AP® Art History
2003 Sample Student Responses

The materials included in these files are intended for use by AP teachers for course and exam preparation; permission for any other use must be sought from the Advanced Placement Program®. Teachers may reproduce them, in whole or in part, in limited quantities for noncommercial, face-to-face teaching purposes. This permission does not apply to any third-party copyrights contained herein. This material may not be mass distributed, electronically or otherwise. These materials and any copies made of them may not be resold, and the copyright notices must be retained as they appear here.
8. 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. (30 minutes)

   The Venus of Willendorf which dates from about 25,000 - 27,000 BCE and the statue of Akhenaten from the Amarna period of the New Kingdom in Egypt both are splendid examples of the use of stylization and abstraction in representing the human body. The Venus of Willendorf is both stylized heavily and also abstracted in the early attempts of its artist to create a female fertility figure. The statue of Akhenaten...
shows an androgynous being, with features of both male and female. The two works were both constructed for various ends and serve as fine examples of the use of artists abstraction and stylization of artist's to achieve certain results.

The Venus of Willendorf is a 4" hand-hold fertility figure of the Paleolithic period. Discovered in Austria, it seems almost monumental despite its miniature size. In Venus, the female figures reproductive features are only emphasized, to a point where the figure seems abstract. As a fertility figure, it only seems natural that the figure would have such features. During this time in prehistory, organized religion were far away and a sort of paganism was practiced throughout what is now Europe. Women of the time would worship hand-helds like the Venus hoping for healthy children and safe-child birth. The Venus also is stylized in that her head-piece (now thought as being a cap) is decorated heavily with tiny squares carved out of the stone. Venus bears no facial features too, further emphasizing the abstraction of the figure. Primitive art. The artist of the Venus of Willendorf sought to create a piece which would serve effectively as a fertility figure. The use of abstraction and stylization attests to
Question 8 is reprinted for your convenience.

8. 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. (30 minutes)

Lack of interest in creating a naturalistic image and the desire of the people of the time to have pagan idols which they could worship. The Venus serves its purpose well as such a figure. The statue of Akhenaton, however, serves a different purpose than the Venus. Akhenaton, a ruler of the New Kingdom of Egypt, broke from the rigid tradition in art that had been the standard at art in Egypt since the creation of the Palette of Narmer in 3000 BCE. Akhenaton believed only in one god, the sun god Aton, and he founded the Amarna period of Egypt on this and other standards. The statue of Akhenaton shows the pharaoh as an androgynous being. It is unclear whether he had some form of physical defect but what is known is that he work abstracted his body in order to lash out against what was the harsh canon of sculptural portrait is abstracted in that it is difficult to discern the actual gender of the awkward creature.
Is also used in Akhenaton's statue to show further part. The abstraction serves to further emphasize Akhenaton's desire to break from rigid Egyptian artistic traditions and to create a style of his own.
ART HISTORY
SECTION II—Part B
Time—60 minutes
2 Questions

Directions: You have 60 minutes to answer the two questions in this part. You may wish to spend a few minutes
organizing or outlining your response in the blank space provided above each question. Notes in the blank space will
not be graded. Be sure to analyze each question carefully and choose appropriate examples. Identify your examples
as fully as possible.

Responses that answer the question directly will receive higher scores than those that simply list characteristics or
include irrelevant points.

Tale of Genji: Japan
- Taishō
- Reflects nature of Imperial
  Japanese court
- Stylized eyes =
- Some facial features not
  shown!
- Dress
- Body not stylized
- V. stylized form/body
- Large, triangular breasts
- Large eyes
- Very geometric abstract
- Grotesque rep. of a very
  classic theme
- Woman I
- Woman I

8. 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. (30 minutes)

Many cultures have stylized or abstracted the human body in
art. Two examples can be found in the figures from
The Tale of Genji," a Japanese scroll by Takayoshi, and the painting
Woman I" by de Kooning.

The imperial Japanese culture was very strict in
adhering to custom. There were strict conventions for all
types of engawa and especially in art. In Japanese
culture it is improper to show the form of the human
body under clothing. Likewise, in "The Tale of Genji" all the

Unauthorized copying or reuse of any part of this page is illegal.
figures have very stylized bodies that show a head and a large
garment that indicates no form of the body underneath. Similarly,
the stylized eyes as slits and the lack of expression in the
figures’ faces is very much a reflection on the imperial
Japanese formality.

De Kooning is an artist from within the European tradition
who also abstracted the human body. De Kooning’s abstraction
of women as seen in “Woman I” were very much a reaction
to classical views of women. De Kooning exaggerates the features
of women, eyes, breasts, hips & a way to satirize the not
only the “ideal” female form as portrayed in advertising of the
time, but also the traditional fertility figure. De Kooning
is going against the common theme of women as goddesses
of fertility and earlier idealized female forms.

The human body is seen in many cultures and is used
for many purposes. Abstraction and stylization of the body
are just ways in which different artists in different times
have represented a central theme in all art, the human.