

AP[®] ART HISTORY

2007 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 6

Left slide: Antonio Canova. *Pauline Borghese as Venus*. 1808.

Right slide: Blank

6. Identify the art-historical style of this sculpture. How do the form and content of the sculpture as a whole convey meaning? (10 minutes)

Background:

The Italian sculptor Antonio Canova (1757–1822) was one of the most celebrated artists of his era. Canova was inspired by Ancient art in addition to the writings of the eighteenth-century author and art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann, whose works (*Reflections on the Imitation of Greek Art in Paintings and Sculpture* and *History of Ancient Art*) celebrate and encourage the conscious imitation of Classical ideals. Canova's Neoclassical sculptures were admired for their marriage of Classical idealism and modern subjectivity, as well as their timeless beauty. Canova's reputation was international; he received prestigious commissions from the Papacy in Rome and the Austrian Hapsburgs, such as the *Monument to the Archduchess Maria Christina* (1805) in Vienna. His mythological subjects range from the muscular *Hercules and Lichus* (1795–1815) to the delicate and erotically charged *Cupid and Psyche* (1787–93).

Summoned to Paris by Napoleon in 1802, Canova made numerous portraits of the emperor and his family, including a colossal nude statue of *Napoleon as Mars the Peacemaker* (1806). *Pauline Borghese as Venus* (1808) depicts Napoleon's sister reclining semi-nude on a fashionable antique daybed as Venus Victrix holding an apple. Famous for her beauty and scandalous behavior, Pauline chose to be represented as Venus rather than Diana as Canova originally intended. The sculpture melds together the individual particularity of portraiture and naturalistic detail with the timeless Classical ideal evoked through the mythological theme, partial nudity, particular coiffure, clinging drapery, and languid pose. In Napoleonic France, the Neoclassical style was deployed to glorify the emperor by linking his military triumphs and imperial ambitions with the grandeur of Ancient Rome. Canova's elegantly erotic statue aestheticizes and aggrandizes Pauline Borghese by representing her in mythological guise and comparing her to the goddess of love.

Students have two tasks:

- (1) They must identify the art-historical style as Neoclassicism.
- (2) They must analyze how the form (the sculpture's shape and structure) and content (the themes or ideas) of the sculpture **as a whole** convey meaning.

Better responses will understand that Neoclassicism is a reinterpretation of Classical art that repackages and historicizes the Classical ethos by infusing it with a modern sensibility. They will address both form (the three-dimensional figure in visual terms) and content (the subject matter) and analyze the contradictory meanings conveyed by the sculpture's hybrid approach to demonstrate how Canova utilized the Neoclassical idiom to elevate the subject and transcend portraiture.

Points to remember:

- Students should discuss the sculpture **as a whole** and consider the figure within the broader context of its setting and the Neoclassical idiom.
- Students are not asked to identify the sculpture or the artist.
- This is a 10-minute question.

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Question 6 (continued)

Scoring Criteria

Score Scale 0–4

4 Identifies the art-historical style as Neoclassicism. Analyzes how the **form and content** of the sculpture **as a whole** convey meaning. Discussion is full and without significant errors.

3 Identifies the art-historical style as Neoclassicism. Analyzes how the **form and content** of the sculpture **as a whole** convey meaning. Discussion is not as full and may contain errors.

OR

Does not identify the art-historical style as Neoclassicism but is otherwise a 4.

2 Identifies the art-historical style as Neoclassicism. Attempts to analyze how the form and content of the sculpture **as a whole** convey meaning, but discussion lacks specificity or contains errors.

OR

Does not identify the art-historical style as Neoclassicism but analyzes form and content.

1 Identifies the art-historical style as Neoclassicism but includes no other discussion of merit.

OR

Does not identify the art-historical style as Neoclassicism but attempts to analyze form or content.

0 Makes an attempt, but the response is without merit because it fails to identify the art-historical style or makes only incorrect or irrelevant statements.

— This is a nonresponse, such as a blank paper, crossed-out words, or personal notes.

6. Identify the art-historical style of this sculpture. How do the form and content of the sculpture as a whole convey meaning? (10 minutes)

This work by Canova is ~~part~~ from the Neo-classical movement in the latter half of the 18th century. This ~~the~~ sculpture was done by Canova as a portrait of Isabelle Bonaparte and its purpose is ~~to glorify~~ to glorify ~~and~~ the woman. Isabelle Bonaparte is here depicted as Venus, the god of love, ~~and~~ equating her with the goddess and therefore elevating her status. The ~~style~~ form and style of the piece ~~is~~ also add to its purpose. The neo-classical style idealizes the subject ~~and~~ through perfection, beauty, and reference to classical Greece. Canova depicted his subject partially nude with light drapery, in the Greek style, lounging elegantly on a bed. The use of neo-classical style, ~~and~~ Isabelle Bonaparte's request to be depicted as Venus, and the clear idealization conveys the way in which the subject saw herself and more generally, the arrogance as well of ~~the~~ Napoleon's

⊗ That gives the effect of an intimate throne.

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6A₂

empire.

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6. Identify the art-historical style of this sculpture. How do the form and content of the sculpture as a whole convey meaning? (10 minutes)

This piece is from the Neoclassical style. It references antiquity because it is ~~not a ^{king's} wife~~ a political leader's wife portrayed as Venus, goddess of love. The wife was a very seductive woman who had numerous alleged affairs. She was asked to be portrayed as Venus holding the golden apple given to her by Paris. She is almost Hellenistic Greek in style with the drapery blanketed over her lower body. Her upper torso is more classical Greek with the tasteful nudity. Still, her pose leaning on the chair shows a strong erotic and seductive influence. The chair she lays on has gold, suggesting wealth and this piece was actually for private viewing.

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6. Identify the art-historical style of this sculpture. How do the form and content of the sculpture as a whole convey meaning? (10 minutes)

This is a Neoclassical sculpture. The reclining form of the lady conveys a highly gentrified lifestyle since she is gracefully reclined on a mattress with two luxurious pillows all supported by a regally designed bed frame. The lady wears jewelry and is comfortably dressed. Her facial expression also conveys a sense of refinement. The sculpture's medium is also a reference to the marble statues of Rome, a civilization which was being revered at the time this sculpture was created for its advanced and enviable culture. The gold adorning the bed frame also adds to the sculpture's meaning of exemplifying the beauty of the lady since it is integrated into the pedestal which presents the woman; the gold makes the woman appear even more upper-class and lady-like. Even the bedfeet are trimmed with an edge of valuable gold.

as well as
the lifestyles of its gentry

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AP[®] ART HISTORY 2007 SCORING COMMENTARY

Question 6

Overview

This 10-minute question asked students to identify Neoclassicism as the art-historical style of the sculpture of *Pauline Borghese as Venus* (1808) by Antonio Canova and to analyze how the form and content of the sculpture conveyed meaning. The intent was for students to identify Neoclassical sculpture on visual grounds (if they did not recognize the image), using clues embedded in the sculpture's form and content, and then to have them analyze how the artist conveyed both a local and a broader meaning through the formal and thematic concerns of Neoclassical sculpture. The question asked students to place the sculpture within its broader historical, cultural, and art-historical context.

Sample: 6A

Score: 4

This essay correctly identifies the art-historical style as Neoclassicism. The student considers the form *and* content of the sculpture as a whole by analyzing the subject (Venus) and visual elements such as the partially nude figure, the light drapery, and the bed. The essay further identifies these items with the Neoclassical style and associates that style with Classical ideals such as perfection, beauty, and reference to Ancient Greece.

Sample: 6B

Score: 3

The essay correctly identifies the art-historical style as Neoclassicism and considers form and content of the sculpture as a whole by analyzing the subject of the work (Venus) and elements of the entire sculpture, including the nude figure, drapery, elaborately decorated chair, and the apple. However, the discussion is not as full as a response receiving a score of 4.

Sample: 6C

Score: 2

This essay correctly identifies the art-historical style as Neoclassicism and connects, with a degree of specificity, the media (marble) to Classical civilization and the culture of Ancient Rome. However, the student relies on a visual analysis that identifies grace and refinement as characteristic of this style. Discussion of the sculpture as a whole, in relation to form and content, is lacking.