

AP® ART HISTORY

2008 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 3

Left slide: Ambrogio Lorenzetti, *Sala della Pace* (room containing Lorenzetti frescoes of Good and Bad Government), Palazzo Pubblico, Siena, 1338–1339.

Right slide: Ambrogio Lorenzetti, *Allegory of Good Government in the City*, fresco in the Sala della Pace, Palazzo Pubblico, Siena, 1338–1339.

3. The slides show two views of the same fresco cycle in the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena.

Identify the artist. Explain how the subject and meaning of the fresco cycle relate to its location.
(10 minutes)

Background:

Ambrogio Lorenzetti's fresco cycle is located in the Sala della Pace (Room of Peace), also called the Sala dei Nove (Room of the Nine), adjacent to the large council chamber known as the Sala del Consiglio (Room of the Council) in the Palazzo Pubblico, or city hall, of Siena. It is signed by way of an inscription on the lower north wall that states: "AMBROSIUS LAVRENTII DE SENIS hic PINXIT . . ." (Ambrogio Lorenzetti of Siena painted this). The fresco cycle was commissioned by the city council to decorate the room in which the governing body, known as the Nine, would meet to discuss matters of civic importance and governance. The council, which governed Siena from 1287 to 1355, was a representative body, drawn from the Sienese aristocracy, whose membership rotated in two-month terms. Legislation of 1318 made the Nine responsible for "the ordering and reformation of the whole city and *contado* of Siena." (A *contado* is the rural area around the city.) Lorenzetti's fresco cycle spells out the advantages of good government and the disadvantages of bad government in naturalistic detail that makes the allegorical message particularly clear and palpable.

On the north wall (seen on the left side of the left slide), the *Allegory of Good Government* details the virtues and practices of good government through a combination of allegorical personifications, vignettes, and naturalistic detail in such a way that the bridge between the naturalism of the "real" world and the ideal world of the allegories is smoothly spanned. The large, frontal figure of the enthroned man to the right represents the city of Siena, as indicated by the letters CSCCV (which likely stand for *Comune Senarun Civitas Virginis* [the Commune of Siena, City of the Virgin]) and his heraldic black-and-white garb. Above his head flutter personifications of the three theological virtues: Faith, Hope, and Charity. Flanking him are seated and semirecumbent female personifications of additional virtues, each clearly labeled: Peace, Fortitude, Prudence, Magnanimity, Temperance, and Justice. Siena's Roman origins are asserted via the figure of the she-wolf suckling Romulus and Remus beneath the feet of Siena's throne. To the left, the vertically aligned triad of Wisdom, Justice, and Concord further assert the peace established by the beneficent rule of Siena. As Wisdom floats overhead, governing the just rule of the commune, Justice is flanked by angels meting out punishment and reward to the bellicose and peaceful, respectively. Below, Concord hands a rope to a procession of 24 men in fourteenth-century dress who carry it to the enthroned figure of Siena, thereby illustrating that the citizens of Siena, most specifically those eligible to serve on the Nine, form the fabric that brings peace to the commune. To the far right, captive soldiers suggest that the virtuous rule of the city triumphs over discord and enemies, extending Sienese rule over the *contado*. The formal arrangement of figures makes subtle visual allusions to the *Last Judgment*, casting civic rule in a heavenly mold and suggesting that divine will mandates that Siena be justly governed.

The west wall (not illustrated in the slides) contains the *Allegory of Bad Government* and *The Effects of Bad Government in the City and Country*, in which a monstrous tyrannical ruler sits enthroned amidst personifications of the vices—the literal antithesis of the image of Siena flanked by virtues on the north wall. A vivid illustration of the ramifications of corrupt rule extends across the remainder of the wall, as soldiers and criminals variously assault and terrorize the inhabitants of the woefully misgoverned and

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Question 3 (continued)

derelict city. Though it is badly damaged, one can still make out the grim anecdotal details of this reign of terror.

The opposing east wall offers the more encouraging vision of the benefits of good governance. Here, in the sweeping panorama of *The Effects of Good Government in the City and Country*, we see a great walled city, whose gates open up to an expansive hilly landscape, spotted with towns and farms. Naturalism enhances the direct visual relevance, as the city and countryside can be identified as Siena and its surrounding *contado*. Numerous figures engage in agriculture, viticulture, and trade, indicating that the countryside and economy both flourish under this benevolent rule. Fluttering above the town's gate, which appears to be an image of Siena's Porta Romana, an allegorical figure of Security holds a hanged man on the gallows and an inscription whose text extols the practice of justice. Within the city, signs of mercantile activity and construction manifest that times are good, to such a degree that a group of women is dancing in the street. The dome and campanile of Siena Cathedral are visible at the extreme left, indicating that the well-governed city is, in fact, Siena. The crenellated pink structure with grand bifora windows at the center of the city recalls the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena, conjuring up the very building in which the fresco is located, and thereby connecting the message of good governance directly with the Nine of Siena.

The inscription below exhorts the viewer to “turn your eyes to behold her, you who are governing. . . .” This direct mode of address and the fact that it is written in the more commonly understood Siennese Italian indicate the didactic intent of this work. Furthermore, the specific audience for this message is indicated as those governing the city—the Nine. The specificity of local references, coupled with the remarkable detail and anecdotal veracity of the urban and extrurban topography, makes the allegorical and conceptual content of the image palpable in a very immediate and local manner. As such, the fresco cycle serves as an exhortation and example of the need for virtuous governance—an exhortation that is specifically directed to the political body that governs Siena. It serves as a reminder of the implications and ramifications of the decisions made within that very room, as the assembled Nine are visually and textually regaled to rule justly and wisely, cloaking themselves in virtue, in emulation of the enthroned personification of their city on the north wall.

This fresco cycle is addressed in all of the major survey books, often with emphasis on the work's naturalistic detail and early manifestation of panoramic landscape painting. This question challenges students to consider a major work that is well known to them in its original context, with all that implies. Stokstad and Gardner, for example, both briefly mention the frescoes' location in relation to their subject and gloss over the importance of the image of Siena as well governed.

Students have two tasks:

- (1) They must identify the artist.
- (2) They must analyze how the subject and meaning of the fresco cycle relate to its location.

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Question 3 (continued)

Points to remember:

- Students are asked to identify the artist. The best answers provide a full identification: Ambrogio Lorenzetti. Other acceptable identifications include Lorenzetti, one of the Lorenzetti brothers, or Pietro Lorenzetti.
- Students are not asked to provide the title of the fresco cycle, but many include it in explicating the meaning of the work.
- Students are not shown the imagery of Bad Government, but many good essays address this negative example as a foil to Good Government.
- Better responses address the ways in which the frescoes convey propagandistic ideas of proper Sienese governance and reinforce the idea of virtuous rule. They may address the ideal image of the city as prosperous and peaceful, as well as how the work shapes and reflects the governmental policy determined in this room. Although these responses might also address the rise of naturalism and cityscape portrayals, the better discussions relate these points to the fresco cycle's intention of making the governmental ideals more evident.
- Midrange responses note the relationship to governance but do not analyze in detail how these ideas relate to Siena. These essays may address the city of Siena in general, without specifically noting the direct relationship between the imagery, the city hall (Palazzo Pubblico), and the city of Siena.
- Weaker responses are merely descriptive, noting stylistic elements (such as naturalism) without relating them to the work's intent and meaning.
- Remember that the texts do not give this work substantive coverage. The best essays reflect students' application of what they know about the period, the place, and the artists, rather than solid information gleaned from the surveys.
- The slides are included here as visual prompts to discussion of the whole fresco cycle and not necessarily for specific discussion of the details shown.
- This is a 10-minute question.

Scoring Criteria

Score Scale 0–4

- 4** Correctly identifies the artist. Explains how the frescoes' theme of good (and bad) governance is directly related to the room's location and/or function as the meeting place for the city government. Fully analyzes how these political ideas and ideals are expressed in the work. There are no significant errors.
- 3** Correctly identifies the artist. Explains how the frescoes' theme of good (and bad) governance is directly related to the room's location and/or function as the meeting place for the city government but does not analyze fully how these political ideas and ideals are expressed in the work.
- OR*
- Does not identify the artist correctly but is otherwise a 4.
- 2** Correctly identifies the artist. Notes its subject as related to ideals of government but does not analyze how this is expressed in the work or how it relates to the room's function. Describes the work without analyzing it.
- OR*
- Does not identify the artist correctly but is otherwise a 3.

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Question 3 (continued)

- 1** Correctly identifies the artist but includes no other discussion of merit.
OR
Does not identify the artist correctly but is otherwise a 2.
- 0** Makes an attempt, but the response is without merit because it fails to identify the artist or makes only incorrect or irrelevant statements.
- This is a nonresponse, such as a blank paper, crossed-out words, or personal notes.

3. The slides show two views of the same fresco cycle in the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena.

Identify the artist. Explain how the subject and meaning of the fresco cycle relate to its location. (10 minutes)

This work is by Pietro Lorenzetti and is about a virtuous city and rural setting. The subject is Siena and its surrounding countryside, which is fitting for the Palazzo Pubblico was the home of the public and government offices of the city. ~~The fact that the~~

The meaning of the fresco cycle is that the town and its countryside are both peaceful and virtuous. The effects of good morals can be seen in both settings and Lorenzetti's ideas of peace manifest to virtue can be seen.

~~Both frescoes~~ The frescoes depict a calm setting and peaceful unity amongst the citizens. Because this fresco cycle was in the public offices, or Palazzo Pubblico, the ~~idea~~ idea of a righteous government leading virtuous people, was right at home. This was the perfect place for such a fresco because it dealt with the nature of the city of Siena and its "good" citizens.

The work was basically

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propaganda for the city of Siena and was expected to be in such a place as the Palazzo Publico. This was a civic minded painting that was meant to be in a civic building.

This was a depiction of the effects of good government and was found in a government building.

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The ~~fresco~~ fresco cycle, known as ~~the~~ ~~The Effects of Good Government on City and Country~~ was created by Duccio in the 14th century. In the ~~fresco~~, ~~fresco~~ town hall ~~fre~~ fresco, the lives of the city and country within Siena is peacefully rendered; displaying the normal and happy routines of those within it. Through such renderings, Duccio conveys the idea that the government should be responsible; well-managed and executed to spread justice and fairness to the people of Siena. As demonstrated by the fresco cycle, the Siena populace would be live their lives in relative peace as a result. The Palazzo Pubblico is the ideal location of the fresco cycle as that building serves as the Town Hall, Town Hall: the governmental meeting place that ~~at~~ ~~passed~~ established the laws of the ~~si~~ the surrounding masses. As such, the fresco cycle by Duccio serves as the perfect inspiration for governmental officials to pass fair laws for a beneficial effects on the city and country.

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3. The slides show two views of the same fresco cycle in the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena.

Identify the artist. Explain how the subject and meaning of the fresco cycle relate to its location. (10 minutes)

The artist of the fresco cycle of the Palazzo Pubblico is ~~Waldenburger~~ ^{Alfonso Lorenzetti}. The presentation represents the study of humanity that had been advanced on in this time period. There is a presentation of the city and everyday life. The different social classes are presented carrying out their everyday practices. The buildings presented in the fresco compare closely to the architecture found in Siena. In the country presentation, there are peasants and people of the lower class present. The whole fresco demonstrates the study of how an individual reacts to society and is an expansion of the study of how life in Siena really is. Lorenzetti chooses to represent two ~~forms of~~ settings, the country and the city, to portray all forms of people and lifestyles. He wanted to present a perfect ~~to~~ society and how it was possible to create it.

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2008 SCORING COMMENTARY

Question 3

Overview

This was a contextual question addressing function. Students were asked to identify the artist who painted this fresco cycle in the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena, Italy, and then explain how the subject and meaning of the fresco cycle relate to its location.

Sample: 3A

Score: 4

The essay identifies the artist as Pietro Lorenzetti (which was acceptable, in accordance with the scoring guidelines). The student discusses the image of the city as well governed (“peaceful and virtuous”). Noting that the frescoes are located in the governmental seat of the city (“public offices”), the essay examines how this work expresses the idea of “a righteous government leading virtuous people,” thereby combining the idea of good government and civic virtues. This alludes to the idea of civic self-image, apropos of which the essay describes the frescoes as “civic minded” and “propoganda [*sic*],” thereby revealing an understanding that they both shape and reflect governance. In discussing both the message and its intended audience, this response addresses the principal intent of the question.

Sample: 3B

Score: 3

The essay does not correctly identify the artist but otherwise includes a good discussion of the work. The student notes that the frescoes convey the idea (and ideal) that “the government should be responsible,” thus connecting the work to ideals of proper governance. In describing the fresco cycle as “inspiration” for the governing body, the essay addresses the way that the work is intended to impact governmental policy. Connecting the governmental theme to the building’s function as the “town hall,” the student connects the frescoes’ message with their location and audience. In discussing both the message and its intended audience, this essay addresses the principal intent of the question. This is an example of an essay that would have received a score of 4 if the artist were correctly identified.

Sample: 3C

Score: 2

The essay identifies the artist as “Alfonso” Lorenzetti (which was acceptable, in accordance with the scoring guidelines). While the student notes the visual relationship between the city portrayed and the actual city of Siena, most of the essay contains description with little analysis. The essay concentrates on an individual’s view of the city, but the last sentence touches upon the notion that this is an idealized view of the city (suggesting that there is an allegorical relationship between the city portrayed and Siena).