



AP[®] Art History 2001 Sample Student Responses

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6. This slide shows the Virginia State Capitol, designed primarily by Thomas Jefferson between 1785 and 1789.

What is the art historical term for the style of the building? Discuss the social, political, or philosophical reasons for Jefferson's choice of this style. (10 minutes)

This building, designed by Thomas Jefferson, is neoclassical. Its style is based on the Roman and Greek temples of ancient times. It has Ionic columns with entablature, as well as a single entrance reminiscent of Roman architecture. The purpose of such architecture is based on the fact that Greece and Rome were pioneers in democracy. The new American republic at the time wanted architecture that would exemplify the republican architecture of ancient times. Also, such architecture conveys ~~the~~ a sense of control and order to the onlooker. It is perfectly symmetrical and on top of that it is powerful. The columns are large and sturdy, the building is free of structural weakness. The new nation needed such an image of stability to prove to the rest of the world that it could, in fact, work, that this thing called democracy would not crumble. For those reasons Jefferson chose ~~the~~ that style of architecture for ~~the~~ ~~the~~ the Virginia State Capitol.

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The Virginia State Capitol is done in neo-Classical style, incorporating both modern (for the time it was built) aspects, and that of Greek architecture. Jefferson had many reasons for choosing this style, poetically, Virginia was a state filled with politicians. At a time where Democracy was the point that needed to be emphasized, a ~~massive~~ massive neo-Classical building, only slightly older than the White House, stood for a new variation on a Grecian idea. Jefferson modernized the Greek temple for the VA State Capitol like he and his peers modernized democracy for America.