

AP Art History Essay Prompts - examples

Notes:

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. (30 minutes)

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. For each work, identify the content of the narrative and analyze how the work uses narrative to communicate social, political, or religious meaning. (30 minutes)

The general view and detail show the Arch of Constantine.
What was the intended meaning of the monument? Analyze how the reuse of sculptural fragments from other Roman works of art reinforces the intended meaning of the monument.
(10 minutes)

The work is *The School of Athens* by Raphael. Analyze how both the subject matter and the style of the work reflects humanist interests during the High Renaissance. (10 minutes)

Attribute the painting to the artist who painted it. Justify your attribution by discussing specific visual characteristics of the painting that are commonly associated with the work of that artist. (10 minutes)
The Meeting at the Golden Gate, painted in 1305 C.E. by Giotto di Bondone

The works were painted by two different artists associated with the nineteenth century movement called Realism. Using specific evidence, analyze how the works reflect the artists' contrasting views of Realism. (10 minutes)
Burial at Ornans (1849–1850) by Gustave Courbet and, on the right, *The Gleaners* (1857) by Jean-François Millet

The plan and the aerial view show the Great Mosque of Djenné in present day Mali. Identify specific features in the building that are distinctive to mosque architecture. Analyze how mosque architecture relates to the practices of Islam. (10 minutes)

During the last 50 years, many artists have addressed the relationship between technology and how people experience the world. According to artist Nam June Paik, "Our life is half natural and half technological." Paik has also commented, "Skin has become inadequate in interfacing with reality. Technology has become the body's new membrane of existence." Select and clearly identify one work of art created after 1960 C.E. that addresses the relationship between technology and how people experience the world. Your selection may be a work in video, photography, or installation, as well as a work in any other medium.
Making specific reference to both Paik's words and your selected work, analyze how your example addresses the relationship between technology and how people experience the world. (10 minutes)

Across the world, particular materials that have cultural significance have been used to shape the meaning of works of art. Select and fully identify two specific works made from materials that have cultural significance. At least one of your choices must come from beyond the European tradition. For each work, analyze how the use of particular

materials shapes the meaning (religious, social, and/or political) of the work within its cultural context. (30 minutes)

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 C.E., and one must date after 1700 C.E. Using specific visual evidence, analyze how the depiction of domestic space in each work communicates meaning. (30 minutes)

Attribute the painting to the artist who painted it. Justify your attribution by discussing specific visual characteristics of the painting that are commonly associated with the work of that artist. (10 minutes) The painting is *Rain, Steam and Speed: The Great Western Railway* (1844) by Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775–1851)

Both images shown are from the illuminated manuscript known as the *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*. Compare and contrast the two images to analyze how social class is portrayed and how this portrayal relates to the meaning of the manuscript as a whole. (10 minutes)

The work shown is *Guernica* by Pablo Picasso. In the book *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics*, Picasso is quoted as making the following statement.

“What do you think an artist is? An imbecile who has only eyes if he’s a painter . . . ? On the contrary, he’s at the same time a political being, constantly alive to heartrending, fiery, or happy events, to which he responds in every way. . . . No, painting is not done to decorate apartments. It is an instrument of war for attack and defense against the enemy.”

Making specific reference to both the quotation and the painting, analyze how Picasso expresses both emotional and political content in *Guernica*. (10 minutes)

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 within its culture. (30 minutes)

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 C.E., and one must date after 1850 C.E. For each work, analyze how the work and its placement conveyed meaning to its specific audience within its outdoor public space. (30 minutes)

Identify the period in which the ceiling was decorated. How did the artistic elements of the ceiling correspond to the historical context when it was decorated? (10 minutes)

The image shown is *The Triumph of the Name of Jesus* by Giovanni Battista Gaulli. Baroque / counter Reformation

Attribute the work to a specific art-historical period. Justify your attribution by discussing specific characteristics of the work that are commonly associated with that art-historical period. (10 minutes) The work shown is the carved portal (known as the *Porte Miégevillie*) from the south transept of the church of Saint Sernin, Toulouse (circa 1115).

In 1917 a Dada artist submitted a mass-produced urinal as a sculpture to an exhibition in New York City. What was the artist’s real name? How did the artist’s submission challenge conventional ways of thinking about art and artists? (10 minutes)

In the mid-fifth century B.C.E., a Greek sculptor wrote a treatise entitled the Canon that was summarized as follows. Beauty consists in the proportion, not of the elements, but of the parts, that is to say, of finger to finger, and of all the fingers to the palm and the wrist, and of these to the forearm, and of the forearm to the upper arm, and of all the other parts to each other. Identify the sculptor who wrote the Canon. Select and fully identify one work of art that reflects his ideas. Making specific reference to both the text above and your selected work, analyze how the work reflects those ideas. (10 minutes)

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 C.E., and one must date after 1900 C.E. Citing specific elements in each work, analyze how each work conveyed its propagandistic message to its intended audience. (30 minutes)

The work shown is a late-nineteenth-century print by Mary Cassatt. With which art-historical movement is the artist associated? Analyze how the work incorporates the influence of Japanese prints in both style and subject matter. (10 minutes) Left: Mary Cassatt, *La Toilette (Woman Bathing)*, c. 1891 Right: Blank

In his 1912 book *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, the Expressionist painter Wassily Kandinsky wrote the following. “Generally speaking, color directly influences the soul. Color is the keyboard, the eyes are the hammers, the soul is the piano with many strings. The artist is the hand that plays, touching one key or another purposively, to cause vibrations in the soul.” Select and fully identify at least one Expressionist painting that reflects Kandinsky’s ideas about art. Making specific reference to both the quotation above and your selected work, analyze how your example reflects Expressionist ideas. (10 minutes)

Left image: *Saint Michael the Archangel*, right leaf of an ivory diptych, early sixth century C.E. Right image: Blank The work shown is a sixth-century ivory relief depicting *Saint Michael the Archangel*. Which elements tie the work to the Classical tradition? Which elements deviate from the Classical tradition? (5 minutes)

In a letter published in 1861, Gustave Courbet declared, “[An artist must apply] his personal faculties to the ideas and events of the times in which he lives. . . . [A]rt in painting should consist only in the representation of things visible and tangible to the artist. Every age should be respected only by its own artists, that is to say, by the artists who have lived in it. I also maintain that painting is an essentially concrete art form and can consist only of the representation of both real and existing things.” Identify the nineteenth-century artistic movement associated with the above quotation. Select and fully identify at least one work of art from that movement. Analyze how your example reflects Courbet’s approach to the making of art. In your answer, make specific references to both the text and the selected work. (10 minutes)

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. (30 minutes)