

Summer Project-AP Art History

Art serves many functions. It can demonstrate religious fervor, political power, or provide social commentary. Artwork can also be personal expressions of an artist's emotions, sexuality, faith, global visions, or psychosis. In many instances, artwork can also act as a primary historical source. Upon close examination, students of art history can use painting, architecture, photography, and sculpture as windows into the past.

In the past most art was analyzed solely on the merits of an artist's biography. Historians would ask questions like: "What happened in the life of the artist to cause him to paint in such a manner?" Or "What was the artist feeling when he created this work?" More modern scholarship suggests that art can always be understood regardless of biography. Therefore, one can fully understand a work despite an artist's life. In this project you will explore the life and style of a specific artist. You will attempt to determine if an artist's biography is a necessary criteria in analyzing art.

The completed project is due on AUGUST 1, 2008. You may email the project to me or place it in my mailbox at SJC. If the project is not handed in on time students will be removed from the class.

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The Painting

This summer you will examine the painting and life of Vincent Van Gogh and his closest influences.

Part One:

Close Observation

1. Choose four of Van Gogh's paintings, two of Gauguin's paintings, two of Monet's paintings, and two of Latrec's paintings on display at the National Gallery.
2. Take the time to examine each painting closely.
3. Visit the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC. Seeing the paintings both in person and next to each other is a valuable observation tool. The students who see the paintings in person will have a much easier time with the assignment and will complete it in a much shorter time!
4. For each painting make 7-10 observations. Note: These observations can be either simple or complex. Simple observations may be about topics such as subject, style, colors etc. Complicated observations may include topics such as religion, inconsistencies, realism, and social class. Good observations will include both simple and complicated observations.
5. Type your observations under the appropriate painting title. The observations must be written in complete sentences. Include an explanation for your more in-depth observations. (Your observation may be a matter of opinion...prove it to me!)

The Literature Part Two: Literary Comparison

1. Read, *Lust for Life* by Irving Stone
2. While you are doing the reading keep in mind the observations that you made at the gallery.
3. Most importantly, enjoy the book. It's long but it is worth it!

The Paper

Part Three: Tie it all together

1. In addition to handing in your painting selections and typed observations, please prepare for me a 5-7 page response paper on the following topic: Is an understanding an artists life, emotional state, and point of view necessary in order to have a complete understanding of his/her art? Please make reference to at least five works of art you have studied at the gallery when you attempt to answer this question. Consider the works of both Van Gogh and his contemporaries. How much was van Gogh's art a product of his biography? How much was it a product of the influence of theirs? Was he simply a product of his time, religion, or society? Use the information gathered in your reading of the novel but also remember that it is a NOVEL. It is based on factual evidence, however, if you want to check the validity of a specific fact make sure you check with another source.
2. Writing about art is difficult. Make sure you use a painting like a primary source. Be specific and descriptive. Do not make assumptions that you do not know to be true.
3. Use appropriate footnotes and citations. Refer to the Modern Language Association.
4. Paper and observations must be handed in to turnitin.com by AUGUST 1, 2008.
CLASS ID: 2280467
ENROLLMENT PASSWORD: arthistory

This project will count as your first test grade of the quarter. Have a wonderful summer!