly showed landscapes and people. Later, he became interested in mythology and experimented with using creatures from myths as the subjects for his paintings. Eventually, he started to believe that simple shapes and bold colours were the best way to express big emotions.



By 1949 Rothko had developed his 'signature style', with several rectangles of colour on a different coloured background. Rothko chose his colours very carefully to create different feelings. He painted on huge canvases and suggested that people stand very close to them. Rothko wanted people to feel like they were inside his paintings. This kind of art, made up of big blocks of colour, became known as 'Colour Field'.

By the time of his death in 1970 Rothko was one of the most famous and successful artists in the world.

Work: White and Greens