

# AP<sup>®</sup> ART HISTORY

## 2009 SCORING GUIDELINES

### Question 2

Left slide: Chi-rho page from the Gospel of Saint Matthew, *Book of Kells*, c. 800 C.E.  
Right slide: Blank

2. The slide shows a manuscript page.

Identify the culture in which the manuscript page was made. How is the manuscript page characteristic of its culture? (5 minutes)

#### **Background:**

This densely ornamented folio, illustrated in the Insular style, is from the *Book of Kells*, a manuscript containing the four Gospels. Most scholars believe it was produced in Iona in the early ninth century and later added to extensively by an unknown number of scribes at a monastery at Kells, in County Meath, Ireland. The manuscript may have been taken to Kells after a Viking raid at Iona around 801. Some of the pages are missing, and others are unfinished.

This Irish manuscript is the product of an ascetic monastic movement that originated in Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. Irish monks differed from their predecessors, however, in that their movement was primarily a missionary one, placing great value on letters and learning. The Gospels, a record of Christ's deeds and words, was so essential for missionary activity that the Irish churchmen developed a special type of "pocket Gospels," not only to use during the Mass but to read from on a daily basis. The errors and confusions in this text, though, suggest that the book was not meant to be read or studied at length. Rather, its lavish ornamentation indicates that the book was meant to be displayed, probably on a church altar, in order to visually convey the miraculous power of the Word of God. Early on, it was kept in an elaborate metalwork box, evoking the presence of a sacred relic.

The folio shown is dominated by the initial letters of Christ in Greek (*chi-rho-iota*). Since great importance was placed on a noble lineage by the Celts and Anglo-Saxons, the chi-rho monogram, which introduces the genealogy of Christ in the Gospel of Matthew, grew in popularity from its first appearance within an entire page in the *Book of Lindisfarne*. Also seen are two words—*autem* (abbreviated simply as *h*) and *generato*—at the lower right, translated to mean "now this is how the birth of Christ came about." Medieval scribes, sometimes given the official title of "abbreviator," had to learn a long list of standard abbreviations for Latin words in order to save time and space when transcribing or copying texts.

The interlaced patterns and swirling motifs of this folio, rooted in pre-Christian nomadic cultures, suggest a view of the natural world as a place of cyclical flux. These designs evoke a fluid metamorphosis or shape-changing. For example, St. Patrick, credited with bringing Christianity to Ireland, is said to have turned into a stag to escape capture by pagan warriors. Integrated in the design are a number of zoomorphic, animal-style, interlaced designs linking prey and predator, including two cats with mice perched on their backs and rats nibbling a wafer. (This image may be not only a reference to the struggle between good and evil but also to the monks' task to keep the sacred Eucharistic host safe from rodents.) Also woven within the design are three angels, appropriately placed within the sacred text since they are messengers of God.

From prehistoric times, spiral patterns such as the ones seen here were used to symbolize the cycles of life, death, and rebirth. At Newgrange (also in County Meath), it seems to have been necessary to pass a spiral barrier in order to enter the inner sanctuary of a stone burial chamber, symbolizing the soul moving from death to rebirth at the still center. Just as this inner chamber was believed to have been used for both meditation and initiation, early Celtic saints continued this tradition by using a rock cavity for meditation and prayer.

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### Question 2 (continued)

Before the use of paper and the invention of printing in the fifteenth century, books such as this one were illuminated on soft calfskin, called vellum, and done entirely by hand. Therefore, the possession of an entire Bible was rare. The painstaking details, recalling Celtic and Anglo-Saxon metalwork, were produced in a scriptorium, a cold workplace where monks would work in silence at slanted desks.

While Irish monasteries were often characterized by their isolated settings and ascetic practice, the monks were not unaware of the world beyond their often inhospitable surroundings. The scriptorium was adjacent to a library containing a wide range of ancient texts from the Mediterranean world. Costly pigments used to create the *Book of Kells* had to be imported from places even more distant. The monks were also not free of worldly ambitions: for example, a church at Armagh was successful in establishing hegemony over the entire Irish Church, a position comparable to that held by Rome in Italy. While the lavish nature of the *Book of Kells* is believed to be an act of pious homage to St. Columba, significant resources and motives were required to produce what became an object of covetable luxury. The manuscript was stolen in 1007 but recovered quickly thereafter.

#### Students have two tasks:

- (1) Identify the culture in which the manuscript page was made.
- (2) Explain how the manuscript page is characteristic of its culture.

Better responses reveal an understanding of the cultural context of an Irish monastic setting and the long pagan tradition of patterned imagery rooted in Celtic art combined with Christian imagery.

Weaker responses are merely descriptive, failing to link the manuscript page in some significant way to the culture of Irish monks.

#### Points to remember:

- The culture with which the manuscript page can be identified is Insular, Celtic, Hiberno-Saxon, or Irish. A simple identification of Medieval, Early Medieval, or Christian is not sufficient. While references to the animal style or interlaced patterns may enhance an essay, they are not viable on their own as an identification of the culture.
- Students are not asked to merely describe the work but to discuss how the manuscript page is characteristic of the monastic culture that produced this intricate folio. This culture is one that is connected to both earlier Celtic traditions and artmaking and a Mediterranean Christian world distinguished by letters and learning. The page reflects a fusion of cultures, combining Christian imagery with indigenous motifs. Within this culture, the importance attributed to the *Book of Kells* reflects the importance of solitude, prayer, ritual, meditation, disciplined craft, and even humans' relationship with the natural world (through its fluid, swirl-like, interlaced patterns).
- Students are not asked to identify the manuscript.
- This is a 5-minute question.

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## 2009 SCORING GUIDELINES

### Question 2 (continued)

#### Scoring Criteria

#### Score Scale 0–4

- 4** Correctly identifies the culture of the manuscript page. Analyzes with specificity how the manuscript page is characteristic of its culture. There are no significant errors.
- 3** Correctly identifies the culture of the manuscript page. Analyzes with less specificity how the manuscript page is characteristic of its culture. Discussion is less full and may contain errors.  
**OR**  
Fails to identify the culture of the manuscript page but is otherwise a 4.
- 2** Correctly identifies the culture of the manuscript page. Attempts to identify and discuss specific characteristics of its culture, but the discussion is unfocused and may contain significant errors.  
**OR**  
Fails to identify the culture of the manuscript page but is otherwise a 3.
- 1** Correctly identifies the culture of the manuscript page, but there is no analysis of how the manuscript page is characteristic of its culture. Discussion may contain significant errors.  
**OR**  
Fails to identify the culture of the manuscript page 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.

**Directions for Questions 2-8:** The following seven short essay questions are based on slides and/or text. Each question is separately timed and each slide or set of slides will be shown only for the length of time indicated after the question. You are to answer each question in the space provided.

Read the question and take a moment to think about what the question asks. Formulate your answer before you begin to write. You can receive full credit only by answering the question asked.

**Note:** For questions involving two slides, when you are not asked specifically to name the artists and/or titles of the works, you may refer to the work on the left as (L) and the work on the right as (R).

2. The slide shows a manuscript page.

Identify the culture in which the manuscript page was made. How is the manuscript page characteristic of its culture? (5 minutes)

This manuscript page comes from the Hiberno-Saxon culture of Ireland. This highly ornamental ~~work~~ product of handworking monks is extremely characteristic of both this culture and the entire attitude of Medieval art. Its bright color and individualization reflect the culture's lack of a quick printing method, relying on books to be copied individually. This led to them being very special and, often, decorated extensively to reflect their rarity. In addition, the Medieval mindset as a whole meant that most manuscripts, such as this one, were directly religious. This kind of ornate decoration was intended to glorify God and demonstrate the monk's devotion that crafted it.

**GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE.**

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2. The slide shows a manuscript page.

Identify the culture in which the manuscript page was made. How is the manuscript page characteristic of its culture? (5 minutes)

The culture of which this manuscript page is a result of is the Hiberno-Saxon culture. The manuscript page was made for its use in a religious text such as a book of hours, or a psalter. It was most likely made by a monk in a monastery's workshop. Monks spent all of the time they weren't praying, administering alms, or possibly gardening, transcribing and illustrating these texts. As a result the attention to detail is obvious and a testament to their devotion to God. Furthermore the initial on the page belongs to one of Jesus' apostles: Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John and pertain to his respective books of the gospel.

**GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE.**

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2. The slide shows a manuscript page.

Identify the culture in which the manuscript page was made. How is the manuscript page characteristic of its culture? (5 minutes)

This manuscript page comes from the Hyberno-Saxon culture. ~~The~~ The manuscript page is representative of the Hyberno Saxon culture, ~~because of the~~ There are no representative figures, it is all ~~swirls~~ swirls and patterns. There are different shapes that can be seen. It looks very much like metalwork done by this culture. It is fluid and curvilinear. ~~The~~ The patterns are colored in by lighter and darker shades of reddish orange. This type of style can be identified with the Book of Kells.

**GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE.**

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## 2009 SCORING COMMENTARY

### Question 2

#### Overview

This 5-minute question asked students to identify the culture that produced the manuscript page shown and to place the work within a cultural framework. The intent of the question was for students to recall the cultural context of an Irish monastic setting and to discuss the interlaced pattern on the page within the context of Celtic art and Christianity. While many students realized they were looking at a medieval manuscript, simply identifying the culture as “medieval” was not sufficient. They were expected to demonstrate a deeper knowledge of this work, expanding the essay beyond description or formal analysis to a discussion that revealed an understanding of the cultural context, within the parameters of a 5-minute answer.

#### Sample: 2A

##### Score: 4

The essay correctly identifies the manuscript page as Hiberno-Saxon and associates it with the culture of medieval Ireland. It insightfully analyzes how the “highly ornamental product of hardworking monks . . . was intended to glorify God and demonstrate the monk’s devotion.” The essay acknowledges that without a “quick printing method, . . . books [had] to be copied individually,” and they were “often, decorated extensively to reflect their rarity.” The essay clearly recognizes that the question asked for a contextual discussion focused on culture rather than a descriptive formal analysis of style.

#### Sample: 2B

##### Score: 3

The essay correctly identifies the manuscript page as Hiberno-Saxon and associates it with a monastic culture where the creators of this work were engaged in a variety of activities: “praying, administering alms, . . . gardening, transcribing and illustrating these texts.” Minor errors, such as identifying the page as part of “a book of hours, or a psalter,” or associating the initial depicted on the page as “belong[ing] to one of Jesus’ apostles,” begin to weaken the discussion. The essay also fails to specify characteristic features of the folio, such as interlaced patterns or ornamental motifs, in order to fully substantiate its identification of the culture in which the manuscript page was made. Nevertheless, the essay does recognize how “the attention to detail” evident in the manuscript page is “a testament to their devotion to God,” revealing an insight into the cultural context in which this folio was produced.

#### Sample: 2C

##### Score: 2

This essay identifies the manuscript page as Hiberno-Saxon and discusses how the imagery of “swirls and patterns” is characteristic of the art of the culture that made the *Book of Kells*. It also notes that the folio “looks very much like metalwork done by this culture,” recognizing that the artisans of that culture worked in a variety of media. However, the essay is generally descriptive and states incorrectly that “[t]here are no representative figures.” In addition, without associating the creation of this page with a Christian monastic culture, the essay fails to provide a rich analysis of the work’s cultural context.