

AP[®] ART HISTORY

2009 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 5

Left slide: Angelica Kauffmann, *Cornelia Presenting Her Children as Her Treasures (Mother of the Gracchi)*, c. 1785
Right slide: Blank

5. The work shown is by Angelica Kauffmann.

Identify the stylistic period of the work. Discuss the elements of the work that place it in its period.
(5 minutes)

Background:

Angelica Kauffmann (1741–1807) was an eighteenth-century Swiss artist trained in Italy. Recognized as a prodigy, she assisted her father in painting church murals and accepted portrait commissions while still a teenager. Shortly after arriving in Rome in 1763, she painted Johann Winckelmann's portrait and was elected to the Academy of Saint Luke. While in Rome, she became familiar with the new classicism—now known as Neo-Classicism—that was spurred in part by the uncovering of Pompeii and Herculaneum in the first half of the eighteenth century. European academies of the time typically considered history painting to be the highest form of artistic expression and thus superior to portraiture, still life, and genre scenes. In the eighteenth century, women who were painters primarily worked on portraiture and still life; however, in a daring move, Kauffmann chose to pursue a career as a history painter. In 1766, she left Rome for London, where she became one of the founding members of the Royal Academy of Art. She remained in London until returning to Italy in 1781. While in London, she produced numerous history paintings for British patrons, who preferred to acquire Italian paintings while on the Grand Tour or through agents in Italy rather than to purchase works from local artists. Many of Kauffmann's history paintings depicted subjects drawn from classical antiquity.

Arguably, Kauffmann's most familiar history painting is *Cornelia Presenting Her Children as Her Treasures*, which she completed c. 1785 for a British patron after she had returned to Rome. The story is painted to look as if it is taking place during ancient Rome's Republican period. According to the apocryphal account, Cornelia had welcomed a visitor to her home, and the episode in the painting captures the moment when the visitor showed off her jewelry and then asked Cornelia to exhibit hers. Cornelia responded by pointing to her two sons and daughter, stating, "These are my most precious jewels."

Through her act, Cornelia exemplified several themes—foremost among them, the "good mother." This was a popular subject among history painters during the Enlightenment, especially those who were interested in producing works that taught lessons in virtue. Cornelia's virtuous maternal behavior is further underlined by the fact that her sons, Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus, became political reformers in Rome. The entire scene then can be read as a symbolic reference to national, as well as familial, loyalty. Here the mother can be seen as a metaphor for the nation, and the children represent its citizens. The seriousness of the subject is veiled by the subdued tonalities of the palette, the softness of the forms and the atmosphere, and the overall tranquility of the scene.

Students have two tasks:

- (1) They must identify the stylistic period as Neo-Classicism.
- (2) They must explain how the elements of this painting, such as formal language and/or the subject matter, relate to its period.

Better responses will identify Neo-Classical as the style and analyze how the subject matter and/or style are emblematic of the stylistic period.

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Question 5 (continued)

Weaker responses will describe the painting and/or the subject matter without relating it to its period.

Points to remember:

- The style is Neo-Classical or Neo-Classicism. Rococo is not an acceptable response, nor is Romanticism.
- Although they may be used to discuss elements of the work, Academic style, Grand Manner, Enlightenment, or Classicism are not acceptable as identifications.
- The question identifies Kauffmann as the artist. Students are not asked to identify the title of the work.
- The image depicts Cornelia's response to a visitor's actions and the comments regarding Cornelia's jewelry.
- The subject may be understood as an *exemplum virtutis* or as representing a lesson in virtue.
- The setting for the scene is Republican Rome, exemplified through the architecture, clothing, and other details.
- The image may also be associated with larger nationalistic ideals.
- This work of art is a history painting, which was considered the most prestigious genre of painting in eighteenth-century European academies.
- This is a 5-minute question.

Scoring Criteria

Score Scale 0–4

- 4** Correctly identifies the style as Neo-Classical. Analyzes how the elements of this painting, such as formal language and/or the subject matter, relate to its period. Discussion is detailed and without significant errors.
- 3** Correctly identifies the style as Neo-Classical. Analyzes how the elements of this painting, such as formal language and/or the subject matter, relate to its period, but discussion is less specific and may contain minor errors.
- OR**
Fails to identify the style as Neo-Classicism but is otherwise a 4. This is the highest score an essay can earn if it does not identify the style as Neo-Classical.
- 2** Identifies the style as Neo-Classical. Describes the painting without relating it to its period. Discussion may contain significant errors or omissions.
- OR**
Fails to identify the style as Neo-Classical but is otherwise a 3.
- 1** Identifies the style as Neo-Classical but there is no discussion of merit.
- OR**
Fails to identify the style as Neo-Classicism 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.

5. The work shown is by Angelica Kauffmann.

Identify the stylistic period of the work. Discuss the elements of the work that place it in its period. (5 minutes)

This work falls under the Neoclassicism period. Neoclassicism is defined by using a classical form or Greek like setting or style to portray a modern meaning or subject. Elements that place this in this period are the style of flowing clothing, the style of the figures (elegant ballerina like composure and posture), and the classical style scenery and architecture (balcony looking out on the mountains and the columns). This piece is "Her Children as Gems". This is an example of a neoclassic piece expressing a warning or life lesson. The woman seated is asking the erect woman about her Gems/Jewelry/Possess. The standing woman replies that her children (who are present) are her greatest treasures.

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5. The work shown is by Angelica Kauffmann.

Identify the stylistic period of the work. Discuss the elements of the work that place it in its period. (5 minutes)

The stylistic period of this work is Neo-classicism. The plain, column background walls and column that echoes Rome and ancient Greece make it Neo-classical. The Greco-Roman clothing and drapery also place it in its period. Furthermore, the calm, serene expressions on the women seen in Greco-Roman art contribute to its Neo-classicism.

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5. The work shown is by Angelica Kauffmann.

Identify the stylistic period of the work. Discuss the elements of the work that place it in its period. (5 minutes)

The stylistic period of this work is Rococo. The work is "Cornelia Pointing to Her Children as Her Treasures." This work has the Enlightenment theme of a "good mother" in Rococo art. Cornelia is pointing to her children as her jewels. A woman has asked her "How many jewels do you have?" and she has replied by looking at and pointing to her children as if to say, "These are my jewels." The dress of the women and children also place it in the Rococo period. The women are dressed as hardworking mothers.

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2009 SCORING COMMENTARY

Question 5

Overview

This 5-minute question identified the artist of the painting *Cornelia Presenting Her Children as Her Treasures* as Angelica Kauffmann. Students were asked to identify the stylistic period of the work (Neo-Classicism) and to discuss elements of the work (its form and/or content) that place it within that period. This response could have been developed as a stylistic (formal) analysis, an analysis of the content, or a combination of both.

Sample: 5A

Score: 4

The essay correctly identifies the stylistic period of the work as Neo-Classicism, which is characterized as “using a classical [R]oman or [G]reek like setting or style to portray a modern meaning or subject.” These points are elaborated by identifying the “flowing clothing,” figures with “elegant [H]ellenistic like composure and posture,” and “classical style . . . architecture,” including columns—all of which relate to the period of Neo-Classicism. The narrative is correctly summarized and characterized as moralizing, as it is “expressing a meaning or life lesson,” and the moralizing aspect is, in turn, linked to the period. The analysis is full and without significant errors.

Sample: 5B

Score: 3

The essay correctly identifies the stylistic period of the work as Neo-Classicism and discusses how the architecture, clothing, and figures are representative of the period. The architecture, specifically the “background walls and column,” are seen as “echoes [of] Rome and Ancient Greece.” The clothing is characterized as “Greco-Roman,” and the figures, specifically their “calm, serene expressions,” are said to be “seen in Greco-Roman art.” The discussion is less full than that in an essay that would merit a score of 4, so this essay earned a 3.

Sample: 5C

Score: 2

The essay incorrectly identifies the stylistic period of the work as Rococo. The narrative is summarized correctly and presented as moralizing through its reference to the “theme of a ‘good mother,’” a concept that the essay further connects to the Enlightenment. Although the essay mentions “[t]he dress of the women and children,” those costumes are incorrectly seen as characteristic of the Rococo. The discussion is less full than that of higher-scoring essays and earned a score of 2.