
AP Art History

Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary

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2017 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 6

The work shown is Kara Walker's *Darkytown Rebellion*, created in 2001 C.E.

Describe both the form and the content of the work.

Using specific evidence, explain how Walker used both the form and the content to elicit a response from her audience.

Explain how Walker drew a connection between historical and contemporary issues in *Darkytown Rebellion*.

Scoring Criteria

Task		Points
1	Accurately describes the form of <i>Darkytown Rebellion</i> .	1 point
2	Accurately describes the content of <i>Darkytown Rebellion</i> .	1 point
3	Accurately explains how Walker used the form to elicit a response from her audience.	1 point
4	Accurately explains how Walker used the content to elicit a response from her audience.	1 point
5	Accurately explains how Walker drew a connection between historical and contemporary issues in <i>Darkytown Rebellion</i> .	1 point
Total Possible Score		5 points

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Question 6 (continued)

Scoring Information

Describe the form of Darkytown Rebellion.

In the immersive installation *Darkytown Rebellion* Kara Walker created a 37-foot-wide tableau using over a dozen large-scale silhouettes — figures cut from black paper — which she applied to white gallery walls with wax. Walker mounted the silhouettes across two adjacent walls and used colored light projection to create the abstract imagery of a landscape, interspersing the bright colors with dark shadows. By presenting the figures only as silhouettes, Walker emphasizes the figures' contours, which vary in form from traditional profiles to three-quarter views to full frontal poses.

Describe the content of Darkytown Rebellion.

The arrangement of Walker's silhouettes presents a disturbing and purposefully ambiguous scene: perhaps a slave revolt and massacre in the antebellum South, or an uprising just after the American Civil War. The silhouetted characters appear to march across a surrealistic landscape as they participate in, or are victims of, acts of perversity and violence. One figure has a severed, bleeding limb. Next to him a woman in a hoopskirt threatens a smaller figure with a tool. Other figures are engaged in less discernible actions, adding to the uneasy quality of the narrative.

Walker does not use reportage in this particular work, and she is not representing actual events. Instead, to create the content, Walker merged recognizable imagery taken from slave narratives, minstrel shows, and advertising (for example, the Aunt Jemima logo). Many of the specific figures as well as the title were taken from a late 19th-century landscape painting *Darkytown* that Walker saw in a book called *Primitive American Painting*. Responding to the painting's offensive title, as well as to the broader theme of visual stereotyping, Walker reimagined the painting's figures engaged in a fictitious act of rebellion, some carrying flags in a scene that is a mixture of triumph and horror.

Explain how Walker used the form to elicit a response from her audience.

Walker manipulates form to create spatial ambiguity and a sense of disorientation. By representing the figures as silhouettes, with no interior detail, Walker forces viewers to confront their knowledge of racial stereotypes as they attempt to interpret the sharp contours of her figures' forms. Many of the figures' forms play on recognizable African American stereotypes, with exaggerated facial features, hair, and clothing. However, Walker also distorts these stereotypes through their scale, sometimes mixing visual characteristics of children and adults. She creates a gallery of grotesque images through a combination of dissonant visual traits.

To decipher Walker's narrative viewers must use limited visual markers, which makes them engage with the language of racial stereotyping. This exercise in looking is intended to make viewers feel ill at ease because the use of such markers to discern meaning implicates viewers, and makes them complicit, in perpetuating visual stereotypes.

Additionally, Walker uses form to elicit a response from her audience by deliberately placing viewers inside the picture plane. When viewers enter the space they animate the scene: their shadows join the silhouettes on the gallery walls, creating a changing cast of viewers in Walker's narrative through their forms. Walker intended this experience to encourage viewers to study their own forms and the contoured forms of the viewers near them for similar racial markers, and thereby consider both the continued existence of such stereotyping while also revealing the fluidity of identity.

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Question 6 (continued)

Explain how Walker used the content to elicit a response from her audience.

In *Darkytown Rebellion* Walker uses violent and disturbing content drawn from a variety of sources to push her audience to question what they are seeing and why. Part of how Walker solicits a response is by making the work's content purposefully unclear. She places the viewer in the middle of her narrative and asks the viewer to make sense of the jarring, disjointed messages communicated through the figures.

In *Darkytown Rebellion* Walker has also deliberately blurred the lines between the historical realities of racial oppression with the viewers' own exploration of her narrative to force viewers to challenge the origins and the meaning of the images they are seeing as products of multiple and competing histories. Walker wants viewers to question the authenticity of these images or whether they are drawn through viewers' perceptions, the artist's imagination, or both. She presents at one and the same time a genteel, romanticized image of the American South, as communicated through the visual references to what was then a popular, elegant pastime of silhouettes, while simultaneously upending such outdated notions about plantation life by showing a hoopskirted figure literally bludgeoning someone to death.

Walker also uses the narrative of rebellion to explore the harsh realities of African American life both before and after the American Civil War. She demonstrates that we see and understand this period through distorted histories and imagery that have persisted to the present day. She uses dramatic images of violence to shock viewers into an emotional response, whether disgust, anxiety, fear, revulsion, or horror. The purpose of the content is in many ways to elicit a visceral reaction to the scene.

Explain how Walker drew a connection between historical and contemporary issues in Darkytown Rebellion.

By fusing a historical art form (silhouettes) with a contemporary artistic practice (immersive installation), Walker forges a connection between time periods through the interplay of media, content, and form. The very media that Walker uses fuses the concerns of the antebellum past with our contemporary present. She shows both as moments fraught with racial tensions: moments brought together through the projection of viewers' shadows among the silhouettes on the gallery walls. This encourages viewers to question the authenticity of historical narratives, as well as their own stories and who will have control of their narratives over time.

Additionally, the color projections that recall psychedelic light shows reference the 1960s, the decade most closely identified with the American Civil Rights movement and Black Power. This mid-20th-century era of protests, uprisings, marches, rallies, and sit-ins is further connected to Walker's work through the word "rebellion" in her title and her liberation of the figures, both from the frames that traditionally would have enclosed the silhouettes and also from the original landscape painting whose title and imagery the artist has appropriated.

By asking contemporary viewers to acknowledge their recognition and reliance on historical racial stereotypes, Walker demonstrates the persistence of such imagery in contemporary American visual culture. As Walker has observed about this work, "It's interesting that as soon as you start telling the story of racism, you start reliving the story. You keep creating a monster that swallows you. But ... as long as there are people saying 'Hey you don't belong here' to others, it only seems realistic to continue investigating the terrain of racism."

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Question 6 (continued)

Scoring Notes

1	<p>Accurately describes the form of <i>Darkytown Rebellion</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• An immersive installation with a 37-foot-wide tableau that uses over a dozen large-scale, black silhouettes applied to two adjacent white gallery walls with wax.• Use of colored light projection to create an abstract landscape, interspersing bright colors with dark shadows.• The figures emphasize contours, which vary in form from profiles to three-quarter views to full frontal poses.
2	<p>Accurately describes the content of <i>Darkytown Rebellion</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A disturbing, purposefully ambiguous scene: perhaps a slave revolt or an uprising just after the Civil War.• Silhouetted characters appear to march across a surrealistic landscape as they participate in, or are victims of, acts of perversity and violence.• To create the content Walker used imagery from slave narratives, minstrel shows, and advertising (for example, the Aunt Jemima logo). Many of the specific figures as well as the title were taken from a late 19th-century landscape painting <i>Darkytown</i>. Responding to the painting's offensive title, as well as to the broader theme of visual stereotyping, Walker reimagined the painting's figures engaged in a fictitious act of rebellion, some carrying flags in a scene that is a mixture of triumph and horror.
3	<p>Accurately uses specific evidence to explain how Walker used the form to elicit a response from her audience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Walker manipulates form to create spatial ambiguity and a sense of disorientation. She distorts the figures partly through scale, sometimes mixing visual characteristics of children and adults.• Many figures' forms are recognizable African American stereotypes. To decipher the narrative, viewers must use limited visual markers, which makes them engage with the language of racial stereotyping. This exercise in looking is intended to make viewers feel ill at ease because the use of such markers implicates them and makes them complicit in perpetuating visual stereotypes.• Additionally, viewers' shadows join the silhouettes on the gallery walls, including viewers in the work through their forms. This creates a changing cast of characters that animate the scene. Walker intended this experience to encourage viewers to study their own forms and the contoured forms of the viewers near them for similar racial markers, and thereby consider both the continued existence of such stereotyping while also revealing the fluidity of identity.

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Question 6 (continued)

4	<p>Accurately uses specific evidence to explain how Walker used the content to elicit a response from her audience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Walker uses violent and disturbing content to push her audience to question what they are seeing and why. She makes the content purposefully unclear.• She deliberately blurs the lines between the historical realities of racial oppression with the viewers' own exploration. She wants viewers to question the images' authenticity, playing off stereotypes of the genteel, romanticized American South while simultaneously upending such notions.• Walker uses the narrative of rebellion to point to the harsh realities of African American life both before and after the American Civil War. She demonstrates that we see and understand this period through distorted histories and imagery: dramatic images that she uses to shock viewers into a visceral, emotional response.
5	<p>Accurately explains how Walker drew a connection between historical and contemporary issues in <i>Darkytown Rebellion</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• By fusing a historical art form (silhouettes) with a contemporary artistic practice (installation), Walker forges a connection between time periods through the interplay of media, content, and form.• By asking contemporary viewers to acknowledge their recognition and reliance on historical racial stereotypes, Walker demonstrates the persistence of such imagery in contemporary American visual culture.• Additionally, the color projections that recall psychedelic light shows reference the 1960s, the decade most closely identified with the American Civil Rights movement and Black Power. This mid-20th-century era is further connected to Walker's work through the word "rebellion" in her title.

6. Suggested time: 15 minutes.

The work shown is Kara Walker's *Darkytown Rebellion*, created in 2001 C.E.

Describe both the form and the content of the work.

Using specific evidence, explain how Walker used both the form and the content to elicit a response from her audience.

Explain how Walker drew a connection between historical and contemporary issues in *Darkytown Rebellion*.

The form of the work consists of black cut out silhouettes figures of different sizes and positions, with a projected multicolor light on the wall of the corner behind the ~~silhouettes~~ ^{silhouettes}, projecting and distorting the figures in more vibrant colors. The content of the work is different African American Antebellum figures in a progression or procession through time. They are engaged in different actions like marching, flying, and carrying flags ^{or caps} in a slave rebellion. There are ~~adults~~ men, women, and children all involved. Walker uses form to elicit a response from her audience through the dramatic and stark contrast between the stylized black silhouettes in motion and the bright colored lights projected behind them creating more organic and possibly sinister shapes. This elicits the response of sensing the tension in the form and causing the audience to feel drama and emotion. Walker uses content to elicit a response from the audience because the iconography of African American slaves in the antebellum south marching toward a rebellion in a stylized way

Creates a dramatic reaction. There are gory images of a man without a leg and a girl who looks impaled along with a ~~woman~~ brave raise of a flag and an overall mix of different characters, evoking a response of sadness, reverence, and ~~some~~ confusion over the event, especially when the audience knows that not many slave rebellions were successful. ~~satire~~

Walker drew a connection between historical and contemporary issues in Darytown Rebellion by depicting Antebellum African Americans ~~fight~~ rebelling against slavery before the Civil War but using a style similar to ~~modern day~~ contemporary cartoons or illustrations and using modern multimedia to relate the events of the past with issues of the present. By drawing on history while using more contemporary media and stylization, Walker suggests through Darytown Rebellion that the issues of the past she depicts still have a place in the present, possibly most likely with issues like racism and racial discrimination relevant in 2001 America, and even in America today. The ^{combination} ~~mixture~~ of black silhouettes, which suggest figural stories of the past, and colored lighting, which could represent the more vibrant color in technology of present, Walker links historical issues with contemporary issues.

LB1

6. Suggested time: 15 minutes.

The work shown is Kara Walker's *Darkytown Rebellion*, created in 2001 C.E.

Describe both the form and the content of the work.

Using specific evidence, explain how Walker used both the form and the content to elicit a response from her audience.

Explain how Walker drew a connection between historical and contemporary issues in *Darkytown Rebellion*.

Kara Walker created the work Darkytown Rebellion with paper cutouts and a projector. The cutouts are silhouettes of figures, and they cover the wall in various scenes and scenarios which force the viewer to think about racial stereotypes. ~~Therefore~~ This exhibition is meant to make the viewer uncomfortable, and it succeeds. The ~~use~~ ~~of~~ paper cutout silhouettes are used to create extremely stereotypical figures in stereotypical situations. This forces the viewer to stop and think, as they see these silhouettes and automatically assume the races of the figures. However, the fact that the figures are silhouettes with no skin color makes the viewer rethink racial stereotypes, and feel uncomfortable for stereotyping the silhouettes. Walker draws a connection between the historical issue of slavery and racial discrimination and the present day issue of racial stereotyping. Her silhouettes form scenes that clearly represent slavery and oppression, and although the figures have no skin color, the viewer quickly assumes which figures are black and which are white. This brings in the current theme of stereotypes, as people jump to conclusions based on little

6B2

evidence. Walker wants to make viewers aware of the horrors of the past and the issues of the present; and successfully does this by forcing people to self-evaluate their own role in these issues.

6. Suggested time: 15 minutes.

The work shown is Kara Walker's *Darkytown Rebellion*, created in 2001 C.E.

Describe both the form and the content of the work.

Using specific evidence, explain how Walker used both the form and the content to elicit a response from her audience.

Slavery, South

Explain how Walker drew a connection between historical and contemporary issues in *Darkytown Rebellion*.

Kara Walker's "Darkytown Rebellion" is an artwork using a ~~piece~~ projection on a wall. At first, the artwork depicts a happy and adventurous piece, until the audience catches the dark, gloomy tone of the piece. "Darkytown Rebellion" shows men, women, and children in scenes of horrific attributes: A man is walking with one leg, and the other limb fell off, a woman is depicted killing her baby, and another woman giving birth, yet purposely kills the baby having its head hit the ground. The purpose of Kara Walker's "Darkytown Rebellion" is to recount the historical tragedy African American people experienced in the ~~South~~ American South as a result to slavery, and no opportunities to improve their lifestyle.

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Question 6

Overview

This question asked students to analyze Kara Walker's *Darkytown Rebellion* in terms of how the artist used both form and content to elicit a response from the audience. This is a work from Global Contemporary (1980 C.E. to present). The intent of the question was to give students the opportunity to use skills of visual and contextual analysis to demonstrate an understanding of how an artist may purposefully manipulate form and content to elicit a response.

Sample: 6A

Score: 5

Task 1: Accurately describes the form of *Darkytown Rebellion*. (1 point)

The response describes the form of *Darkytown Rebellion* as consisting of “black cut out silhouette figures of different sizes and positions.” The response notes that the installation includes “multicolor light on the wall,” projected into a corner.

Task 2: Accurately describes the content of *Darkytown Rebellion*. (1 point)

The response describes the content of *Darkytown Rebellion* as a scene of “different African American Antebellum figures in a . . . procession,” noting the presence of men, women, and children “engaged in different actions like marching, flying, and carrying flags or weapons in a slave rebellion.”

Task 3: Accurately uses specific evidence to explain how Walker used the form to elicit a response from her audience. (1 point)

The response uses specific evidence to explain how Walker used the form to elicit a response from her audience. The response explains that Walker used the “dramatic and stark contrast between the stylized black silhouettes in motion and the bright colored lights projected behind them” to create “sinister shapes,” which “elicits the response of sensing the tension in the form and causing the audience to feel drama and emotion.”

Task 4: Accurately uses specific evidence to explain how Walker used the content to elicit a response from her audience. (1 point)

The response uses specific evidence to explain how Walker used the content to elicit a response from her audience. The response explains that “the iconography of African American slaves in the antebellum south marching toward a rebellion in a stylized way creates a dramatic reaction.” The response explains that the “gory images” of figures, including “a man without a leg and a girl who looks impaled,” evoke “a response of sadness, reverence, and confusion over the event, especially when the audience knows that not many slave rebellions were successful.”

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Question 6 (continued)

Task 5: Accurately explains how Walker drew a connection between historical and contemporary issues in *Darkytown Rebellion*. (1 point)

The response explains how Walker drew a connection between historical and contemporary issues in *Darkytown Rebellion* by focusing on her juxtaposition of historical content with a contemporary multimedia format. The response explains that “by depicting Antebellum African Americans . . . but using a style similar to contemporary cartoons or illustrations,” Kara Walker is able to “relate the events of the past with issues of the present. By drawing on history while using more contemporary media and stylization, Walker suggests through *Darkytown Rebellion* that the issues of the past she depicts still have a place in the present, most likely with issues of racism and racial discrimination relevant in 2001 America, and even in America today.”

Sample: 6B

Score: 4

Task 1: Accurately describes the form of *Darkytown Rebellion*. (1 point)

The response describes the form of *Darkytown Rebellion* as created with “paper cutouts” of silhouetted figures on a wall with a projector.

Task 2: Accurately describes the content of *Darkytown Rebellion*. (1 point)

The response describes the content of *Darkytown Rebellion* as “various scenes and scenarios which force the viewer to think about racial stereotypes.” The response further notes that the artist’s “silhouettes form scenes that clearly represent slavery and oppression.”

Task 3: Accurately uses specific evidence to explain how Walker used the form to elicit a response from her audience. (1 point)

The response uses specific evidence to explain how Walker used the form to elicit a response from her audience. The response explains how the ambiguous nature of the silhouettes “forces the viewer to stop and think, as they see these silhouettes and automatically assume the races of the figures.” The response further explains the audience response by stating, “[T]he fact that the figures are silhouettes with no skin color makes the viewer rethink racial stereotypes, and feel uncomfortable for stereotyping the silhouettes.”

Task 4: Accurately uses specific evidence to explain how Walker used the content to elicit a response from her audience. (0 points)

No point was earned. The response does not use specific evidence to explain how Walker used the content to elicit a response from her audience. To earn the point the response could have addressed the idea of figures in “stereotypical situations” in a way that explored the specific content of the scene and how that content could lead to a particular response. For example, the response could have explained with more detail the “stereotypical situations” depicted by Kara Walker and how within the context of a scene that represents slavery and oppression such “stereotypical situations” might elicit a specific emotional or intellectual response.

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Question 6 (continued)

Task 5: Accurately explains how Walker drew a connection between historical and contemporary issues in *Darkytown Rebellion*. (1 point)

The response explains how Walker drew a connection between historical and contemporary issues in *Darkytown Rebellion* by focusing on racial stereotyping, past and present. The response first repeats the assertion that the silhouettes “have no skin color,” which forces the viewer to assume “which figures are black and which are white.” This statement alone would not have earned the point. However, the response then links this observation to “the current theme of stereotypes, as people jump to conclusions based on little evidence. Walker wants to make viewers aware of the horrors of the past and the issues of the present; and successfully does this by forcing people to self-evaluate their own role in these issues.”

Sample: 6C

Score: 2

Task 1: Accurately describes the form of *Darkytown Rebellion*. (1 point)

The response describes the form of *Darkytown Rebellion* as “an artwork using a projection on a wall.”

Task 2: Accurately describes the content of *Darkytown Rebellion*. (1 point)

The response describes the content of *Darkytown Rebellion* as “dark, gloomy.” Walker shows “men, women, and children in scenes of horrific attributes: A man is walking with one leg . . . a woman is depicted killing her baby.”

Task 3: Accurately uses specific evidence to explain how Walker used the form to elicit a response from her audience. (0 points)

No point was earned. The response does not use specific evidence to explain how Walker used the form to elicit a response from her audience.

Task 4: Accurately uses specific evidence to explain how Walker used the content to elicit a response from her audience. (0 points)

No point was earned. The response does not use specific evidence to explain how Walker used the content to elicit a response from her audience.

Task 5: Accurately explains how Walker drew a connection between historical and contemporary issues in *Darkytown Rebellion*. (0 points)

No point was earned. The response does not explain how Walker drew a connection between historical and contemporary issues in *Darkytown Rebellion*. The response makes an attempt by stating, “The purpose of Kara Walker’s ‘Darkytown Rebellion’ is to recount the historical tragedy African American people experienced in the American South as a result to [sic] slavery and no opportunities to improve their lifestyle.” However, the response does not connect this observation about the work’s historical context to a clear contemporary issue. To earn the point the response could have elaborated on this observation by connecting it to present-day experiences of African American people, as represented by Walker’s use of contemporary media, her incorporation of the viewer into the scene through shadows, or her intention to provoke critical thoughts about the ongoing presence of racism and racial stereotyping.