

# AP<sup>®</sup> ART HISTORY

## 2008 SCORING GUIDELINES

### Question 6

Left slide: Jackson Pollock, *Autumn Rhythm (Number 30)*, 1950.

Right slide: Blank

6. Both the 1950 painting shown in the slide and the quotation below are by the same artist.

“My painting does not come from the easel. . . . I prefer to tack the unstretched canvas to the hard wall or the floor. . . . On the floor I am more at ease. I feel nearer, more a part of the painting, since this way I can walk around it, work from the four sides and literally be in the painting. . . . When I am in my painting, I’m not aware of what I’m doing. . . . I have no fears about making changes, destroying the image, etc., because the painting has a life of its own. I try to let it come through.”

Identify the artist. How does the painting reflect the artist’s description of his process? In your answer, make specific references to both the quotation and the painting. (10 minutes)

#### **Background:**

American artist Jackson Pollock (1912–1956) was one of the founders of the New York School. He was celebrated for his gestural drip painting technique. With the other gesture painters, such as Willem de Kooning, Pollock focused on process and the application of paint. As Harold Rosenberg famously observed, “At a certain moment the canvas began to appear to one American painter after another as an arena in which to act. . . . What was to go to the canvas was not a picture but an *event*.” Influenced by Surrealist automatism and the Mexican muralists, notably Siqueiros, Pollock developed a revolutionary improvisational approach that broke with the tradition of easel painting. Beginning in the late 1940s he dripped and splattered ordinary household paint on unsized canvas stretched out on the floor, performing a sort of rhythmic dance. The shifting all-over latticework of paint, which conveyed a sense of energy and spontaneity, became the record of his encounter with the canvas. The resulting paintings had no focus or composition in the traditional sense. Pollock’s mural-size paintings—with their “all-overness”; shifting, ambiguous space; and epic scale—epitomized the risk-taking and unbounded ambition of the New York School for critics such as Clement Greenberg.

#### **Students have two tasks:**

- (1) They must identify the artist as Jackson Pollock.
- (2) They must analyze how the painting reflects the artist’s description of his process, making specific references to BOTH the quotation and the painting in their answer.

Better essays understand the significance of Pollock’s revolutionary breakthrough and how his emphasis on process engendered a new type of painting. These responses cogently analyze the quotation and demonstrate how the painting shown exemplifies the artist’s description of his process.

Weaker essays merely describe the painting or paraphrase the quotation but fail to analyze how the painting exemplifies the artist’s description of his process or connect them in a meaningful manner.

Better responses may include some of the following points:

- Gestural abstraction/action painting
- “All-over” composition
- Motion and rhythm
- Tension between control and improvisation
- Large scale, monumentality
- Medium (house paint and not paint out of a tube)
- Nonobjective expression of the self

# AP<sup>®</sup> ART HISTORY

## 2008 SCORING GUIDELINES

### Question 6 (continued)

#### Points to remember:

- Text-based questions are intended to give students an opportunity to analyze primary source material and apply it to what they know about a given period, artist, or work of art. The question does not require prior knowledge of the text. It is up to the student to make the connection between the text and the painting that exemplifies the process described in the quotation.
- This is a 10-minute question.

#### Scoring Criteria

##### Score Scale 0–4

- 4** Identifies Pollock as the artist. Analyzes with a high degree of specificity how the painting shown in the slide reflects the artist’s description of his process, making specific references to BOTH the quotation and the painting. There are no significant errors.
- 3** Identifies Pollock as the artist. Analyzes with a fair degree of specificity how the painting shown in the slide reflects the artist’s description of his process, making specific references to BOTH the quotation and the painting. There may be some errors.  
*OR*  
Fails to identify Pollock as the artist but is otherwise a 4.
- 2** Identifies Pollock as the artist and attempts to analyze how the painting shown in the slide reflects the artist’s description of his process. Discussion is weak and unbalanced or does not directly reference the quotation or the painting. It may contain significant errors.  
*OR*  
Fails to identify Pollock as the artist but is otherwise a 3.
- 1** Identifies Pollock as the artist but makes no other points of merit.  
*OR*  
Fails to identify Pollock as the artist but is otherwise a 2.
- 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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Identify the artist. How does the painting reflect the artist's description of his process? In your answer, make specific references to both the quotation and the painting. (10 minutes)

This statement and art piece are by Jackson Pollock. The painting is Loophole. Its monumental size eternally divorces Pollock's pieces from any sort of easel, as he emphasizes in the quotation. Pollock's ~~abstract~~ paintings are evidences of his personal experience in the process of generating the image. He begins to use industrial paints and divorces himself from brushwork. He opts to fling, drip, and splash paint rather than apply it with brush. The act of painting for him becomes an act in itself - a dance or a ritual. His process allows him the most intimate experience he can with the piece. When he paints he is free to "walk around it, work from the four sides and literally be in the painting". Each motion and movement he makes as he flings paint infuses that action within the mark, and thus as he "experiences" the piece he is revealing that experience visually with the piece. In this way "the painting has a life of its own." Pollock captures the experience in his gestural marks, and aesthetic is no longer the primary concern. In this way Pollock does not have to fear "destroying the image" because that is the image.

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Identify the artist. How does the painting reflect the artist's description of his process? In your answer, make specific references to both the quotation and the painting. (10 minutes)

The artist is Jackson Pollock. Pollock's work matured as he moved his canvas to the ground. The lines feel as if they were placed from different locations around the ~~the~~ canvas, rather than from one angle. Pollock says he has no fear of destroying the image, and that is clearly seen as many layers of paint appear to have been applied. The painting clearly has its own life as the chaos and disorder swirl around, forming no clear image. The passion of the piece (and the artist) still shines through. You can almost feel Pollock walking around the canvas, throwing, splatting, thrashing the paint down. The beauty of the piece is found in the emotion of the application of the paint and less in the actual composition. The painting, then, comes together not as a form, but as a feeling. Pollock becomes the painting, as he puts it.

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Identify the artist. How does the painting reflect the artist's description of his process? In your answer, make specific references to both the quotation and the painting. (10 minutes)

The artist of the painting is the Symbolist, Jackson Pollock. Pollock is a pioneer for modern, ~~and~~ nontraditional painting. Rather than attempting to create a logically produced, naturalistic portrait of a specific subject, Pollock lets his paint do the work for him. In order to be "a part of the painting," he ~~take~~ paints ~~on~~ <sup>his</sup> canvas on the floor or tacked to a wall. ~~His paintings are~~ ~~spattered and~~ ~~nonrepresentational,~~ ~~yet~~ ~~locally~~ ~~and~~ ~~emotionally~~ ~~provocative.~~ In order to achieve "his imbalance," Pollock allows himself to feel disoriented and "not aware" of what he's doing. ~~The limited scope of color also adds to the~~ ~~his~~ ~~searching~~ ~~by~~ ~~elusive~~ ~~painting's~~ ~~activity.~~

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**AP<sup>®</sup> ART HISTORY**  
**2008 SCORING COMMENTARY**

**Question 6**

**Overview**

This was a text-based question that required students to relate a quotation by an artist (Jackson Pollock) to an image of a work by the same artist.

**Sample: 6A**

**Score: 4**

The student correctly identifies Jackson Pollock as the artist and shows a strong understanding of Pollock's painting style, cogently describing the monumentality of the work, use of industrial paints, "gestural" paint application, movement, and the act of expressive painting with an overall emphasis on process. The essay clearly and effectively combines specific references from the quotation with discussion of the painting.

**Sample: 6B**

**Score: 3**

The student correctly identifies Jackson Pollock as the artist. The essay includes descriptions of the layering of paint, the action of paint application, and an emphasis on process and emotional expression over any traditional composition or formal concerns. While the student references both the painting and the quotation, the discussion lacks development, and the quotation is not fully engaged.

**Sample: 6C**

**Score: 2**

The student correctly identifies Jackson Pollock as the artist. While the essay notes the action of paint application and nonrepresentational subject matter, these references are largely descriptive and not fully developed ideas. The quotation is minimally repeated without much explication.