

AP[®] ART HISTORY

2008 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 5

Left slide: Plan of the Palatine Chapel in Aachen, Germany, c. 800 C.E.

Right slide: Interior of the Palatine Chapel in Aachen, Germany, c. 800 C.E.

5. The slides show a plan and an interior view of Charlemagne's Palatine Chapel in Aachen, circa 800 C.E. The building contains deliberate references to earlier architecture.

Name at least one earlier architectural period referenced in the Palatine Chapel. Identify one significant way in which the Palatine Chapel reinterprets architectural elements of that earlier period and explain why. (10 minutes)

Background:

Charlemagne's Palatine Chapel, designed by the Frankish architect Odo of Metz, was part of the emperor's *renovatio* program. The term suggests that instead of a rebirth, or renaissance, Charlemagne sought a renovation of a surviving Classical tradition. In addition to his project of restoring the purity and clarity of Latin texts and preserving many Classical documents (including Vitruvius's architectural treatise), Charlemagne was active in reforming education and the visual arts based on Roman precedent. His own palace chapel reflects these concerns.

Charlemagne's Palatine Chapel was directly inspired by Justinian's court church, San Vitale in Ravenna, which Charlemagne had visited. Most notably, both are centralized in plan, although the Aachen plan is simpler, emphasizing its geometric clarity and more clearly articulating its more robust and massive structure. In turn, Roman imperial buildings, such as the mausoleum of Constantina (Santa Costanza), and other baptisteries and basilicas were the inspirations for San Vitale. Thus, the Palatine Chapel presents a synthesis of Roman, Early Christian, and Byzantine elements. Charlemagne's chapel was intended to be symbolic of the Heavenly Jerusalem, and as the site of imperial functions and the emperor's mausoleum, it became a symbol of imperial power as well. His throne was located in the first gallery and looked over the space below to the main altar. The external westwork that marked access to the galleries was also probably derived from Roman prototypes, such as city gateways, that symbolized imperial authority. In his book *The Life of Charlemagne*, Charlemagne's biographer Einhard noted that the columns used at Aachen were transported from Rome and Ravenna, further strengthening the ties between those Classical traditions.

In the standard art history survey texts, coverage of the chapel is somewhat limited. Honour and Fleming's text provides the best coverage, including an extended quotation by Einhard, and specifically locating San Vitale as a source of inspiration while providing insightful analysis of the building's structure. Stokstad's text makes several comparisons between the Carolingian palace chapel and Byzantine San Vitale in terms of construction and spatial considerations, and it also mentions Roman precedents. The Gardner text discusses the influence of San Vitale, too, but the reference to Roman influences is general. Gardner also mentions that the imperial gallery at the chapel is similar to that at Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. Adams's coverage is more general, comparing the palace chapel to San Vitale only in terms of its central plan and mentioning the general Roman influence, such as the pier and arch construction found at the Colosseum.

Students have three tasks:

- (1) They must name an earlier period referenced in the chapel. Acceptable choices for the period identification are Early Christian, Roman, or Byzantine.
- (2) They must identify at least one way in which the Palatine Chapel employs architectural elements of that earlier period. Obviously, the specifics of each student's argument dictate whether a given choice is appropriate.
- (3) They must address why Charlemagne used that architectural element at Aachen.

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Question 5 (continued)

Better responses relate either the central plan or the interior spatial configuration to a specific building from a specific period and link the form to Charlemagne's political or imperial agenda. These responses may also more generally identify an earlier building type (as Stokstad does in referencing a Roman forum). In either case, stronger essays both identify a specific element and analyze its implied meaning.

Points to remember:

- The chapel is identified for the students as Charlemagne's Palatine Chapel at Aachen and is dated.
- Students are not asked to identify a specific building with which to compare this work. However, such specificity may lead a student to a more complete discussion.
- Better responses often select San Vitale or Santa Costanza.
- Students should first identify an earlier architectural period and then identify an architectural element similar to a specific building or building type from that period. Because there is scholarly debate as to whether San Vitale is best defined as a Byzantine or Early Christian building, latitude should be given on that point. Students may also cite Roman prototypes if they can defend their choice(s). They should then analyze the meaning of the form.
- This is a 10-minute question.

Scoring Criteria

Score Scale 0–4

- 4** Identifies an earlier architectural period and a specific way in which the Palatine Chapel reinterprets an architectural element of that earlier period. Analyzes why that element is used at Aachen. Discussion is full and without significant errors.
- 3** Identifies an earlier architectural period and a specific way in which the Palatine Chapel reinterprets an architectural element of that earlier period. Analyzes why that element is used at Aachen but with less specificity. Discussion is not as full as in top-scoring essays and may contain errors.
- 2** Describes the similarities to a previous architectural period. Attempts to discuss the reinterpretation of the earlier period or to analyze the reason why this element is used in a meaningful way, but the response is limited or contains significant errors.
- 1** The description makes note of a similarity, but discussion is weak and contains significant errors.
- 0** Makes an attempt, but the response is without merit because it restates the question or makes only incorrect or irrelevant statements.
- This is a nonresponse, such as a blank paper, crossed-out words, or personal notes.

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Name at least one earlier architectural period referenced in the Palatine Chapel. Identify one significant way in which the Palatine Chapel reinterprets architectural elements of that earlier period and explain why. (10 minutes)

Charlemagne's Palatine Chapel was heavily influenced by Byzantine architecture, namely that of San Vitale in Ravenna. Charlemagne visited Ravenna before building his chapel at Aachen, ~~and~~ and included elements of San Vitale's plan and interior decoration in the Palatine Chapel. San Vitale is a centrally-planned, ~~not just a~~ regular polygonal building buttressed by round arches. The Palatine Chapel is also centrally planned, but is more straightforward, doing away with the arches for more geometric clarity. The two-colored round arches are also similar to San Vitale, which employs a similar color scheme. Unlike ~~the~~ San Vitale though, the Palatine Chapel is not heavily mosaiced, relying again on its geometry and simpler ornamentation, representing a new form of the Romanesque style. Charlemagne chose to imitate this Byzantine style because he, as a powerful and unifying ruler, sought to imitate the holy Roman Empire, ~~as~~

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Charlemagne was coronated in 800 CE. He was ruler of the Carolingian empire, a dark ages kingdom. Though from this time, the Palatine temple clearly exhibits characteristics of other eras, notably ~~the~~ Eastern Byzantine churches. The plan is reminiscent of the centrally planned cathedrals of ~~the~~ Byzantium's easternmost regions, Santa Costanza comes to mind. In the Palatine chapel, as in Santa Costanza, the ^(the altar) focus of the church is in the middle, not at the nave's end, like in cross-planned churches. The archwork is also evocative of the framed altar of churches like Santa Costanza. This style was, of course, influenced by the building plans of the Romans. However, there are differences. The Palatine chapel utilizes double-level arching with extra support, ~~a~~ Santa Costanza's plan did not reach as high as the Palatine version, ~~not~~ partly due to architectural incapacibilities they were easier during Carolingian times. Santa Costanza did not have ambulatories emanating from ~~the~~ its outermost edges, either.

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Charlemagne's Palatine Chapel can be referenced to an earlier architectural period of Rome. The circular domed area, with the oculus in the center becomes reminiscent to that of the Pantheon. The entrance has a shorter nave flanked by two spiralling staircases on either side. Balance & harmony is portrayed, along with the concept of a more open, less compartment-like area. The front part of the building can be connected to Roman temples. The lack of light dissolving inward & removing the whole/complete mass of the building can also be compared to Rome. At this period ^{of Charlemagne} churches weren't completely constructed w/ enough light. This ^{later} urged the idea of a lighter area that removes the earth-bound to heaven. Another aspect that connects it to Rome is the use of the arches. It becomes similar to that of a Roman aqueduct displaying 2 stories.

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2008 SCORING COMMENTARY

Question 5

Overview

Students had three tasks with this question: to identify the period during which the Palatine Chapel at Aachen was built; to relate the chapel to an architectural work from a previous period; and to explain why this feature was used by Charlemagne in the chapel.

Sample: 5A

Score: 4

The student identifies Byzantine architecture as a source for the Palatine Chapel. The centralized, polygonal plan of San Vitale is cited as a specific source. With respect to reinterpretation, the essay describes how the Palatine Chapel emphasizes simpler “geometric clarity” and does not contain mosaic decoration like San Vitale. The student explains that Charlemagne used this reinterpretation because he “sought to imitate the Holy [R]oman [E]mpire.”

Sample: 5B

Score: 3

The student identifies both Roman and Byzantine architecture as sources for the Palatine Chapel. The plan and architectural vocabulary of Santa Costanza are discussed as influences on the Palatine Chapel. The essay considers differences between the heights of buildings at the beginning of an analysis of how the Palatine Chapel is a reinterpretation. The reason for referencing the earlier building is holistically implied by linking the Palatine Chapel of the crowned Charlemagne’s “Carolingian [*sic*] empire” with the two major regions of the late Roman Empire.

Sample: 5C

Score: 2

The student states that the design of the Palatine Chapel drew upon Roman sources. There is some discussion of Roman architectural elements reinterpreted in the chapel, including “the use of the arches” on levels and the implication that a central plan was used (“[t]he circular domed area”). However, no reason is given as to why the Palatine Chapel employs these architectural elements.