

AP[®] ART HISTORY

2009 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 8

(No slide shown)

8. In a letter published in 1861, Gustave Courbet declared,

“[An artist must apply] his personal faculties to the ideas and events of the times in which he lives. . . . [A]rt in painting should consist only in the representation of things visible and tangible to the artist. Every age should be respected only by its own artists, that is to say, by the artists who have lived in it. I also maintain that painting is an essentially concrete art form and can consist only of the representation of both real and existing things.”

Identify the nineteenth-century artistic movement associated with the above quotation. Select and fully identify at least one work of art from that movement. Analyze how your example reflects Courbet’s approach to the making of art. In your answer, make specific references to both the text and the selected work. (10 minutes)

Background:

French artist Gustave Courbet (1819–1877) was one of the leading painters of the Realist movement. The Realists, like the empiricists (who emphasized that knowledge is a result of observation and experience) and positivists (who also emphasized the role of observable sense experience in the accumulation of knowledge), were concerned with observing the nuances of contemporary life. In the art world, this emphasis placed them in opposition to the academicians who constituted the majority of the Salon juries and placed more emphasis on historic and fictional subject matter. Publications by art historians such as Linda Nochlin, T. J. Clark, and Albert Boime have contributed greatly to the discussion of this movement.

Because this question opens with a quotation of Courbet, it can be assumed that most of the answers will cite a work by Courbet. His paintings are illustrated in all of the major art history survey texts, with *The Stone Breakers* and *Burial at Ornans* being the most commonly illustrated works. Although Courbet’s work was accepted at the Salon (both the aforementioned paintings were shown at the Salon of 1850-51), his more revolutionary work represented an assault on the academy. The subject matter was considered too contemporary and too trivial, especially to warrant the monumental scale of the works, while stylistically the surface of the painting was sometimes too rough and seemed unfinished. Some answers may also note that these works reflected Courbet’s radical social ideals following the revolution of 1848. Courbet’s alignment with radical politics has been well documented and would eventually result in his imprisonment and self-imposed exile following the 1871 Paris Commune.

In various ways, other Realist artists also addressed the concerns expressed by Courbet with their artwork. Appropriate examples for this question (as discussed in all the major art history texts) might include the French artists Courbet, Millet, Daumier, Bonheur, or Manet, or the American artists Homer, Eakins, or Tanner. There will, of course, be nuances of difference in discussions of Courbet’s work as opposed to any of these other examples. It is important to remember that the student’s task with this question is to identify the artistic movement as Realism and chose an example from that movement.

Students have three tasks:

- (1) They must identify the artistic movement as Realism.
- (2) They must select and fully identify at least one work of art from the Realist movement.
- (3) They must discuss how their selected example reflects the opinions expressed in Courbet’s letter, making specific reference to BOTH the quotation AND their selected work.

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Question 8 (continued)

Better essays understand the significance of Courbet's (and the Realists') revolutionary approach, which placed emphasis on subjects taken from contemporary life while rejecting the historical and fictional subject matter that was favored by the French Academy. These responses will cogently analyze Courbet's quotation and demonstrate how their selected example reflects Courbet's opinions.

Weaker essays merely describe their selected artwork or paraphrase the quotation but fail to analyze how their example reflects Courbet's approach to the making of art or to connect the quotation and their example in a meaningful manner.

Points to remember:

- The movement must be identified as Realism.
- A full identification should include artist and title, but if a description shows that the student is referring to a specific work that can be identified, the student may receive credit.
- Essays may choose an example from another nineteenth-century movement (such as Impressionism); however, the essay must validate the choice by referring to the ideals of the Realist movement and engaging the text appropriately (i.e., the response must reflect the opinions expressed in Courbet's letter, making specific references to both the quotation and the selected work).
- Appropriate examples (as discussed in all of the major art history texts) for this question might include Courbet, Millet, Daumier, Bonheur, Manet, Homer, Eakins, or Tanner.
- The example chosen should not predate the Realist movement (mid-nineteenth century).
- 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 student's chosen example.
- This is a 10-minute question.

Scoring Criteria

Score Scale 0–4

- 4** Identifies Realism as the artistic movement. Analyzes with a high degree of specificity how the selected example reflects Courbet's approach to the making of art. Analysis makes specific references to BOTH the quotation AND the selected example. There are no significant errors.
- 3** Identifies Realism as the artistic movement. Analyzes with a fair degree of specificity how the selected example reflects Courbet's approach to the making of art. Analysis makes specific references to BOTH the quotation AND the selected example. The answer is less full and/or may contain errors.

OR

Fails to identify Realism as the artistic movement but is otherwise a 4.

Note: The highest score an essay may earn without identifying Realism is a 3.

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Question 8 (continued)

- 2** Identifies Realism as the artistic movement and attempts to analyze how the selected example reflects Courbet's approach to the making of art. Discussion is weak and unbalanced or does not directly reference the quotation or the selected example. The answer may fail to identify a particular example; the example chosen may be inappropriate; and/or the discussion may contain significant errors.

OR

Fails to identify Realism as the artistic movement but is otherwise a 3.

Note: The highest score an essay may earn without identifying an appropriate example is a 2.

Note: The highest score an essay may earn without engaging the text is a 2.

- 1** Identifies Realism as the artistic movement but makes no other points of merit.

OR

Fails to identify Realism as the artistic movement 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.

8. In a letter published in 1861, Gustave Courbet declared,

"[An artist must apply] his personal faculties to the ideas and events of the times in which he lives. . . . [A]rt in painting should consist only in the representation of things visible and tangible to the artist. Every age should be respected only by its own artists, that is to say, by the artists who have lived in it. I also maintain that painting is an essentially concrete art form and can consist only of the representation of both real and existing things."

Identify the nineteenth-century artistic movement associated with the above quotation. Select and fully identify at least one work of art from that movement. Analyze how your example reflects Courbet's approach to the making of art. In your answer, make specific references to both the text and the selected work. (10 minutes)

Courbet's quotation describes the philosophy behind the Realism movement in art. One example of Realism is The Gleaners, a painting of three women working under a hot sun to gather the last of the wheat harvest. The depiction of the women is very plainly stated, and their backbreaking job is not idealized, romanticized, or dramatized in any way. They were painted this way to honestly represent women whom the artist had seen in his life. This is true to Courbet's claim that art "can consist only of the representation of both real and existing things," and that this representation should be "of things visible and tangible to the artist." In the artist's life, he had seen women doing this work of gleaning the fields, so painting the image was a way of representing ~~his~~ experiences from his own life that had been visible to him, without adding any other elements to the depiction. This reflects Courbet's approach because it seeks to represent true images and events as the artist knew them, since a artist cannot accurately depict something he has no experienced, according to

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Courbet was a famous realist artist associated w/ the letter here and the infamous quote "Show me an angel, and I'll paint one." Courbet and his contemporaries believed that if you couldn't see or touch the subject, then it should not appear on a canvas. An example of this approach would be Courbet's "The Stone Breakers" or Millet's "The Gleaners", in which people are shown going about their everyday ~~tasks~~ tasks. These men and women could be seen and touched, as Courbet believed. Courbet also wrote that "every age --- have lived in it." This is also clearly lived out in his works b/c everyone in his paintings are dressed for their time period and doing few tasks they are set. There will be no myths, monsters, angels or Roman emperors wearing togas for Mr. Courbet.

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The artistic movement was realism. A piece of this time was that of a painting of a poor African American family. The thankful poor depicts a time where African Americans weren't the wealthiest yet they were hard working. This is representative of the time period and contains real things. There is no mythical nor fake representation, it is everyday life. In other words, it is real. This painting was nothing out of the ordinary but showed the reality of being in that time period.

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2009 SCORING COMMENTARY

Question 8

Overview

This was a 10-minute, text-based question that required students to relate a quotation from Courbet to a specific art-historical movement (Realism). They also had to discuss a work of their choice from that movement (there was no image accompanying this question) and to analyze how their example reflected Courbet's approach to the making of art. Students needed to read the text and think abstractly about how it related to the art movements and theories of its specific time.

Sample: 8A

Score: 4

The student correctly identifies the movement as Realism, selects and identifies a specific and appropriate work, *The Gleaners*, and analyzes how the work reflects the letter in which Courbet describes his approach to the making of art. The essay makes specific reference to the painting's depiction of a "backbreaking job [that] is not idealized, romanticized, or dramatized in any way." It engages the text, noting the painting's relationship to "Courbet's claim that art 'can consist only of the representation [*sic*] of both real and existing things,' . . . 'of things visible and tangible to the artist.'" The student notes that for the artist who created *The Gleaners*, "painting the image was a way of representing experiences from his own life that had been visible to him, without adding any other elements to the depiction . . . since a[n] artist cannot accurately depict something he has no[t] experienced, according to the philosophy expressed in Courbet's quotation."

Sample: 8B

Score: 3

The student correctly identifies the movement as Realism and selects and identifies two specific and appropriate works, Courbet's *The Stonebreakers* and Millet's *The Gleaners*. The essay explains that "Courbet . . . believed that if you couldn't see or touch the subject then it should not appear on a canvas." The student notes that the figures depicted are "dressed for their time period and doing the tasks they are set. There will be no myths, monsters, angels or Roman emperors wearing togas for Mr. Courbet." While the essay addresses the text ("Every age . . . have lived in it"),* the discussion is less full and less specific in its engagement with selected works than that of essays that would earn a score of 4.

* The complete line from Courbet's letter is: "Every age should be respected only by its own artists, that is to say, by the artists who have lived in it."

Sample: 8C

Score: 2

The student correctly identifies the movement as Realism and selects an appropriate work, *The Thankful Poor*. The essay explains why this work reflects Courbet's approach to the making of art, but it does not make specific reference to the text.