

AP[®] ART HISTORY

2012 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 8

The work shown is *Guernica* by Pablo Picasso.

In the book *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics*, Picasso is quoted as making the following statement.

“What do you think an artist is? An imbecile who has only eyes if he’s a painter . . . ? On the contrary, he’s at the same time a political being, constantly alive to heartrending, fiery, or happy events, to which he responds in every way. . . . No, painting is not done to decorate apartments. It is an instrument of war for attack and defense against the enemy.”

Making specific reference to both the quotation and the painting, analyze how Picasso expresses both emotional and political content in *Guernica*. (10 minutes)

Background

This question asks students to analyze a work of art based on statements made by the artist. Specifically, students must reference both the quotation and the painting to analyze how Picasso expresses both emotional and political content in *Guernica*. The intent of this question is to give students the opportunity to analyze how statements made by an artist are visually expressed in the work of that artist.

Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) painted *Guernica* in 1937 in response to a specific event associated with the Spanish Civil War. The conflict had begun the previous year when a rebel coup attempted to unseat the elected government of the Spanish Second Republic. Starting in 1937 the rebels, now known as the Nationalists and led by Francisco Franco, began a protracted war of attrition, fighting against Republican forces. The Nationalists had the support of Nazi Germany and the Kingdom of Italy, namely, the European powers that would form the Axis alliance in the coming Second World War.

Picasso, a Spaniard, who was living in Paris at the time, had at first taken no political stance regarding the conflict, although by early 1937 his opposition to Franco became more pronounced. In January 1937 Picasso wrote a poem accompanied by a suite of 18 etchings titled *Dream and Lie of Franco*. The poem and etchings comprised a bitter satire of the Nationalists’ leader. In the same month Picasso received an invitation from the Spanish architect Josep Sert to contribute a large mural for a proposed Spanish Pavilion at the 1937 World’s Fair that would emphatically demonstrate the existence and contributions of the elected Spanish Republic. Although Picasso originally seemed ambivalent about the project, the horrific bombings of the Basque town of Guernica on April 26, 1937, provided him with both the inspiration and subject matter for the mural project. Guernica — believed to have been the epicenter of Republican resistance — was bombed by Nazi warplanes of the German Luftwaffe, at the request of Franco’s forces. Germany used this as an opportunity to test out new weapons and tactics, related to the later Blitzkrieg. Approximately 1,600 civilians were killed, mostly women and children. Parisian newspapers carried close-up photographs of woman and children killed in the attack, and protests erupted in support of the Spanish Republican forces. Against this highly charged emotional and political backdrop, Picasso created *Guernica*.

Measuring nearly 12 x 26 feet, the sheer scale of the *Guernica* mural marks that it was “not done to decorate apartments.” Instead, its monumentality evokes the tradition of academic history painting and suggests that it carries the same intellectual heft. Yet rather than engaging in the history of past events, *Guernica* protests the present, demonstrating how Picasso “is a political being, constantly alive to heartrending, fiery . . . events.” Visually, Picasso’s *Guernica* is a complex composition filled with

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Question 8 (continued)

idiosyncratic details. The color palette is black, white, and gray — perhaps referencing the newspaper reports of the event that Picasso most certainly would have read. Compositionally, the central pyramidal grouping, capped by the figure of a wounded horse, is flanked on the left side by a mother clutching her dead child, iconographically recalling the composition of a *pietà*. To the right, a woman seems to fall from a burning building. In his book *Picasso's Guernica*, Herschel B. Chipp interprets the various figures in multiple symbolic ways. In literal terms, the central figure extending the oil lamp over the scene seems to illuminate the horror of the bombing of the Spanish town, but she could also allude to the potential light of liberty beckoning the figures away from the scene. Significantly, the composition contains no direct reference to the actual bombing of Guernica. Rather it presents a visceral depiction of terror, chaos, and grief.

From the time it was first exhibited in 1937, *Guernica* was embraced as “an instrument of war for attack and defense against the enemy.” It was hung in the Spanish Pavilion in Paris alongside the works of other artists sympathetic to the cause of the Spanish Republic, such as Alexander Calder and Joan Miró. Postcards of *Guernica* along with several of Picasso's anti-Franco etchings were also distributed. Supporters then sent *Guernica* on an international tour to create awareness for the Spanish Republican cause and to raise funds to resist Franco.

Two Tasks for Students

1. Analyze how Picasso expresses both emotional and political content in *Guernica*.
2. Support that analysis with specific references to both the quotation and the painting.

Points to Remember

This is essentially a contextual question. Since students are given the title and artist of the work, they should be able to focus their responses on how Picasso expresses emotional and political content in *Guernica*.

Students are not given the date, but to answer the question they will need to be able to place the work within its general political and historical context. While the Spanish Civil War is the most correct answer, it is acceptable for students to refer to the rise of Franco or to Spain's support for Nazi Germany at the onset of the Second World War.

Students must engage with both the quotation and the painting. A response that fails to do both is not fully answering the question. The highest score a response can earn if it does not discuss both the quotation and the painting is 2 points.

In student responses, the political content of the work may be imbedded in its context. Picasso intended for *Guernica* to be viewed as a large mural in the very public arena of a World's Fair, and that in and of itself is political content.

It is important to remember that interpretations of *Guernica* vary widely, and this will be reflected in the student responses.

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Question 8 (continued)

Scoring Criteria

4 points

Response shows thorough knowledge and understanding of the question.

The response uses specific evidence from both the painting and the quotation to analyze how Picasso expresses both emotional and political content in *Guernica*. The response may include minor errors that do not have a meaningful impact on the analysis.

3 points

Response shows sufficient knowledge and understanding of the question.

The response uses evidence from both the painting and the quotation to analyze how Picasso expresses both emotional and political content in *Guernica*. However, the response may be somewhat unbalanced, focusing more on the painting than on the quotation, or more on the emotional than on the political content, although all are represented. The response may include minor errors that have some impact on the analysis.

2 points

Response shows some knowledge and understanding of the question.

The response refers to evidence from both the painting and the quotation to analyze how Picasso expresses both emotional and political content in *Guernica*. However, the discussion of this evidence is less analytical than descriptive. It may be overly general, simplistic, or unbalanced. For example, the discussion of the painting's emotional content may be mostly accurate, whereas the discussion of political content may have errors that impact the response. References to the quotation may be mostly implied rather than stated directly.

OR

The response uses specific evidence to discuss how either social or political content is expressed in *Guernica*, but not both. If both are discussed, the response refers either to the quotation or to the painting, but not both.

NOTE: This is the highest score a response can earn if it does not make reference to both the quotation and the painting OR if it does not discuss both the emotional and the political content of *Guernica*.

1 point

Response shows little knowledge and understanding of the question.

The response demonstrates some general familiarity with the issues raised by the question by attempting to discuss the emotional and/or political content of *Guernica*. However, the discussion is weak, overly descriptive, and/or contains significant errors. The response may not engage with the quotation even in a general way.

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. The score of 0 points includes crossed-out words, personal notes, and drawings.

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8. The work shown is *Guernica* by Pablo Picasso.

In the book *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics*, Picasso is quoted as making the following statement.

"What do you think an artist is? An imbecile who has only eyes if he's a painter . . . ? On the contrary, he's at the same time a political being, constantly alive to heartrending, fiery, or happy events, to which he responds in every way. . . . No, painting is not done to decorate apartments. It is an instrument of war for attack and defense against the enemy."

Making specific reference to both the quotation and the painting, analyze how Picasso expresses both emotional and political content in *Guernica*. (10 minutes)

Produced for the ~~1939~~ 1948 World's Fair in Paris, ~~Guernica~~ Pablo Picasso's large-scale painting "Guernica" stood as one of the most ~~poth~~ politically-charged, disturbing images of its time. As suggested in Picasso's quote, "Guernica" was indeed a political "response" to a particularly "heartrending" event from recent Spanish history. Using his distinctive distorted cubist style, Picasso depicted a particularly well-known and gruesome event — the German ~~attack on the~~ bombing of the civilian Spanish town of Guernica, at mid-day. Though it depicts and references a specific historical event though, it is not accurate ~~in the~~ a traditional in the sense of a "history painting." Not only is the form and figures of the painting a distorted, Cubist, conglomeration, but it is neither factually nor historically correct. This is to say, that even if the Cubist mess that Picasso spread onto his canvas were somehow undone, and the figures depicted naturalistically, it would still make ~~no sense~~ as little sense.

Picasso deliberately did this, specifically picking random figures, characters and scenes from throughout the tragedy, and ~~putting~~ arranged them. Though not "accurate" this distortion seeks to further fully express the horror of the event as a whole, leading to a greater emotional impact on the viewer.

Among this gruesome melange ~~to~~ lie traditional symbols of Spanish culture, such as the bull and horse, from Spanish bullfights. These symbols of Spanish heritage are destroyed, though, impaled and slaughtered. They are not only gruesome, but symbolically and emotionally charged.

Slaughter is strewn across the canvas, and the whole scene is mindbendingly surreal and horrific. The lack of spacial depth, harsh and almost photographic quality of the painting, and clearly gruesome subject matter throw the viewer into a horrific scene, into the horrors of war itself.

This clearly emotional content is political in nature, given the event depicted, but furthermore, it has a political goal — to raise feelings of anger and horror in its viewers ~~in the way~~. As he says, it is "an instrument of war for attack" and Picasso is very much a "political being."

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✓ ✓ Making specific reference to both the quotation and the painting, analyze how Picasso expresses both emotional and political content in *Guernica*. (10 minutes)

Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* is the depiction of an event in World War II ~~that~~ when the German Luftwaffe bombed the town of ~~the~~ Guernica to test its bombs for the Spanish Civil War. Picasso's depiction of this real event aligns with his statement "he's at the same time a political being, constantly alive to heartrending, fiery, or happy events, to which he responds in every way. . . .". Picasso painted this work as memorial to the victims of the ~~the~~ Guernica bombing, making Picasso an artist depicting historical events. Picasso uses Analytic Cubism to create the piece; the broken lines and juxtaposition of ~~the~~ objects and people in multiple perspectives creates chaos similar to the one at Guernica. People lie dead on the ground, ~~and~~ screaming in pain or horror. The agonized ~~shapes~~ ^{shapes} of ~~the~~ ^{the} horse and bull ~~are~~ ^{are} symbols of Spain. The lightbulb at the top of the painting, which could be seen as an eye, casts its shadow on the figures below, representing the evil German Luftwaffe. This mural illustrates that war is horrible and devastating. Picasso uses this as "an instrument of war for attack. . . ." against "the enemy", the German Nazis who obliterated Guernica. The mural calls attention to the horrifying effects of the bombing and the harmful effects of war.

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Making specific reference to both the quotation and the painting, analyze how Picasso expresses both emotional and political content in *Guernica*. (10 minutes)

Guernica by Pablo Picasso is a portrayal of the city of Guernica after Adolf Hitler practiced his new fighting style of Blitzkrieg on the small town. Picasso says "It is an instrument of war for attack and defense against the enemy." Picasso painted *Guernica* to get people's attention on what happened. Emotion is shown through this painting by looks of terror on people's faces, body parts scattered all over, and people and animals being blown to bits. Political content is shown with the collage look of the painting. There are bits of newspaper used to make a shape. This represented Picasso's stand on the reason for creating this work of art, the world didn't pay attention to *Guernica*. The newspapers didn't even write a story about the tragedy. "painting is not done to decorate apartments." Art has truly deeper meanings than viewers see.

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Question 8

Overview

This 10-minute question asked students to analyze a work of art that was identified for them — Pablo Picasso’s *Guernica* — using statements made by the artist. Specifically, students had to reference both Picasso’s quotation and his mural to analyze how Picasso expressed both emotional and political content in *Guernica*. The intent of the question was to give students the opportunity to analyze how statements made by an artist are visually expressed in the work of that artist.

Sample: 8A

Score: 4

This response uses specific evidence from both the painting and the quotation to analyze how Picasso expresses both emotional and political content in *Guernica*. The response correctly states that *Guernica* is a “large-scale” painting produced for the “World’s Fair in Paris.” The first sentence inaccurately states that the *Guernica* was produced for the 1948 World’s Fair — the correct date is 1937 — but this is a minor error that has no impact on the analysis. Addressing the political aspect of the work, the response states that *Guernica* “stood as one of the most politically-charged, disturbing images of its time” and was the artist’s “heartrending” response to the “German bombing of the civilian Spanish town of Guernica, at mid-day.” The response notes that although *Guernica* depicts a historical event, it is not a traditional history painting per se because no particular war scene is shown.

The emotional content of *Guernica* is addressed with the statement that a “distorted” Cubist style is used “to further fully express the horror of the event as a whole, leading to a greater emotional impact on the viewer.” Another way that the response places emotional content into the analysis is by referencing “traditional symbols of Spanish culture, such as the bull and the horse, from Spanish bullfights. These symbols of Spanish heritage are destroyed, though, impaled and slaughtered,” making them both “symbolically and emotionally charged.” The response ends with a summary that references Picasso’s words: “This clearly emotional content is political in nature” with “a political goal — to raise feelings of anger and horror in its viewers. As he says, it is ‘an instrument of war for attack’ and Picasso is very much a ‘political being.’ ” In this way the response shows thorough knowledge and understanding of the question.

Sample: 8B

Score: 3

This response uses evidence from both the painting and the quotation to analyze how Picasso expresses both emotional and political content in *Guernica*. Knowledge of political content is demonstrated through the statement that “Pablo Picasso’s *Guernica* is the depiction of an event in World War II when the German Luftwaffe bombed the town of Guernica to test its bombs for the Spanish Civil War.” The response then ties the depiction of this event to Picasso’s words: “ ‘he’s at the same time a political being, constantly alive to heartrending, fiery, or happy events, to which he responds in every way.’ ” To reinforce this connection between the quotation and the political content of *Guernica*, the response states, “Picasso painted this work as memorial to the victims of the Guernica bombing, making Picasso an artist depicting historical events.” A minor error is present — “Picasso uses Analytic Cubism to create the piece”; he did not — but this error does not have a significant impact on the analysis since the style of *Guernica* can be seen as generally related to Picasso’s earlier Cubist style. In addition, the response is somewhat unbalanced, focusing more on the political than the emotional content of the work, but the response does mention how “broken lines and juxtapositions of objects and people in multiple perspectives creates chaos similar to the one at Guernica.”

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Question 8 (continued)

The concluding section of the response correctly refers to the work as a mural and uses Picasso's words to communicate the political views of the artist: "This mural illustrates that war is horrible and devastating. Picasso uses this as 'an instrument of war for attack...' against 'the enemy', the German Nazis who obliterated Guernica. The mural calls attention to the horrifying effects of the bombing and the harmful effects of war." In this way the response shows sufficient knowledge and understanding of the question.

Sample: 8C

Score: 2

This response refers to evidence from both the painting and the quotation to analyze how Picasso expresses both emotional and political content in *Guernica*. The first sentence demonstrates knowledge of the political context of the mural: "Guernica by Pablo Picasso is a portrayal of the city of Guernica [*sic*] after Adolf Hitler practiced his new fighting style of Blitzkrieg on the small town." However, the response as a whole is overly general. No further context is referenced, such as the Spanish Civil War or where the mural was displayed. The political intention of the artist is noted: "Picasso painted Guernica to get people's attention on what happened." Picasso's words are cited: " 'It is an instrument of war for attack and defense against the enemy.' " But it is not clear if the quotation is meant to apply to the act of painting or to the bombing itself. Similarly, the emotional content is addressed — "looks of terror on people's faces, body parts scattered all over, and people and animals being blown to bits" — but this discussion is more descriptive than analytical. In this way the response shows some knowledge and understanding of the question.