

AP[®] ART HISTORY

2010 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 6

Left image: Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem, 687–692

Right image: Blank

6. The building shown is the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem.

With which religion is the building directly associated? Discuss the building's structure and ornamentation in relation to its religious significance. (5 minutes)

Background:

The intent of the question is for students to identify one of Islam's most important religious monuments and to specify how its structure and ornamentation reflect Muslim beliefs. Placement of the building is religiously significant, so implicit within the notion of "structure" are the reasons for its location.

The first great achievement of Islamic architecture was the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. The Muslims had taken the city from the Byzantines in 638, and the Umayyad caliph Abd al-Malik (r. 685–705) erected the monumental sanctuary between 687 and 692 as an architectural tribute to the triumph of Islam. It was completed after a turbulent decade in which the Umayyads briefly lost control of the Hijaz (and with it the holy cities of Mecca and Medina) and survived further serious challenges from religious opposition groups. Thus, some scholars explain it as a victory monument and even as a place of worldwide Muslim pilgrimage to supplement, if not to supplant, Mecca itself. The Dome of the Rock marked the coming of the new religion to a city that has been, and still is, sacred to both Jews and Christians. The structure rises from a huge platform known as the Noble Enclosure, and even today it dominates the skyline of the holy city. The sanctuary was erected on the traditional site of Adam's burial, of Abraham's preparation for Isaac's sacrifice, and of the Temple of Solomon destroyed by the Romans in 70 C.E. It houses the rock from which Muslims later came to believe Muhammad ascended to Heaven during the Night Journey.

As many Islamic teachings are similar to tenets of Judaism and Christianity, so its architects and artists borrowed and transformed design, construction and ornamentation principles that had long been applied, and were still current, in Byzantium and the Middle East. The Dome of the Rock is a domed octagon resembling San Vitale in Ravenna in its basic design. In all likelihood, a neighboring Christian monument, Constantine the Great's Rotunda of the Holy Sepulcher, inspired the Dome's designers. The building consists of an outer solid octagon enclosing two open octagons composed of columns. Above the innermost of these stands a dome on a tall circular drum. The double-shelled, wooden dome (covered by gilt sheets of copper), some 60 feet across and 75 feet high, so dominates the elevation that it reduces the octagon to a mere base. This soaring, majestic unit creates a decidedly more commanding effect than that of Late Roman and Byzantine domed structures.

The building's exterior has been much restored with Ottoman tiling from the sixteenth century and later, replacing the original mosaic. Yet the vivid, colorful patterning that wraps the walls like a textile is typical of Islamic ornamentation. The interior's rich mosaic ornamentation, which has been preserved, owes a lot to the Byzantine world. From it, one can imagine how the exterior walls originally appeared, since Islamic practice does not significantly distinguish between interior and exterior decor. The building contains the earliest epigraphic program in Islamic architecture, comprised of lengthy Qur'anic quotations used for proselytizing purposes.

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Question 6 (continued)

The interior reflects Byzantine influence with mosaics, marble inlay and reused ancient columns from other sites. Quartered marble panels are placed below the hundreds of square feet of wall mosaic in which green and gold vine scrolls predominate. Mosaics depict landscapes with luxuriant green trees and the flowing waters of the rivers of paradise, as described in Genesis. There are also columned pavilions and fantasy architecture whose meaning remains ambiguous but that are perhaps topographical references to Damascus, Syria, or a wish-fulfilling depiction of a world at peace under Islamic rule, or evocations of paradise. The representation of jewels and precious stones as essential elements of the decoration is wholly Eastern.

Students have three tasks:

- (1) They must state that the building is directly associated with Islam.
- (2) They must discuss the building's structure in terms of its religious significance.
- (3) They must discuss the building's ornamentation in terms of its religious significance.

Points to remember:

- A discussion of the religious significance of the building's structure might include:
 - The triumph of Islam: The location is also sacred to Jews and Christians, and so the dominant position of the Dome of the Rock implies Islam's spiritual superiority.
 - It is a pilgrimage site associated with the Prophet Muhammad.
 - It is a central-plan structure with an ambulatory meant for circumambulation around a sacred rock.
 - In addition to being associated with the Prophet Muhammad, the Dome of the Rock is also a holy site for Jews and Christians.
 - The golden copper dome serves as a marker of respect for the holy rock within.
- A discussion of the religious significance of the building's ornamentation might include:
 - The ban on figuration in Islamic art (general statement).
 - Specific discussion of the use of abstract patterns on tiles and mosaics because of the ban.
 - Images of gardens, pavilions and vine scrolls in the mosaics are a reference to paradise as promised in the Qur'an.
 - The use of Qur'anic texts (calligraphy) on the interior and exterior of the building.
 - The influence of Roman and Byzantine art and architecture on the building as an indication that at this early time, Islam was still searching for an artistic identity.
- The highest score a response can earn if it identifies the building as a mosque is a 3.
- There is minimal discussion of this building in the majority of textbooks.
- This is a 5-minute question.

Scoring Criteria

Score Scale 0–4

- 4** Associates the building with the religion of Islam. Discusses the religious significance of the building's structure **and** ornamentation. Discussion is full and demonstrates an understanding of the religious significance of the building's structure and ornamentation. There are no significant errors.
- 3** Associates the building with the religion of Islam. Discusses the religious significance of the building's structure **and** ornamentation, but the discussion is less developed than a 4 and may contain minor errors.
- OR**
- Associates the building with a mosque but is otherwise a 4.

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Question 6 (continued)

- 2** Associates the building with the religion of Islam. Discusses the religious significance of the building's structure **or** ornamentation.
- 1** Associates the building with the religion of Islam but provides no other discussion of merit.
OR
Does not associate the building with the religion of Islam, and the discussion of structure and/or ornamentation is generic.
- 0** Makes an attempt, but the response is without merit because it makes only incorrect or irrelevant statements.
- This is a nonresponse, such as a blank paper, crossed-out words or personal notes.

6. The building shown is the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem.

With which religion is the building directly associated? Discuss the building's structure and ornamentation in relation to its religious significance. (5 minutes)

The Dome of the Rock is a sacred building ~~is~~ associated with Islam. The building marks a holy site, and so its structure and ornamentation ~~are~~ ^{suit} its spirituality. The central plan with a majestic dome is appropriate for housing the holy rock inside the temple. The centrality, reflected by the pole at the dome's top, connects the earth to the heavens. The ornamentation is aniconic, adhering to Muslim beliefs. However, ~~the~~ ^{the mosaics are} ~~the~~ geometric and repetitive, hinting at ^{the} eternal bliss promised to Muslims. The ~~the~~ ornamentation also incorporates sacred Muslim scripture with calligraphy, and the golden ~~the~~ ^{building's} dome highlights the heavenly aura.

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6. The building shown is the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem.

With which religion is the building directly associated? Discuss the building's structure and ornamentation in relation to its religious significance. (5 minutes)

The Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem is directly associated with the Religion of Islam, intimating its cultural importance in the ~~the~~ ornamentation of the Dome as well as the distinctive Arabic design of the outside. The building itself is hexagonal, commemorating the Rock from which the prophet Muhammad rose to heaven. The mosque therefore has central significance to the mythology of Islam, and is served to be glorified in the ornamentation of the inside and out. The dome itself is gold leafed, ~~the~~ and the building is made of marble. The value of the materials utilized in building the structure emphasizes the importance of the building itself. The distinct Arabic script relating along the outside and ~~the~~ the deliberately complex patterns of design make the piece intrinsically Islamic in a city where so many competing religions reside. The support structures and columns in the internal section mirror the styles of the outside, utilizing panoramic ~~the~~ patterns of shapes and colors in the Islamic tradition.

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6. The building shown is the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem.

6C

With which religion is the building directly associated? Discuss the building's structure and ornamentation in relation to its religious significance. (5 minutes)

The Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem is a religious building that promotes the Islamic faith. The structure ~~has~~ bears religious significance to the prophet Mohammed, and therefore is a central location for Islamic worship. The gold dome is the most striking element of the structure as it is the first aspect to catch the viewer's attention. It ascends towards the sky, and is painted gold; the color most often associated with heaven. Similar to Gothic cathedrals, this building aimed to connect with a higher power, in this case: Allah. The blue and gold tiles are also representative of Islamic architecture as blue was considered a divine color, and the craftsmanship w/ the tiles was exquisite fit for a religious structure.

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2010 SCORING COMMENTARY

Question 6

Overview

The intent of this question was for students to be able to identify one of the most important Islamic religious monuments and to identify what characteristics of its construction and decoration reflect Muslim religious practices and aesthetics. Of secondary importance was for students to discuss the ways in which the Dome of the Rock borrows from and differs from other historic buildings during this early time period, when Islam was attempting to develop an identifiable architectural style. Basically, this question asked students to address the Vitruvian principles of structure, function and ornament in an interrelated fashion.

Sample: 6A

Score: 4

The essay correctly identifies Islam as the religion directly associated with the Dome of the Rock. The student discusses the religious significance of the structure and its location by first referring to it as “a holy site” and then further elaborating: “The central plan with a majestic dome is appropriate for housing the holy rock inside.” There is a discussion of the religious significance of the ornamentation: “The ornamentation is aniconic, adhering to Muslim beliefs” and “also incorporates sacred Muslim scripture with calligraphy.” The essay earned a score of 4.

Sample: 6B

Score: 3

The essay correctly identifies Islam as the religion associated with the Dome of the Rock. The student correctly identifies the religious significance of its location, “commemorating the Rock from which the prophet Muhammad rose to heaven.” The religious significance of the ornamentation is addressed in the description of the structure’s exterior containing “Arabic script” and the statement that “deliberately [*sic*] complex patterns of design make the piece intrinsically Islamic in a city where so many competing religions reside.” The structure is incorrectly identified as a mosque, so it could not earn a score higher than a 3.

Sample: 6C

Score: 2

The essay correctly identifies Islam as the religion associated with the Dome of the Rock. The student connects the structure’s religious significance to the Prophet Muhammad but in a vague manner. The rest of the essay is primarily descriptive and contains some errors, earning it a score of 2.