

AP[®] ART HISTORY

2008 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 8

Left slide: Diego Velázquez, *Las Meninas*, 1656.
Right slide: Blank

8. The Baroque painting shown includes portrayals of both its patron and its artist.

Name the artist. Explain how the painting served the aims of both the artist and the patron.
(10 minutes)

Background:

Diego Velázquez (1599–1660) was court painter to Philip IV of Spain. The primary duty of a Baroque-era court painter was to produce flattering, yet lifelike, portraits of the reigning monarch and the royal family. The painting shown, *Las Meninas* (1656), was originally called *The Family of Philip IV*. In fact, the painting includes only one of Philip’s children, the Infanta Margarita, with her retinue. The king and queen appear in the background, reflected in a mirror, leading the viewer to assume that they are present, off-stage as it were. A self-portrait of Velázquez at his easel occupies the left portion of the picture. The setting is a room in the Alcázar Palace where Velázquez had a studio, though this room likely does not depict it. The room’s upper walls display paintings from the royal collections by (or after) Rubens, who had been ennobled by England’s Charles I. *Las Meninas* melds a group portrait, a self-portrait, and a high-level genre scene into a coherent whole, each element contributing subtly to the picture’s dual goals of satisfying the patron’s wishes and the artist’s aims.

Las Meninas, completed late in Velázquez’s life, seems to have been undertaken with the king’s approval, if not formally commissioned by him. Once finished, this intimate portrayal of the Infanta was placed on the entry wall of the king’s private office, enabling the busy monarch (ruler of Spain, the Low Countries, the Philippines, and much of the New World) to “see” his child often. Such placement for an unofficial portrait signals the king-patron’s need for and approval of Velázquez’s services. The picture also attests to the king’s tastes and powers as a collector of art (the room’s decor) and as a connoisseur of fine painting (not least of Velázquez’s own work, which the king observes here).

Velázquez’s inclusion of himself at work, surrounded by members of the royal family, underscores how a court position enhanced an artist’s reputation, a typical goal of artists in the Baroque era. The informality of the scene bespeaks an unusually close relationship between artist and royal family. From the age of 24 until his death, Velázquez, whose origins were in Seville’s working class, served the king as a court painter, collections adviser, curator, and diplomat. The canvas’s size, complex composition, bravura brushwork, and verisimilitude emphasize Velázquez’s skill at recreating reality, a quality valued at the time and considered quasi divine. Velázquez had long sought a title, forbidden to artists and other manual laborers. The red cross on the artist’s doublet (added later) attests to Velázquez’s 1658 appointment as a knight of the Order of Santiago. The painting thus embodies two long-standing goals of the artist: to elevate the status of the arts as well as his own social status.

Students have two tasks:

- (1) They must identify the artist as Velázquez.
- (2) They must explain how the painting shown served both the aims of the artist and the patron.

AP[®] ART HISTORY

2008 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 8 (continued)

Points to remember:

- The painting is illustrated and extensively discussed in all major texts. For a score in the upper range (3–4), Velázquez must be identified correctly.
- Students are told that the painting includes depictions of both the artist and the patron. Though the patron need not be identified, they must name the artist. Good essays will refer to Velázquez's position in the king's employ when addressing the aims of both the artist and the patron.
- This is a 10-minute question.

Scoring Criteria

Score Scale 0–4

- 4** Correctly names Velázquez as the artist. Explains with a high degree of specificity how the painting served the aims of Velázquez AND his patron. Contains no significant errors.
- 3** Correctly names Velázquez as the artist. Explains with less specificity how the painting served the aims of Velázquez AND his patron, but the discussion may be unbalanced, focusing more on the artist or the patron.
- 2** Correctly names Velázquez as the artist. Discusses the aims of the artist OR patron with little specificity. Contains many errors.
OR
Fails to identify Velázquez as the artist but is otherwise a 3.
- 1** Correctly identifies Velázquez as the artist. Discussion is minimal and has significant errors.
OR
Fails to identify Velázquez as the artist but is otherwise a 2.
- 0** Fails to identify Velázquez. Any attempt at discussion is without merit.
- This is a nonresponse, such as a blank paper, crossed-out words, or personal notes.

8. The Baroque painting shown includes portrayals of both its patron and its artist.

Name the artist. Explain how the painting served the aims of both the artist and the patron. (10 minutes)

The artist of this painting is Velasquez. The painting is presented from the point of view of the princess's mother and father, who are seen in the mirror opposite the viewer. By presenting the figures in their finest clothing ~~and~~ and ^{with} a room filled with exquisite artwork, Velasquez hoped to glorify the patron's sense of artistic taste and style. In this way he also benefits from the artwork, because by placing himself in the painting he is suggesting that he is worthy of future attention due to his own fraternization with such wealthy and stylish people. The patrons are presented with a beautiful likeness of their child and a reminder of who gave them that likeness in the first place at the same time.

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8. The Baroque painting shown includes portrayals of both its patron and its artist.

Name the artist. Explain how the painting served the aims of both the artist and the patron. (10 minutes)

The artist of this painting is Velazquez. This painting served the aims of both the artist and the patron. It served the patron because they wanted to show off their daughter, their wealth, and how educated/cared after she was. The daughter of the patron is the little blonde girl dressed in a very wide skirt and corset top. The fabrics everyone that all the people are dressed in look expensive to show wealth. There is also a midget in the painting to show they have enough money to entertain their daughter. There is also a teacher, nanny, and maid to help her learn and get ready. You can also see the royal couple in a mirror so you knew who her parents were.

The artist aimed to become well known so he included himself in the picture painting the scene. He wanted to be known for his skills, which are apparent in this painting, so he could get more commissions for more money.

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8. The Baroque painting shown includes portrayals of both its patron and its artist.

Name the artist. Explain how the painting served the aims of both the artist and the patron. (10 minutes)

The artist is Diego Velazquez and the painting is Las Meninas. The painting serves both artist and patron because both are included: Diego Velazquez is shown at work, while the King of Spain and his wife can be seen in the mirror in the background. His painting shows Velazquez prominence as an artist, while also showing the King's wealth and lavish surroundings. Through this painting both artist and patron are benefiting.

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AP[®] ART HISTORY
2008 SCORING COMMENTARY

Question 8

Overview

This question asked students to look at a major work covered at length in all texts, Velázquez's *Las Meninas*, and to discuss the painting's importance to its patron and its artist. Students were asked to identify the artist but not the patron.

Sample: 8A
Score: 4

The artist is identified as Velázquez, and his aim to be “worthy of future attention” by his “fraternization” with the royal family is clearly expressed. The aim of the patrons to display their “artistic taste and style” is also addressed as a key point. A reference to the patrons as the viewers, “seen in the mirror” and “presented with a beautiful likeness of their child,” places primacy on their “point of view.”

Sample: 8B
Score: 3

The artist is identified as Velázquez, and his aim to become “known for his skills . . . so he could get more commissions [*sic*]” is noted, but the essay fails to address the desire of Velázquez to gain greater social status with the royal court. The aim of the patrons “to show off their daughter, their wealth, and how educated/cared after she was” is stated, but this point is followed mostly by a description of the painting instead of supportive analysis.

Sample: 8C
Score: 2

Discussion of the painting in this response is minimal. The artist is identified as Velázquez, and his aim to gain “prominence [*sic*] as an artist” and to display “the king's wealth and lavish surroundings” is clearly mentioned. The essay, however, fails to follow up this statement with any additional supportive analysis.