

AP[®] ART HISTORY

2008 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 7

Left slide: *Madonna and Child* (the *Morgan Madonna*), twelfth century.
Right slide: Blank

7. Identify the art-historical period of the sculpture. What key characteristics support your placement of the work in the period you have identified? (5 minutes)

Background:

The *sedes sapientiae*, or Throne of Wisdom, is a common theme in Romanesque sculpture. Like the Byzantine Theotokos, the Throne of Wisdom presents Mary as the bearer of God via her role as the mother of Christ, transforming Mary into an actual throne for Christ. Furthermore, Mary plays a role as intermediary between the New and Old Testaments, as her thronelike stool connects her to the lion throne of King Solomon; thus Jesus is connected to the Old Testament symbol of wisdom through Mary. Jesus's association with divine wisdom would have been reinforced through the gestures of his now-missing hands: one raised in blessing and the other holding a book, presumably scripture. As Mary bears Christ, she also represents (and is identified with) the Church, wherein Christ is also borne. As Mary literally embodies the Church, the Throne of Wisdom image additionally asserts the wisdom of Church teaching. Works such as this Throne of Wisdom probably served dual purposes as reliquaries and as devotional objects used in liturgical dramas or church processions. Miracles and healing powers were often ascribed to them.

Romanesque sculpture ranges widely in date and style, but this term is usually used for sculpture created in western and central Europe between the tenth and thirteenth centuries, with particularly increased activity from about the beginning of the twelfth century. Throne of Wisdom figures were a specialty of the workshops of Auvergne, France. Evidence, such as the writings of Bernard d'Angers, suggests that the Auvergne was one of the earliest regions to promote such three-dimensional cult images. The rise of both monastic movements and pilgrimages fostered the demand for, and acceptance of, small devotional statuary such as the Throne of Wisdom.

Several characteristics of Romanesque sculpture apply to this Virgin and Child. The formal frontality of the figures suggests the image's function as a cult figure and/or reliquary, image types that became particularly popular during the Romanesque period. Mary's scale is considerably larger than that of Christ. Such variance in size, augmenting the theological and hagiological message of the image, is common in Romanesque sculpture. The platelike folds of drapery are particularly representative of twelfth-century sculpture in Burgundy and Auvergne. The emphasis on formal clarity, at the expense of naturalism, is characteristic of the Romanesque style. Unlike the earlier Carolingian focus on imperial imagery and Classical style, this work is typically Romanesque in its religious subject matter and relative lack of naturalism. Similarly, the Throne of Wisdom differs from more dynamic and expressionistic Anglo-Saxon and Ottonian pieces in its rigidity and lack of emotion. Though it clearly borrows from Byzantine icons in its rigid, formal, frontal style, this work is freestanding and intimate in scale. Furthermore, as is typical of the Romanesque era, Jesus is shown as a stylized homunculus. Although not naturalistic in a human perceptual sense, this stylistic trait visually underscores Christ's omniscience. Appearing as a hybrid of man and infant, the Christ figure simultaneously manifests the divinity and humanity of Christ. In alluding to themes of incarnation and pantocracy, such an image serves to palpably present layers of theological doctrine. The focus on Mary and Christ also attests to the growing cult of the Virgin that would reach its apex during the later Gothic period.

The *Morgan Madonna* is specifically addressed as an example of freestanding Romanesque sculpture in both Gardner's *Art through the Ages* and Stokstad's *Art History*. Both texts focus on this Throne of Wisdom as a common Romanesque type and describe the work as a western European version of the

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2008 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 7 (continued)

Byzantine Theotokos. Moreover, the Metropolitan Museum of Art has the work posted on its Web site with a discussion of its use in church processions and for housing relics. Be aware that not all texts discuss this work.

Students have two tasks:

- (1) They must identify the art-historical period of the sculpture as Romanesque.
- (2) They must defend their attribution by identifying the work's Romanesque characteristics.

Students should attribute the work to the Romanesque era for some of the following reasons:

- It is a *sedes sapientiae*, or Throne of Wisdom, a popular Romanesque form.
- It is made of wood and painted—typical of the period.
- Drapery is treated in linear fashion.
- The work's style as a whole is formal, as shown most notably in its bilateral symmetry.
- It is a portable, religious sculpture, typical of those used as reliquaries and in liturgical dramas and church processions.
- It lacks the classicizing, courtly elements seen in the Carolingian and Gothic periods.
- It demonstrates a notable emphasis on clarity of conceptual presentation over naturalism of rendering, such as Christ's being portrayed as a stylized homunculus rather than as a naturalistic infant.
- It is a freestanding work, unlike the Byzantine Theotokos icons.

Points to remember:

- Students are not asked to identify this particular work but only to name the art-historical period and defend their attribution.
- This is a 5-minute question.

Scoring Criteria

Score Scale 0–4

- 4** Correctly identifies the art-historical period as Romanesque. Explains the characteristics of the work that place it in the Romanesque period. Discussion is full and without significant errors.
- 3** Correctly identifies the art-historical period as Romanesque. Discussion is less full than that of top-scoring essays. There may be minor errors.
- 2** Correctly identifies the art-historical period as Romanesque but includes little discussion of merit.
OR
Does not identify the work as Romanesque but is otherwise a 3.
Note: This is the highest score a response can earn without identifying the period as Romanesque.
- 1** Does not identify the work as Romanesque but includes some discussion of merit.
OR
Only identifies the period as Romanesque with no discussion of merit.
- 0** Makes an attempt, but the response is without merit because it fails to identify the work or makes only incorrect or irrelevant statements.
- This is a nonresponse, such as a blank paper, crossed-out words, or personal notes.

7. Identify the art-historical period of the sculpture. What key characteristics support your placement of the work in the period you have identified? (5 minutes)

The piece shown is of the Romanesque period. This can be seen through the ~~highly~~ strong linear folds, the rigid frontality of the piece, and the portrayal of baby Jesus as a stern ~~and~~ adult, lacking any childlike characteristic. The folds in the drapery are extremely linear. ~~There~~ The folds from the ~~and~~ shoulders to the feet are extremely unnatural. These folds lack the realistic qualities of the later Gothic era. The position of the two figures is very ~~stern~~ rigid and frontal. The figures are sitting very symmetrically with no weight shift ~~or~~ or natural position. Both feet are firmly planted on the floor and all body parts face solidly front. The portrayal of Jesus also attributes it to Romanesque because of his lack of youthful characteristics. ~~White~~ His expression is extremely serious, ~~despite~~ very unrealistic due to the nature of babies. He is calmly planted on his mother's lap ~~and~~ holding ~~the~~ personality ~~and~~ ~~as~~ ↓ possessing the seriousness of an adult. Later periods would ~~se~~ end up showing this realistic portrayal of a mother and son with works such as the Virgin of Paris. The mother and baby Jesus from this Romanesque

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work possess no mother child relationship
characteristics like that of the virgin of Paris.

Linear folds
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little b

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE.

7. Identify the art-historical period of the sculpture. What key characteristics support your placement of the work in the period you have identified? (5 minutes)

This piece is from the Romanesque period. I placed it there because Mary (the Virgin) isn't wearing a crown so it wouldn't be in the Gothic. The sculpture shows Mary and Jesus in the seat of wisdom. The sculpture is simple but trying to show the folds of drapery in the ~~the~~ cloth. Jesus as a child doesn't look proportionate and has the face of an adult. It's not good enough to be Renaissance and not ornate enough to be Byzantine or Gothic. Since it's still about religion and it's more skillfully done than Early Christian work it's Romanesque.

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7. Identify the art-historical period of the sculpture. What key characteristics support your placement of the work in the period you have identified? (5 minutes)

This sculpture is an Early Christian sculpture. The composition of Mary as the Throne of Wisdom is a very common portrayal at that time. However, the sculpture is awkward, rigid and unnatural, unlike the Gothic and Renaissance sculptures that follow. The drapery folds are stiff and shallow, revealing very little body shape. The faces are the most realistic piece, but are still blank, emotionless and empty. Perspective has not been fully accomplished and the wood ~~carving~~ carving is less expensive than later marble.

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AP® ART HISTORY
2008 SCORING COMMENTARY

Question 7

Overview

This question asked students to attribute a European medieval sculpture (the *Morgan Madonna*) to its art-historical period, the Romanesque era.

Sample: 7A

Score: 4

The period is identified correctly. Key characteristics are clearly enumerated: “strong linear folds, the rigid frontality of the piece, and the portrayal of baby Jesus as a stern adult.” There are no significant errors.

Sample: 7B

Score: 3

The period is identified correctly, and two key characteristics are enumerated: “seat of wisdom” and Christ as homunculus. However, the description of Christ as homunculus is unsophisticated, and references to other characteristics use inexact art-historical language: “The sculpture is simple but trying to show the folds of drapery in the cloth.”

Sample: 7C

Score: 2

The period is incorrectly identified, but the enumeration of some key characteristics is precise: “throne of wisdom,” and “drapery folds are stiff and shallow.” Some references are imprecise or generic: “The sculpture [*sic*] is awkward,” and “faces are . . . blank, emotionless and empty.” Precise or imprecise, the number of noted characteristics met the requirements for a score of 2, even without the correct period identification.