

Thirty-Minute Essay Questions from Earlier AP Exams

A: In most parts of the world, public sculpture is a common and accepted sight. Identify three works of public sculpture whose effects are different from one another. Describe the three works. Then discuss how each functions within its particular setting, comparing and contrasting the works in terms of their characteristics and in terms of the relation of each to its setting.

B: How do artists deal with the invisible? Identify two works, each from a different period, that specifically address problems of conveying what is not visible. Compare and contrast the ways in which the two works approach and resolve this problem. Use the two works you have selected as the basis for your discussion.

C: The manipulation of color has been one of the most forceful tools in the hands of the painter. Choose **three** works--one prior to 1800, one from the nineteenth century, and one from the twentieth century--in which color is an important concern. Explain how and to what effect color is used in each of the three.

D: Through the processes of idealization, abstraction, and stylization, religious art often represents religious figures as above the ordinary. Choose a religious work of art from **two** of the following areas: ancient, classical, Christian, non-Western. Use the two works you have chosen to discuss how the human form has been modified to show spiritual nature.

E: Identify **two** examples of architectural sculpture, each from a different art historical period. Discuss the style of each work, its physical relationship to its architectural setting, and the ways in which it enhances the function of the building of which it is a part.

F: Political or social events have often inspired artists to produce works of art. Identify **two** paintings in which contemporary events, such as battles, disasters, or new items, are the subject matter. Discuss the way the artist's treatment of the subject presents a particular point of view and illuminates the event. Choose one work from before 1900 and one from the twentieth century.

G: The character of a work of art is at least partly determined by the materials used to create it. Choose and identify **three** works, each done in a different two-dimensional medium (some suggestions for media are found in the list below). Briefly discuss the nature of each medium used and explain how its characteristics and limitations have contributed to the style and impact of the work of art. You may choose three media from the list below or select other appropriate two-dimensional media.

Mosaic	Tempera	Watercolor	Pastel	Etching
Oil	Fresco	Pencil	Pen and ink	Tapestry
Acrylic	Stained glass	Collage	Weaving	Photography
Woodcut	Engraving			

H: Art has often been used to create and convey the power of the ruler and/or the state. Identify **two** works of sculpture from two different art historical periods. Compare and contrast the ways in which each work expresses a concept of authority.

Buildings used for religious purposes have been created by many cultures around the world. Select **two** such buildings, each built for a different religion. Discuss how the form and decoration of each building serve its religious function.

J: Artists have often portrayed themselves in their works. Identify **two** such images or portrayals, each by a different artist. Discuss how each work reveals the artist's view of herself or himself and reflects ideas about the artist's role in her or his society.

K: Major changes in architectural form and function are often made possible by new construction methods or new materials. Discuss such changes in two different art historical periods, at least one before 1800. Use specific buildings as examples to support your discussion.

L: Many works of art, such as paintings, sculptures, and monuments, have celebrated famous individuals, for example, writers, actors, military or religious leaders, political figures, and philosophers. Identify **two** such works, each from a different art historical period, and compare the ways in which each work celebrates the individual.

M: Buildings can relate to their sites in various ways. Choosing **two** buildings, discuss one building in terms of its physical relationship to its site and the other in terms of its symbolic or historical relationship to its site. Identify each building by name and period.

N: Select **two** paintings, one before 1800 and one after 1800, in which the artist has depicted the daily life of her or his own time as the subject. Identify each work by artist and title and compare the ways in which the artists depict the subject matter.

O: Many artists have been interested in creating the illusion of movement on two-dimensional surfaces. Identify by artist and title **two** such two-dimensional works, each from a different century, in which the artist is concerned with implying movement. Discuss the techniques that each artist used to depict movement.

P: Choose two sculptural groups created after 500 BC. that are free-standing (sculpture in the round) and that include two or more figures. Identify each work as specifically as possible. Discuss the ways in which each sculptor treated the relationship among the figures within the group, the relationship of the group to its surrounding space, and the relationship of the group to the viewer.

Q: In depicting significant events from their own times, artists interpret those events in a variety of ways. Identify by title and artist (if historically known) two depictions, in any medium, of events from the artist's own time--one depiction before 1500, the other after 1500. For each work, discuss the visual and stylistic means used by the artist to convey a social or political interpretation of the event.

R: Choose and identify **TWO** Post-Impressionist paintings by different artists. Discuss the ways in which each artist used and modified the basic concepts of Impressionism.

S: Select two portrait paintings (NOT SELF-PORTRAITS), each of a single individual by different artists, and from different periods. Identify each work by title and artist. How does each work reflect the stylistic tendency of the artist's own time? Compare and contrast how each artist portrays the person's individuality.

T: The representation of light in painting has been used to serve a variety of purposes. Identify two artists, each from a different art historical period, who have explored the effects of light. Discuss the function and use of light in specific works by each artist.

U: Representations of the human body vary considerably in different periods and cultures. Fully identify two specific representations of the human figure, each from a different period or culture. Discuss how each work reflects the cultural value of its time period or the place where it was made.

V: In order to understand works of art fully, one must understand their original or intended settings. For example, most works of art in museums have been fully removed from their original settings. Often a work's original setting has been altered or destroyed or was never completed as planned. Fully identify two works of art that have been moved from their original settings. Each example must come from a different original or intended settings. Discuss how knowledge of the original settings contributes to a more complete understanding of each work.

W: The relationship between an artist or architect and a patron very often shapes the form and content of a work of art or architecture. Identify two works, each from a different art historical period, and name the specific persons who commissioned them. Discuss how the specific interests and intentions of the particular patrons are revealed in each work.

X: Frequently in the history of art, artists and architects have challenged established traditions. Select and fully identify two works that challenged established traditions. One example must have been produced before 1800 C.E. Discuss how and why each work constituted a significant challenge to the artistic conventions of its time.

IMPORTANT CHANGE IN 2006

The College Board Art History Course Description for May 2006 and 2007 states on page 36, "Beginning in 2006, topics for the long essay question requiring incorporation of art beyond the European tradition will not be announced in advance.

Themes and topics for this essay question have included, but are not limited to, the following:

- **The human body in art**
- **Objects related to religious ritual**
- **Narrative in art**
- **Sacred spaces (religious architecture and sites)**
- **How art (including architecture) conveys power and authority"**

The implication of this is that students who think about these themes all through the course should be prepared to perform well on this essay. Examples of how these topics have been addressed in the past follow:

ANNOUNCED TOPICS USED:

- 1: 1998: Many cultures designate spaces or create structures for religious devotion. Choose two specific examples, each from a different culture. At least one culture must be non-European or non-European based. Identify your examples and their cultures. Discuss the ways in which your examples create places appropriate for religious devotion in each culture. Consider (if applicable) plan, orientation, site, structure, ornamentation, etc.**
- 2: 1999: In many cultures, artists have produced images for religious use. Name two images, such as wall decorations, sculptures, or other objects, each from a different culture. At least one image must be from a non-European or non-European-based culture. Discuss how the images conform to the beliefs of the culture in which they were produced, and in what ways each contributed to reinforcing those beliefs.**
- 3: 2000: Choose two specific images of power and authority, each produced by a different culture. At least one must come from a non-European based culture. How does each work of art convey that particular culture's notion of what constitutes power and authority?**
- 4: 2001: Virtually all of the world's cultures have defined sacred spaces for religious purposes. The design and appearance of these spaces vary greatly. Fully identify two specific sacred spaces, one of which must be from beyond the European tradition. For each choice, discuss the relationship between the appearance of the space and its religious function.**
- 5: 2002: Many cultures use architecture to reinforce power and authority. Choose two works of architecture from different cultures, identifying each work as fully as possible. At least one work must come from beyond the European tradition. Discuss how each work conveys power and authority.**
- 6: 2003: The human body is often highly stylized or abstracted in works of art. Fully identify two works from different cultures in which the body has been highly stylized or abstracted. At least one of your choices must be a work from beyond the European tradition. Discuss how the stylization or abstraction of each figure is related to cultural and/or religious ideas.**
- 7: 2004: This question asks you to explore the stylistic relationships between the form and content of figurative art. How a culture is perceived is often expressed in depictions of the human figure. Choose two specific representations of the human body from different cultures. Only one of your choices may be from a European artistic tradition. Discuss significant aspects of each culture that are revealed by the way in which the human body is depicted.**
- 8: 2005: Most cultures have made use of art's narrative function. Select and fully identify two works of art that visually convey a narrative. At least one of your choices must be from beyond the European tradition. Identify the subject of each narrative and discuss the means used to convey the narrative.**
- 9: 2006 – First Year without announced topics**

Throughout history, works of art have included symbolic or allegorical images. Select and fully identify two works of art that include symbolic or allegorical images. Your choices must be from different art historical periods. Discuss how each work uses symbols or allegory to convey meaning.

10: Non-European question in 2006:

Representations of the natural world or motifs from nature are found in the art of all times and places. Choose and fully identify two appropriate works of art from two different cultures. One of your choices must be from beyond the European tradition. Explain why and how each work uses representations of the natural world or motifs from nature.