
Long Essay Questions

Religious Spaces (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.

Portraits (1998)

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

Religious Images (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.

Light (1999)

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.

Power and Authority (2000)

Choose two specific images of power and authority, each produced in a different culture. At least one must come from a non-European-based tradition. How does each work of art convey that particular culture's notion of what constitutes power and authority?

Observed Reality (2000)

Many artists radically transform actual observation and experience in order to express their unique artistic vision. Select TWO works, each by a different artist. Discuss ways in which each artist has radically transformed observed reality in order to achieve a personal vision.

Sacred Spaces (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, at least 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.

The Human Figure (2001)

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 values of its time period or the place where it was made.

Power and Authority (2002)

Many cultures use architecture to express or 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.

Image and Text (2002)

Works of art often combine images with text. Choose and fully identify two specific works made after 500 CE that combine images with text. The works must come from different art historical periods. Note: Do not choose works with text consisting only of names, labels, or artists' signatures. Discuss the relationship between text and image in the two works you have chosen.

The Human Body (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.

Setting and Context of Works of Art (2003)

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 removed from their original setting. Often a work's original setting had been altered or destroyed or was never completed as planned. Fully identify two works of art that have been removed from their original settings. Each example must come from a different original or intended setting. Discuss how knowledge of the original settings contributes to a more complete understanding of each work.

Human Body (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 depiction 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.

Artist and Patron (2004)

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 interest and intentions of particular patrons are revealed in each work.

Narrative in Art (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.

Artist as Innovator (2005)

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 CE. Discuss how and why each work constituted a significant challenge to accepted artists' conventions of its time.

Natural World or Motifs from Nature (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 representation of the natural world or motifs from nature.

Allegorical or Symbolic Art (2006)

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.

Hostility or Violence in Works of Art (2007)

Through history, art representing hostility or violence has been used for a variety of purposes. Select and fully identify two works of art from two different cultures, one of which must be from beyond the European tradition. Explain how and why each work of art communicated hostility or violence.

Technological Developments in Art (2008)

Throughout history, technological developments have enabled artists and architects to express ideas in new ways. Choose and fully identify two works of art or architecture and the specific technological development that made each work possible. One of your choices must date before 1800 CE and one must date after 1800 CE. For each work, analyze how the technological development enabled the artist or architect to express ideas in new ways.

Cultural Attitudes About Women (2008)

Cultural attitudes about women are often revealed in art. Select and fully identify two works of art that depict one or more women. The works must come from two different cultures, one of which must be from beyond the European tradition. Explain how each work reveals its culture's attitudes about women.

Art Since the 1960s (2008)

Art since the 1960s encompasses a wide variety of approaches. Address this variety of approaches through the careful choice and detailed discussion of two works of art made between 1960 and the present. The two works must be by different artists OR in different media. Be sure to fully identify each work.

Sacred Space (2009)

Cultures designate sacred space in a variety of ways to accommodate both religious beliefs and practices. Select and fully identify two examples of sacred spaces from different cultures, one of which must be from beyond the European tradition. Discuss how each space accommodated both religious beliefs and practices within its culture.

Self-Portraiture (2009)

Self-portraiture provides a wide range of information about the artist in addition to physical appearance. Choose and fully identify self-portraits, in any medium, each from a different art-historical period. Analyze how each self-portrait conveys information about the artist and his or her era.

Depiction of Ancestors and Family Groupings (2010)

Artists within a culture often use depictions of ancestors, siblings, couples, or other types of family groupings to communicate larger social, political, mythical, and historical concerns. Select and fully identify two works, in any medium, that represent family groups or relationships. The works should come from two different cultures. At least one of the two examples must be from beyond the European tradition. Discuss the specific cultural concerns two works communicate and analyze the visual means used to communicate those concerns.

Propaganda (2010)

Throughout history, art has been used as propaganda to shape public opinion. Propaganda takes many forms such as architecture, paintings, and print media, and is used to promote religious, political, and social ideologies. Select and fully identify two works, in any medium, that were used to shape public opinion. One of your examples must date before 1900 CE, and one must date after 1900 CE. Citing specific elements in each work, analyze how each work conveyed its propagandistic message to its intended audience.

Religious Images (2011)

The visual representation of deities and holy personages is a feature of religious beliefs and practices throughout the world. Select and fully identify two examples of representations of deities or holy personages, in any medium, from two different cultures. At least one of your choices must be from beyond the European tradition. Using specific visual evidence, analyze each work in relation to the religious beliefs and practices.

Outdoor (Public) Art Works (2011)

Throughout history, art in a wide variety of media has been situated in outdoor public spaces to convey meaning to specific audiences. Select and fully identify two such works. One of your examples must date before 1850 CE, and one must date after 1850 CE. For each work, analyze how the work and its placement conveyed meaning to its specific audience within its outdoor public space.

Materials that have Cultural Significance (2012)

Select and fully identify two specific works made from materials that have cultural significance. At least none of your choices must be from beyond the European tradition. For each work, analyze how the use of particular materials shapes the meaning (religious, social, and/or political).

Domestic Space (2012)

For a variety of reasons, artists throughout history have created works of art that depict domestic (household) space. Select and fully identify two works of art that depict domestic space. One of your choices must date prior to 1700 CE, and one must date after 1700 CE. Using specific visual evidence, analyze how the depiction of domestic space in each work communicates meaning.

Sites of Religious Pilgrimage (2013)

Across the world, sites and structures have been the destination of people on religious pilgrimages. Select and clearly identify two sites or structures of religious pilgrimages. Your choices must come from two different cultural traditions; at least one of your choices must come from beyond the European tradition. Using specific visual evidence, analyze how features of each site or structure shape the intended experience of the pilgrims.

Narrative (2013)

Throughout history, narrative has been used in art to communicate social, political, or religious meaning. Select and clearly identify two works of art that use narrative. One of your examples must date before 1800 CE and one must date after 1800 CE. For each work, identify the content of the narrative and analyze how the work uses narrative to communicate social, political, or religious meaning.

Landscape (2014)

The creation or representation of landscape (both the natural and/or built environment) is a cultural construct. Different cultures use a variety of approaches to create or represent landscape to communicate meaning. Select and clearly identify two examples of the creation or representation of landscape, in any medium, from two different cultures. At least one of your choices must come beyond the European tradition. Using specific evidence from each of our examples, analyze both how that landscape is created or represented and how that landscape communicated meaning within the culture that produced it.

Identity (2014)

Since the 1960s many artists have investigated issues of identity in their work. Their investigations relate to larger cultural concerns. Select and clearly identify two such works made between 1960 CE and the present. The works must be by two different artists; the works may be in any media. Using specific evidence, analyze both how each artist investigates issues of identity in their work and how each investigation related to larger cultural concerns.

Non-AP Examples

Building Functions

Although the world is filled with diverse cultural traditions, there exist certain similarities in purpose among the buildings of each culture. Choose and fully identify two buildings that have similar functions. Each building must be from a different culture. One of your choices must be from beyond the European tradition. Identify and describe the specific purpose of each building. Discuss the manner in which they reflect their respective cultures.

Peasants and Laborers

Artists have presented peasants and laborers in various ways. Select and fully identify two specific paintings. Your choices must be from different periods in art history. Discuss the similarities and differences in the ways the artists presented peasants and/or laborers.

Political and Religious Leaders

Many works of art have represented important political and religious leaders. Select and fully identify two works of art, each from a different culture. At least one culture must be from beyond the European tradition. Describe the ways in which each work portrays the leader and visual represents his or her roles, achievements, and beliefs

Light

The visual effect of light is a very important element in some paintings. Choose and fully identify two paintings – one from before 1800 CE and one from after 1800 CE – in which light and its effects are an important element. Compare and contrast the role played by light in each painting.

Heads

Human heads have often been a focus for artists, sometimes depicted independently from bodies, sometimes in disproportion to the bodies on which they are placed. Choose two works of art from two different cultures – at least one must be from beyond the European tradition – and discuss the relationship of the head to the rest of the body.

Landscape

Artist have often been inspired by nature and have used landscape painting as a way to express their feelings. Choose two works of art from two different cultures – at least one must be from beyond the European tradition – that expressively uses landscape painting. Explain how each approach to landscape is different, and how those differences reflect a cultural statement about landscapes and nature.

The Divine Human Form

Cultures often require that artist create images of the divine expresses in human form. Choose two works of art in which a human had been invested with divine qualities, and explain how the artist rendered the divine qualities that the human image possesses. At least one work must be from beyond the European tradition.

Sacred Religious Sites

Buildings are often on sacred religious sites. Choose two buildings that are located on important sites and discuss how the buildings take into consideration the importance of the site in its construction.

Non-Independent Self-Portraits

For various reasons, painters have often included themselves in their works of art. Choose two works that are not independent self-portraits from two different periods and explain where the artist has placed himself or herself in the composition and discuss the relationship this artist has with the rest of the painting.

Perspective

Perspective has been a principal tool used by painters since the Renaissance. Sometimes artists strictly adhere to the formulas or perspective; other times they deviate widely from it. Choose two works, one from which faithfully uses perspectives and one which deviates from the formula, and explain the effects the artist wanted to achieve with each.

Commemorating the Dead

Many works of art have been designed to commemorate the dead. Choose two works, at least one of which must be from beyond the European tradition, that memorialize a dead person, and discuss how the artist's interpretation of the subject's life creates a fitting memorial for him or her.

Private Homes

Private homes have been fertile ground for architectural expression. Select and fully identify two buildings from two different art-historical periods and discuss the ways in which the architect designed the home to reflect the time in which it was built.

Appropriation

Throughout history, artists have appropriated images and/or architectural motifs/building forms from the past, or from other culture, reinterpreting them for new purposes and effects. Select two artists or specific works of art/architecture from different art historical periods and identify the earlier works appropriated. Discuss how each new (later work) has altered the original image to achieve new meaning or purpose.

Metaphor and Allegory

Throughout history, artists have used art and architecture to express eternal truths and complex ideas. Select two works of art or architecture from different historical periods that use an image (or images) or building forms metaphorically or allegorically. Discuss the function and meaning of each image in relation to the artist or the art historical period.