

AP[®] ART HISTORY

2012 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 4

Attribute the painting to the artist who painted it. Justify your attribution by discussing specific visual characteristics of the painting that are commonly associated with the work of that artist. (10 minutes)

Background

This question asks students to correctly attribute a painting to the artist who painted it. Students are asked to justify the attribution by discussing specific visual characteristics of the painting that are associated with the work of that artist. The intent of this question is to have students apply their knowledge of the visual characteristics of an artist's paintings to their discussion of a presumably unknown work.

The painting is *Rain, Steam and Speed: The Great Western Railway* (1844) by Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775–1851). A late painting of Turner's, *Rain, Steam and Speed* combines his signature open brushwork and use of overlapping layers of light paint with a modern subject: a recently completed Brunel railway bridge near Maidenhead and a rushing steam locomotive on the Great Western Railway, which had opened its passenger service in 1838. In this painting Turner has devised a dynamic composition that uses diagonal lines to suggest the train rushing toward the viewer as a dark gash that emerges suddenly from a sun-dappled, blue-skied, seemingly idyllic countryside over which a summer rainstorm drifts. The prominent brushstrokes imbue the painting's surface with an energetic immediacy that matches the movement of the locomotive and the changeability of the weather. The tiny skiff with its motionless fisherman floating, as if stationary, in the lower left-hand area of the canvas provides a delicate contrast to the speeding, modern, and anonymous engine.

Significantly, Turner's earlier paintings, whether histories in dramatically lit settings or meditations on the explosive power of nature explored through storms and shipwrecks, consistently privilege the sky and sea over minute figures. Glowing sunsets, stark contrasts of light and dark, foaming sea, and frothy sky are all tools Turner used to inject events with immediacy and drama. In his professional life as well, Turner embraced the dramatic, providing virtuosic painting performances to audiences at exhibitions. In his late paintings such as *Rain, Steam and Speed*, this prioritizing of process over finish came to a head. In addition, the passion and energy of Turner's later works reveal his Romantic sensibilities and his desire to capture the Sublime, a concept defined by the 18th-century philosopher Edmund Burke as something that strikes awe and terror into the heart of the viewer.

In justifying the attribution, students may cite a range of specific visual characteristics that connect *Rain, Steam and Speed* to formal or conceptual features found in other works by Turner. Students may cite the dynamic composition, brilliant light, loose and energetic brushwork, layered paint, blazing and emotive color, and haziness of forms. With regard to subject matter, students may situate Turner in terms of both the broader category of Romantic landscape painting and this particular painting's presentation of the natural world during the Industrial Age. The violent rainstorm, the modern steam engine rushing over a manmade bridge, and the tiny human figures dominated by the landscape are all commonly associated with other works by Turner. That said, it is Turner's direct engagement with industrialism that separates his work from that of other Romantic painters, who typically protested the Industrial Revolution by emphasizing its opposite: an idyllic agrarian past. In addition, Turner's work departs from typical Romantic landscape scenes through his distinctively loose and fluid brushwork, his lack of outlines or edges for the objects depicted, and the exaggerated scale of natural elements in comparison to the manmade. Therefore, although many aspects of Turner's work can be related to Romantic preferences, the manner in which they are depicted is expressly and uniquely Turner's and should be acknowledged as such in any connection between Turner and Romanticism.

AP[®] ART HISTORY

2012 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 4 (continued)

Two Tasks for Students

1. Correctly attribute the painting to Turner.
2. Justify the attribution by discussing specific visual characteristics of the painting that are commonly associated with the work of Turner.

Points to Remember

This is an attribution question. The question requires an attribution to a specific artist, not to an art-historical movement or period. The correct answer is Turner. The highest score a response can earn if the painting is not correctly attributed to Turner is 2 points.

Students may imply an attribution to Turner by identifying the artist as the same artist who painted works such as *The Slave Ship*. The highest score this kind of attribution can earn is 2 points.

Some students may mistakenly attribute the work to an art-historical period rather than to an artist. The highest score this kind of attribution can earn is 2 points.

When a response is granted partial credit, attention should be paid to the plausibility of the evidence cited for the incorrect artist or art-historical period and whether such evidence could reasonably apply to Turner's *Rain, Steam and Speed*. In general, an incorrect attribution to another 19th-century artist, or a period attribution such as Romanticism or Impressionism, will be a stronger response than one to an artist or period outside of Turner's era.

Note that students are not required to identify the painting or to provide a specific comparison to another work by Turner, although some students may include such details in their responses.

AP[®] ART HISTORY

2012 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 4 (continued)

Scoring Criteria

4 points

Response demonstrates thorough knowledge and understanding of the question.

The painting is correctly attributed to Turner. The response justifies the attribution by citing specific visual characteristics of the painting that are commonly associated with other works by Turner. The response may include minor errors that do not have a meaningful impact on the discussion.

3 points

Response demonstrates sufficient knowledge and understanding of the question.

The painting is correctly attributed to Turner. The response justifies the attribution by citing visual characteristics of the painting that are commonly associated with other works by Turner. However, the response may be somewhat general and/or include minor errors that have some impact on the discussion.

2 points

Response demonstrates some knowledge and understanding of the question.

The painting is correctly attributed to Turner, although this attribution may be implied rather than stated directly. The response justifies the attribution by referring to visual characteristics of the painting that are commonly associated with other works by Turner; however, the response may be overly general, simplistic, or descriptive. The response may contain errors that impact the discussion.

OR

The painting is attributed incorrectly, but the specific visual characteristics cited as justification can reasonably be applied both to this painting and to the work of the incorrect artist or art-historical period.

NOTE: This is the highest score a response can earn if it does not correctly attribute the painting to Turner.

1 point

Response demonstrates little knowledge and understanding of the question.

The painting is correctly attributed to Turner, but there is no other discussion of merit.

OR

The painting is attributed incorrectly. The response includes an attempt at justification, but the discussion may be overly general, simplistic, or descriptive, even if the visual characteristics cited as justification can reasonably be applied both to this painting and to the work of the incorrect artist or art-historical period.

0 points

Response demonstrates no discernible knowledge or understanding of the question.

The student attempts to respond, but the response makes only incorrect or irrelevant statements about the painting. The score of 0 points includes crossed-out words, personal notes, and drawings.

— This is a blank paper only.

4. Attribute the painting to the artist who painted it. Justify your attribution by discussing specific visual characteristics of the painting that are commonly associated with the work of that artist. (10 minutes)

Turner painted this painting. Other works by him, such as The Burning of The Houses of Parliament reveal the intrinsic characteristics of Romanticism. He paints with loose, hurried brushstrokes to intensify the emotion of the painting. Here, the land blurs together to create a sense of movement and speed. Romantic art often depicts current events, and here Turner shows a train racing through Industrial England. Romantic artists searched for the feeling of the Sublime, and here, Turner uses his color palette and sense of energy to display the awe inspiring moment when a train passes by at full speed. Lastly, even with the chaos and emotions, Romantic art remains formally balanced. Here, Turner places a bridge and a boat, rendered with more exact brushstrokes to balance out the train and its movement on the night. The emotions, brushstrokes, and depiction of a current event all prove that Turner painted this Romantic painting.

~~Impressionism = Monet, Manet, Renoir, Cassat,~~

4B

4. Attribute the painting to the artist who painted it. Justify your attribution by discussing specific visual characteristics of the painting that are commonly associated with the work of that artist. (10 minutes)

~~William Turner~~ ~~Manet~~ Turner

This is by ~~William Turner~~. This is called The Train, and it is from ~~Romanticism~~ ~~Romanticism~~ ^{Impressionism} ^{Romanticism}. Characteristics that justify my attribution include haziness, indistinct forms, movement created by brushstrokes. The train is representational. It's similar to The Slave Ship also done by Turner. In the Slave Ship, it's representational, but barely. The ~~pen~~ brushstrokes are similar. He uses color to paint solely to indicate emotions. There's really no distinction between colors.

4. Attribute the painting to the artist who painted it. Justify your attribution by discussing specific visual characteristics of the painting that are commonly associated with the work of that artist. (10 minutes)

This work of art is attributed to Joseph M.W. Turner. This painting contains all the characteristics of Joseph M.W. Turner. He was a realistic painter who painted mostly on oil and canvas. He used wide brushstrokes to depict the background of the painting. These can easily be seen and are similar to his painting Slave ship. His realistic approach can be seen by his depiction of a train. He is depicting an everyday occurrence which, in this case, is a train passing by. This is ~~what~~ what realism painters paint and Turner is a realist painter.

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2012 SCORING COMMENTARY

Question 4

Overview

This 10-minute question asked students to correctly attribute the painting *Rain, Steam and Speed: The Great Western Railway* to the artist Turner. Students were then asked to justify their attribution by discussing specific visual characteristics of the painting that are commonly associated with Turner's other work. The intent of the question was to have students apply their knowledge of the visual characteristics of an artist's paintings to their discussion of a presumably unknown work. (*Rain, Steam and Speed* is not illustrated in the major survey texts.)

Sample: 4A
Score: 4

The painting is correctly attributed to Turner. The response justifies the attribution by citing specific visual characteristics of the painting that are commonly associated with other works by Turner, such as "loose, hurried brushstrokes" that "intensify the emotion" and land that "blurs together to create a sense of movement, and speed." Referring to Turner's *The Burning of the Houses of Parliament*, the response states that "Romantic art often depicts current events" and notes that Turner shows a "train racing through industrial England." Romantic artists are characterized as searching "for the feeling of the sublime." This concept is applied to Turner through a discussion of Turner's "color palette and sense of energy," used "to display the awe inspiring moment when a train passes by at full speed." The response concludes with a discussion about composition, noting the way in which the bridge and boat are "rendered with more exact brushstrokes to balance out the train and its movement." In this way the response demonstrates thorough knowledge and understanding of the question.

Sample: 4B
Score: 3

The painting is correctly attributed to Turner. The response justifies the attribution by citing visual characteristics of the painting that are commonly associated with other works by Turner, such as "haziness, indistinct forms, movement created by brushstrokes." The response notes that Turner "uses color to paint solely to indicate emotions," resulting in an effect that is "representational, but barely." There is a comparison to *The Slave Ship*, which, though undeveloped, adds to the quality of the response. However, the sheer brevity of the response means that it remains somewhat general. In this way the response demonstrates sufficient knowledge and understanding of the question.

Sample: 4C
Score: 2

The painting is correctly attributed to Turner. The response justifies the attribution by referring to visual characteristics of the painting that are commonly associated with other works by Turner: "wide brushstrokes to depict the background of the painting. These can be easily seen and are similar to his painting *Slavership* [*sic*]." That said, the response is overly general and simplistic. The misidentification of Turner as "a realistic painter" rather than a Romantic painter is a significant error that impacts the quality of the response. In this way the response demonstrates some knowledge and understanding of the question.