2018



AP Art History Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary

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Question 6

The work shown is the Delphic Sibyl in the Sistine Chapel, painted by Michelangelo c. 1508–1512 C. E.

Describe the visual characteristics of the Delphic Sibyl.

Using <u>at least two</u> examples of specific visual evidence, explain how the visual characteristics of the Delphic Sibyl reference and/or depart from the classical tradition of Ancient Greece and Rome.

Describe the place that the Delphic Sibyl occupies within the larger iconographic program of the Sistine Chapel.

Using specific contextual evidence, explain how the inclusion of the Delphic Sibyl within the larger iconographic program of the Sistine Chapel represents the ideals of the Renaissance.

Scoring Criteria

Та	Task Points	
1	Accurately describes ONE visual characteristic of the Delphic Sibyl.	1 point
2	Accurately uses ONE example of specific visual evidence to explain how the visual characteristics of the Delphic Sibyl reference OR depart from the classical tradition of Ancient Greece and Rome.	1 point
3	Accurately uses ANOTHER example of specific visual evidence to explain how the visual characteristics of the Delphic Sibyl reference OR depart from the classical tradition of Ancient Greece and Rome.	1 point
4	Accurately describes the place that the Delphic Sibyl occupies within the larger iconographic program of the Sistine Chapel.	1 point
5	Accurately uses specific contextual evidence to explain how the inclusion of the Delphic Sibyl within the larger iconographic program of the Sistine Chapel represents the ideals of the Renaissance.	1 point
Total Possible Score		5 points

Question 6 (continued)

Scoring Information

Describe the visual characteristics of the Delphic Sibyl.

Michelangelo depicts the Delphic Sibyl, one of the five ancient Greek women prophets on the Sistine ceiling, as an idealized young woman seated in an illusionistic architectural space. Her monumental form fills a thronelike niche and appears to project outward from the surface of the ceiling. The sibyl's twisting pose reinforces the sense of balance within the circular composition. One of her arms extends down, alongside her torso, the hand resting in her lap. The other extends across her body, the hand clasping a large unfurled scroll. Turning away from the document, the sibyl directs her face over her shoulder toward the viewer. Her gaze is focused to the right as if responding to a sound or a vision; her mouth is slightly open as if she is about to speak or has just taken a breath.

The Delphic Sibyl wears a light blue veil that covers most of her hair, except for a few blonde tendrils that float above her back. The sibyl's sleeveless, light green tunic is held closed by a round brooch visible below her raised arm. Over the tunic she wears a vibrant two-toned cloak, the blue outer shell covering her shoulders and the intense orange of the underside enveloping her lower torso and legs.

Using <u>at least two</u> examples of specific visual evidence, explain how the visual characteristics of the Delphic Sibyl reference and/or depart from the classical tradition of Ancient Greece and Rome.

Several ancient Greek and Roman influences inspired Michelangelo's depiction of the Delphic Sibyl. On the one hand, the Delphic Sibyl evokes the classical Greek idealism of Polykleitos. She projects heroic monumentality, combines repose and balance, and recalls the perfected form of classical arts based on the nude as a standard of perfection and beauty. At the same time, the Delphic Sibyl has Hellenistic athletic musculature, shows emotional intensity growing from within, and twists with the torsion of figures on the Altar of Zeus and Athena from Pergamon. Her pose, musculature, and the physique of the youths behind her demonstrate the likely influence of classical sculptures such as the Belvedere Torso. In this work Michelangelo synthesizes his Florentine training that valued classical art with inspiration gained from newly discovered Pergamene-style Hellenistic sculptures entering the Vatican's collection.

Michelangelo enhances the classical, sculptural illusionism of the work through the use of chiaroscuro, intense contrast and highlights that accentuate the musculature of the figure and the volume of her clothing. The sibyl's garments, especially her long tunic and cloak, reference the sculpted drapery of classical antiquity. Neither purely classical nor Hellenistic, the draperies both conform to the volumes of the body like those on the grave stele of Hegeso as they swell into deeper pockets of light and dark as found in Hellenistic art. Michelangelo's careful studies of these draperies show the attention made to their form. Finally, Michelangelo's use of fresco mimics visual qualities of carved marble or stone to create an architectural setting with antique features. An elaborate painted cornice unites the various scenes of the chapel ceiling. The architectural features reveal additional influences drawn from the classical tradition of Greece and Rome.

That said, the Delphic Sibyl includes elements that depart from the classical tradition of Ancient Greece and Rome. The palette's intensity and color range departs from classical art, leaning toward Mannerism. The saturation of the colors, especially in the earlier phases of the ceiling, burst out of classical restraint. The Greeks and Roman, who frequently depicted sibyls as enigmatic young women, did not create colossal, enthroned versions of these seers. The superhuman scale of the figures are a departure from antiquity.

Question 6 (continued)

Michelangelo's use of the idealized male body for the Delphic Sibyl's female form departs from the classical tradition of Greece and Rome.

The Delphic Sibyl, and the ceiling as a whole, also include visual elements that would become hallmarks of Mannerism. Michelangelo's use of vibrant hues in the drapery, the spiraling pose, and the ambiguous spatial relationships to the attendants would become influential for artists such as Jacopo da Pontormo in his *Entombment of Christ*.

Describe the place that the Delphic Sibyl occupies within the larger iconographic program of the Sistine Chapel.

Physically, the placement of the Delphic Sibyl within the larger iconographic program of the Sistine Chapel connects her to the message of prophecy. Located above the entrance to the chapel, the Delphic Sibyl provides a visual access point to the program as a whole, beginning with the Flood and culminating in the Creation, located above the altar wall. The Delphic Sibyl's position adjacent to the figures of Zachariah, Joel, and Isaiah visually reinforces her importance as a classical counterpart to the Hebrew prophets within the chapel's larger iconographic program.

Symbolically, the iconographic program of the Sistine Chapel presents a Christian perspective of sacred history emphasizing God's plan for the redemption of humankind. The iconography includes scenes from the Creation and the Fall, the Jewish ancestors of Jesus, and the anticipation of the coming of Christ as a redeemer. This dramatic history, which only contains stories from the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament), focuses on scenes from the book of Genesis. The episodes from Genesis include the Creation, Adam and Eve and the Fall, and the Flood to emphasize prophetic revelation and divine intervention. Michelangelo alternates five ancient pagan sibyls with seven Hebrew prophets — a combination of classical and Jewish prophets — to frame the nine scenes from Genesis. In the ancient world sibyls were female seers who prophesied at sacred sites. During the Medieval and Renaissance periods, sibyls were reinterpreted as foretelling the coming of Christ and the establishment of the Roman Catholic Church. The Delphic Sibyl's engaged expression, twisting pose, open scroll, and studious attendants reinforce the significance of prophecy to the revelation of the Word of God to humanity.

Using specific contextual evidence, explain how the inclusion of the Delphic Sibyl within the larger iconographic program of the Sistine Chapel represents the ideals of the Renaissance.

Michelangelo's inclusion of the Delphic Sibyl within the larger iconographic program of the Sistine Chapel engages with concepts associated with Renaissance Humanism. Stressing the centrality of humanity and the individual, this intellectual undertaking looked to the arts and texts of classical antiquity as models for ideal behavior, culture, and civic life. The sibyls' presence within the program symbolizes the "rebirth" of the classical past as an ideal of the Italian Renaissance by seeking inspiration in ancient sculpture, painting, architecture, philosophy, and knowledge based in empirical observation rather than medieval Scholasticism.

By synthesizing religious prophetic traditions, Michelangelo's pairing of sibyls with Hebrew prophets within the Sistine Chapel ceiling creates a humanist approach within the Christian message. The monumentality and emotional engagement of the Delphic Sibyl prioritize her significance for divine revelation, integrating the classical past with the Renaissance Christian present.

Question 6 (continued)

Sixteenth-century patronage practices also provide context for Michelangelo's inclusion of the Delphic Sibyl. Michelangelo completed the Sistine Chapel ceiling frescos under the direction of Pope Julius II, who was noted for his humanist interests. The active sponsorship by Pope Julius II of new commissions and the renovation of sacred sites in Rome included projects that both supported the authority of the Church and included motifs associated with antiquity. Because the Sistine Chapel is the private chapel of the pope and his court as well as the site for papal elections, Michelangelo's inclusion of the Delphic Sibyl within the larger iconographic program illustrates the significance of antique subjects for Renaissance patrons interested in humanism. Lastly, the broader scope of interest in the classical subjects and their connection to humanism is further demonstrated by another papal commission within the Vatican located close to the Delphic Sibyl within the Sistine Chapel: Raphael's *School of Athens*.

Question 6 (continued)

Scoring Notes

1	Accurately describes ONE visual characteristic of the Delphic Sibyl.	
	 An idealized young woman is seated in an illusionistic architectural space. The figure is monumental, filling a throne-like niche and appearing to project outward. Twisting pose reinforces the sense of balance within the circular composition. 	
	 The sibyl is depicted with: A youthful face, her head turned outward and gaze directed to the right, her mouth slightly open One arm extending downward; the other extends across her body, her hand holding an unfurled scroll Voluminous drapery, the blue shell covering her shoulders and the intense orange enveloping her lower torso 	
2	2 Accurately uses ONE example of specific visual evidence to explain how the visual characteristics of the Delphic Sibyl reference OR depart from the classical tradition of Ancient Greece and Rome.	
	References:	
	• Idealized musculature shows influence from classical and/or Hellenistic sculptures.	
	Contrapposto or twisting mass is derived from sources from Ancient Greece and Rome.	
	 Voluminous garments reference sculpted drapery of classical antiquity. Hellenistic emotion is on the sibyl's face. 	
	Chiaroscuro creates sculptural volume.	
	Classical architecture: setting incorporates typical elements.	
	 Putti were inspired by the ideal nude tradition of Ancient Greece and Rome. 	
	Departs:	
	• Palette: the colors are vibrant and explore a range that departs from most classical art.	
	Scale: the monumental size of the sibyls does not exist in classical art.	
	Male nude figure were used as the basis for the female figure.	
3	Accurately uses ANOTHER example of specific visual evidence to explain how the visual characteristics of the Delphic Sibyl reference OR depart from the classical tradition of Ancient Greece and Rome.	
	See above.	
4	Accurately describes the place that the Delphic Sibyl occupies within the larger iconographic program of the Sistine Chapel.	
	 Symbolically, the program presents a Christian perspective of history emphasizing God's plan for redemption: Sibyls are reinterpreted as foretelling the coming of Jesus Christ and Salvation. 	
	Physically , the placement also connects her to the message of prophesy: • Sibyls alternate with Hebrew prophets.	
	 Sibyls and prophets frame scenes from Genesis in the Bible (Hebrew Bible or Old Testament also acceptable). Delphic Sibyl's placement above the entrance, near the Flood, serves as an access to the iconographic program. 	

Question 6 (continued)

5 Accurately uses specific contextual evidence to explain how the inclusion of the Delphic Sibyl within the larger iconographic program of the Sistine Chapel represents the ideals of the Renaissance.

- The sibyls symbolize the Renaissance **revival of classical art and intellectual pursuits**.
- The inclusion engages with **Renaissance ideals of humanism**. By synthesizing religious prophetic traditions, Michelangelo's pairing of sibyls with Hebrew prophets creates a humanist approach within the Christian message.
- Sixteenth-century patronage also provides context: Michelangelo completed the Sistine Chapel ceiling frescoes under the direction of **Pope Julius II**, who was noted for his humanist interests.

6. Suggested time: 15 minutes.

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Question 6

Overview

The question asked students to analyze Michelangelo's Delphic Sibyl from the Sistine Chapel by describing the visual characteristics of the work and then explaining how these visual characteristics either reference or depart from the classical tradition of Ancient Greece and Rome. Students also needed to describe the symbolic or physical placement of the Delphic Sibyl within the larger iconographic program of the Sistine Chapel and use contextual evidence to explain how the inclusion of the sibyl represents the rebirth of the classical past within Renaissance Humanism. This is a work from Early Europe and Colonial Americas (200–1750 C.E.). The intent of the question was to give students the opportunity to use visual and contextual analysis skills to explain how a work demonstrates both continuity and change within an artistic tradition.

Sample: 6A Score: 5

Task 1: Accurately describes ONE visual characteristic of the Delphic Sibyl. (1 point)

The response describes one visual characteristic of the Delphic Sibyl: She is "sitting, clothed, and looking off into the distance." While not required to earn the point, the additional visual evidence enhances the quality of the response.

Task 2: Accurately uses ONE example of specific visual evidence to explain how the visual characteristics of the Delphic Sibyl reference OR depart from the classical tradition of Ancient Greece and Rome. (1 point)

The response uses one example of specific visual evidence to explain how the visual characteristics of the Delphic Sibyl reference the classical tradition of Ancient Greece and Rome. The response explains how the seated position of the Delphic Sibyl recalls the classical past by making "a direct reference" to the newly "discovered" Belvedere Torso, a Hellenistic sculpture in the Vatican's collection that Michelangelo likely used for inspiration while painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Specifically, the Delphic Sibyl's curving form is described as having parallels with the pose of the Belvedere Torso.

Task 3: Accurately uses ANOTHER example of specific visual evidence to explain how the visual characteristics of the Delphic Sibyl reference OR depart from the classical tradition of Ancient Greece and Rome. (1 point)

The response uses another example of specific visual evidence to explain how the visual characteristics of the Delphic Sibyl reference the classical tradition of Ancient Greece and Rome: "Her clothes are very ornate and ... appear very flowy, which is very much like the Hellenistic Greek sculpture of Nike adjusting her sandal at the Parthenon, along with many other Greek works that show women in ornate" and flowing drapery.

Task 4: Accurately describes the place that the Delphic Sibyl occupies within the larger iconographic program of the Sistine Chapel. (1 point)

The response describes the place that the Delphic Sibyl occupies within the larger iconographic program of the Sistine Chapel by emphasizing both her physical and her symbolic role. The Delphic Sibyl is "one of the Sibyls that flank the main story of the creation of the world, which is all found on the ceiling of the chapel." The response explains that sibyls are figures from classical mythology "similar to prophets" and that their placement therefore integrates classical mythology with the "Christian works and ideas in the chapel."

Question 6 (continued)

Task 5: Accurately uses specific contextual evidence to explain how the inclusion of the Delphic Sibyl within the larger iconographic program of the Sistine Chapel represents the ideals of the Renaissance. (1 point)

The response uses specific contextual evidence to explain how the inclusion of the Delphic Sibyl within the larger iconographic program of the Sistine Chapel represents the ideals of the Renaissance. The response explains how, during the Renaissance, there was a "revival of classical Greek and Roman ideals," which were part of the period's "Humanist ideology." Collectively, the sibyls, including the Delphic Sibyl, represent the "importance of the classics" for the Renaissance within the Christian message of the frescoes that Michelangelo painted for the Sistine Chapel.

Sample: 6B Score: 4

Task 1: Accurately describes ONE visual characteristic of the Delphic Sibyl. (1 point)

The response describes one visual characteristic of the Delphic Sibyl: She is "painted as very strong" within an architectural setting "that was painted in a 3 dimensional format. Her gaze is averted." While not required to earn the point, the additional visual evidence enhances the quality of the response.

Task 2: Accurately uses ONE example of specific visual evidence to explain how the visual characteristics of the Delphic Sibyl reference OR depart from the classical tradition of Ancient Greece and Rome. (1 point)

The response uses one example of specific visual evidence to explain how the visual characteristics of the Delphic Sibyl reference the classical tradition of Ancient Greece and Rome: Her "strong form references" the musculature in the "sculpture of … ancient Greece and Rome. Instead of depicting the woman as weak and fragile, her muscles are pronounced and idealized as they would have been in Ancient Greece and Rome."

Task 3: Accurately uses ANOTHER example of specific visual evidence to explain how the visual characteristics of the Delphic Sibyl reference OR depart from the classical tradition of Ancient Greece and Rome. (1 point)

The response uses another example of specific visual evidence to explain how the visual characteristics of the Delphic Sibyl reference the classical tradition of Ancient Greece and Rome. The response explains that "the drapery in her outfit can reference the heavy drapery seen in Hellenistic Greek sculptures. Drapery was very important and gives the figure form and dynamicism [*sic*]."

Task 4: Accurately describes the place that the Delphic Sibyl occupies within the larger iconographic program of the Sistine Chapel. (1 point)

The response describes the place that the Delphic Sibyl occupies within the larger iconographic program of the Sistine Chapel by emphasizing her physical role. The response explains that the Delphic Sibyl is placed with "prophets from the old testament of the bible." She has a "supporting" role in this narrative of prophesy and appears alongside central "scenes from the Old Testament such as the creation of man, the bannishing [*sic*] of man from the garden of Eden and the Great Flood."

Question 6 (continued)

Task 5: Accurately uses specific contextual evidence to explain how the inclusion of the Delphic Sibyl within the larger iconographic program of the Sistine Chapel represents the ideals of the Renaissance. (0 points)

No point was earned. The response does not use specific contextual evidence to explain how the inclusion of the Delphic Sibyl within the larger iconographic program of the Sistine Chapel represents the ideals of the Renaissance. The response makes an attempt by claiming that the "focus on the body" represents a Renaissance ideal that can be linked to the musculature of the Delphic Sibyl. This explanation lacks specificity, and the response does not offer sufficient contextual evidence to support the claim. To earn the point the response needed to explain how the inclusion of the Delphic Sibyl represents a revival of interest in classical art, as patronized, in this instance, by Pope Julius II, who was noted for his humanist interests.

Sample: 6C Score: 3

Task 1: Accurately describes ONE visual characteristic of the Delphic Sibyl. (1 point)

The response describes one visual characteristic of the Delphic Sibyl: She is "ideal and muscular." The claim that the sibyl displays "weightlessness" is incorrect because she is monumental; however, this error does not detract from the overall quality of the response.

Task 2: Accurately uses ONE example of specific visual evidence to explain how the visual characteristics of the Delphic Sibyl reference OR depart from the classical tradition of Ancient Greece and Rome. (1 point)

The response uses one example of specific visual evidence to explain how the visual characteristics of the Delphic Sibyl reference the classical tradition of Ancient Greece and Rome. The response explains how the sibyl's "twisted" pose is a "reference [to] the classical times. ... Like Doryphorus, controppasto [*sic*] was used to show motion" and "the sibyl's body has that twisted sense."

Task 3: Accurately uses ANOTHER example of specific visual evidence to explain how the visual characteristics of the Delphic Sibyl reference OR depart from the classical tradition of Ancient Greece and Rome. (0 points)

No point was earned. The response does not use another example of specific visual evidence to explain how the visual characteristics of the Delphic Sibyl reference the classical tradition of Ancient Greece and Rome. While the response makes an attempt by stating that the sibyl is similar to classical figural sculpture in that she does "not address the viewer or recognize the viewer," this generalization is incorrect. To earn the point the response could have discussed other aspects of the Delphic Sibyl that reference the classical tradition: for instance, how the idealized musculature or voluminous drapery recall ancient sculptural traditions.

Task 4: Accurately describes the place that the Delphic Sibyl occupies within the larger iconographic program of the Sistine Chapel. (1 point)

The response describes the place that the Delphic Sibyl occupies within the larger iconographic program of the Sistine Chapel. The response describes both the physical and symbolic placement of the Delphic Sibyl by stating that she is located with other sibyls on the "borders of the cieling [*sic*]," serving as seer who "predicted the coming of a messiah or savior."

Question 6 (continued)

Task 5: Accurately uses specific contextual evidence to explain how the inclusion of the Delphic Sibyl within the larger iconographic program of the Sistine Chapel represents the ideals of the Renaissance. (0 Points)

No point was earned. The response does not use specific contextual evidence to explain how the inclusion of the Delphic Sibyl within the larger iconographic program of the Sistine Chapel represents the ideals of the Renaissance. The response makes an attempt by incorrectly claiming that "being able to have a twisted body and a sense of weightlessness while being idealized" represents the ideals of the Renaissance. However, this description more accurately describes qualities of medieval figure painting. The response also makes no attempt to link these observations with specific contextual evidence either from the classical past or to Renaissance humanism.