

AP[®] ART HISTORY

2015 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 5

The work shown is the *Virgin of Paris*, created during the fourteenth century.

Using specific contextual evidence, analyze how the subject of the *Virgin of Paris* is characteristic of the late Gothic period. Using specific visual evidence, analyze how the form of the *Virgin of Paris* is characteristic of the late Gothic period. (10 minutes)

Background

This question asks students to use evidence to analyze how both the form and the content of a work of art are characteristic of a particular art-historical period; in this case, the late Gothic. The intent of this question is to give students an opportunity to apply skills of formal and contextual analysis to demonstrate their understanding of key aspects of works produced during a specific art-historical period.

The sculpture shown is the Virgin and Child, commonly known as the *Virgin of Paris*, carved in the 14th century for the Chapelle Saint-Aignan in the Canons' Cloister on the Île de la Cité, Paris. Its present location is against the southwestern column in the sanctuary of the church. This location had been the site of an altar dedicated to the Virgin since the 12th century.

The subject of the *Virgin of Paris* is characteristic of the late Gothic period in its emphasis on the importance of Mary. While the subject of the Virgin and Child was not invented in the Gothic era, the popularity of the cult of the Virgin Mary at this time was both fostered and served through sermons, prayers, offices, masses, and popular hagiographies. The 12th-century Cistercian monk Saint Bernard of Clairvaux wrote numerous homilies, sermons, and prayers dedicated to the Virgin that circulated throughout Europe. Later medieval texts, such as the 13th-century *Golden Legend*, provided embellished accounts of Mary's hagiography that came to serve as the basis for liturgical plays and artistic cycles of the various events in Mary's life. In the later Middle Ages, prayers and accounts of Mary's life comprised the Hours of the Virgin, which were placed in books of hours made for private devotional practice. The change in dedication from Saint-Étienne to the Virgin Mary of Paris's cathedral, which functioned not only as the seat of the diocese but also as the Parisian church of Europe's kings, is further evidence of the rise of Marian devotion in the Gothic era. With the expanded focus on Mary's humanity, her role as benevolent intercessor was increasingly emphasized.

Visually, in the *Virgin of Paris*, Mary embodies this role as intercessor by physically presenting the Christ Child to all of humanity. At the same time, her powerful spiritual connection to Christ has been humanized through the tender interaction between a mother and child. Having been assumed into Heaven, Mary has become a bridge between the faithful of this world and that of her Son, and is thus portrayed as participating in both the terrestrial and heavenly realms. Significantly, the *Virgin of Paris* also presents Mary as the Queen of Heaven, as befits a statue placed in a church in such close proximity to France's royal seat of power. Mary's elaborate dress, elegant proportions, and graceful gestures have been shaped by the proximity and patronage of the French royal court, which commissioned luxury items for both public and private Christian worship, collected relics, and sponsored the building of churches dedicated to the Virgin in several cities during the Gothic period. To convey clearly her status as Queen of Heaven, the Virgin is portrayed with the material trappings of a worldly queen. She is adorned in lavish garments and wears a large, bejeweled crown embellished with fleurs-de-lis, the emblem of the Capetian monarchy. She is thus portrayed in accord with perceptions and expectations of royal appearance. Similarly, Christ is garbed in lavish robes with fine trim, like an infant prince. He holds an orb of the world, echoing on a cosmic level the orb of terrestrial rule held by the king. With its dimple on one side, this object might also

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Question 5 (continued)

be interpreted as a fruit such as a pomegranate, a symbol of the Passion, or an apple, referring to the pair's role in redeeming original sin.

Stylistically, the form of the *Virgin of Paris* is characteristic of the late Gothic period through its elegance and courtly refinement. The elongated figure of the Virgin stands in an accentuated S-curve (sometimes referred to as the Gothic sway), an exaggerated form of the classic pose of contrapposto. However, the sculptor of the *Virgin of Paris* did not choose this pose to depict a naturalistic shift in the body's weight from one leg to another. Rather, the S-curve is intended to be more decorative, elongating the body to slender, elegant proportions and imbuing the statue with a delicacy and lyricism that is present across artworks during this period: in gilt objects, manuscript illumination, and the tracery in stained glass. The lavish drapery indicates splendor, as it cascades in abundant, crisp, linear folds that accentuate the play of patterns in the Virgin's garments. Other elements of the sculpture appeal to the human experience. The figures have relatively naturalistic features and turn toward one another, interacting in a more relaxed manner than was common in pre-Gothic figural sculpture. Despite the figures' impassive facial expressions, details such as the Christ child playing with the clasp of his mother's mantle and the tender way in which the Virgin supports her child render these figures more lifelike and approachable than in earlier eras.

Two Tasks for Students

1. Using specific contextual evidence, analyze how the subject of the *Virgin of Paris* is characteristic of the late Gothic period.
2. Using specific visual evidence, analyze how the form of the *Virgin of Paris* is characteristic of the late Gothic period.

Points to Remember

This question asks students to combine skills of both formal and contextual analysis to analyze a specific work of art. While aspects of this question may be answered accurately in general terms, it is also essential for students to analyze specific characteristics of the *Virgin of Paris* to earn full credit.

The highest score a response can earn if it does not use specific evidence to analyze how both the subject and the form of the *Virgin of Paris* are characteristic of the late Gothic period is 2 points.

Note that the name of the sculpture, the century of its creation, and its art-historical period are all provided in the question.

Students are not required to identify the sculpture's present location at the Cathedral of Notre Dame, although some students may include such details in their responses.

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Question 5 (continued)

Scoring Criteria

4 points

Response demonstrates thorough knowledge and understanding of the question.

The response clearly and accurately uses specific contextual evidence to analyze how the subject of the *Virgin of Paris* is characteristic of the late Gothic period. The response clearly and accurately uses specific visual evidence to analyze how the form of the *Virgin of Paris* is characteristic of the late Gothic period. The response may include minor errors that do not have a meaningful effect on the analysis.

3 points

Response demonstrates sufficient knowledge and understanding of the question.

The response accurately uses specific contextual evidence to analyze how the subject of the *Virgin of Paris* is characteristic of the late Gothic period. The response accurately uses specific visual evidence to analyze how the form of the *Virgin of Paris* is characteristic of the late Gothic period. However, the response may be somewhat unbalanced, with a stronger analysis of how either the subject or the form is characteristic of the late Gothic period, although both are represented. The response may include minor errors that have some effect on the analysis.

2 points

Response demonstrates some knowledge and understanding of the question.

The response uses contextual evidence to address how the subject of the *Virgin of Paris* is characteristic of the late Gothic period. The response uses visual evidence to address how the form of the *Virgin of Paris* is characteristic of the late Gothic period. However, the response is less analytical than descriptive. It may be overly general, simplistic, or unbalanced. For example, the discussion of how the subject of the *Virgin of Paris* is characteristic of the late Gothic period may be mostly accurate, whereas the discussion of how the form of the *Virgin of Paris* is characteristic of the late Gothic period may include errors that affect the response.

OR

The response clearly and accurately uses specific evidence to analyze how either the subject or the form of the *Virgin of Paris* is characteristic of the late Gothic period, but not both.

NOTE: This is the highest score a response can earn if it does not use specific evidence to analyze how both the subject and the form of the *Virgin of Paris* is characteristic of the late Gothic period.

1 point

Response demonstrates little knowledge and understanding of the question.

The response demonstrates some general familiarity with the issues raised by the question by addressing how the subject and/or the form of the *Virgin of Paris* is characteristic of the late Gothic period. However, the response is weak, overly descriptive, and/or contains significant errors.

0 points

Response demonstrates no discernible knowledge and 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.

— This is a blank paper only.

5. The work shown is the *Virgin of Paris*, created during the fourteenth century.

Using specific contextual evidence, analyze how the subject of the *Virgin of Paris* is characteristic of the late Gothic period. Using specific visual evidence, analyze how the form of the *Virgin of Paris* is characteristic of the late Gothic period. (10 minutes)

The main piece of contextual evidence pointing to this piece being in the late Gothic style is its subject matter: the Virgin and Child. The Devotion to the Virgin Mary was spreading across Europe during the late Medieval period, but was strongest in France, where many cathedrals such as Chartres, Paris, and Amiens were dedicated to her. Visually, many factors point to this same conclusion. The body of Mary forms a distinct "S-curve," typical of the sculpture of the late Gothic period. Furthermore, the late Gothic period was primarily spearheaded by the aristocracy, leading to wealth and elegance being heavily featured in works of this period. One such example of this is the flowing garments. While in early Gothic periods, fabric was depicted as falling and folding straight downwards, reminiscent of fluted Classical columns, by the late Gothic, fabric was depicted more organically, with flowing curves revealing multiple layers of clothing. Another example of aristocratic influences on this piece is the massively oversized crown. While Mary was traditionally depicted as veiled, the use of a crown here suggests a more wealthy and aristocratic audience. Furthermore, as the regality and Queenship of Mary was a key theological development that occurred

relatively late in the Medieval period, the presence of a crowned Mary firmly places this sculpture in the late Gothic style.

5B11

5. The work shown is the *Virgin of Paris*, created during the fourteenth century.

Using specific contextual evidence, analyze how the subject of the *Virgin of Paris* is characteristic of the late Gothic period. Using specific visual evidence, analyze how the form of the *Virgin of Paris* is characteristic of the late Gothic period. (10 minutes)

The *Virgin of Paris* in the Notre Dame Cathedral ^{in Paris} is a typical Late Gothic sculpture. Firstly, the Notre Dame Cathedral was built during ~~late~~ Gothic period, and this sculpture was created at roughly the same time, so it is late Gothic. And the unnatural S-curve of Mary's body shows that it was before the international Gothic period, when the sculptures get more natural and goes to the Renaissance (the revival of classical perfection). The fact that Mary is crowned shows the Marian Devotion, which was popular during late Gothic period, like the Rottgen Pietà. The little Christ looks strange because it's just a smaller sized adult, late Gothic sculptors haven't mastered the skill for creating a baby-like baby. Late Gothic statues also uses symbols, Mary is hold a lily symbolizing purity, Jesus is holding a globe symbolizing that he is in control of the world. It is much more 3-D like, not like early Gothic statues on the jambs, flat and not specific. They don't have any facial expressions, it fits in dark feelings of late Gothic.

5. The work shown is the *Virgin of Paris*, created during the fourteenth century.

5C₁₁

Using specific contextual evidence, analyze how the subject of the *Virgin of Paris* is characteristic of the late Gothic period. Using specific visual evidence, analyze how the form of the *Virgin of Paris* is characteristic of the late Gothic period. (10 minutes)

The Gothic period began in France, particularly in Paris, during the 14th c. and was meant to align the French Monarchy with the Papacy. While the Gothic period was ~~known~~ mostly known for its architecture, Gothic sculpture held its place in the period. Just like the architecture, Gothic sculpture is meant to be light and airy, and although it was made out of stone, there should be a sense of movement in the drapery which the Virgin of Paris perfectly depicts. The drapery seems to ripple and fall just how it would on a person, suggesting a body underneath the fabric and a ~~weightiness~~ weightlessness to the fabric. Gothic style was also identified by the intricate details, and this sculpture shows this attention to detail in the trim of the fabric that has some sort of pattern in it, the lace on the robes of Christ, the details of the Virgin's hair - it is as if the viewer can see the individual strands - and most importantly the details on the crown. The diamond shapes ~~in~~ in the clothes and the crown are a characteristic of Gothic art because the Gothic period does not use circular designs (like Greek arches), but rather designs with sharper edges (like pointed arches). ~~The~~ The name of the sculpture, The Virgin of Paris ~~also~~ places the work in the late Gothic period because ~~the~~ the Gothic movement is associated with Paris in particular. The light, almost weightless, character of the fabric combined with the intense attention to details that create an intricate ~~looking~~ looking pattern ~~are~~ are both characteristics strongly associated with the late Gothic period, and in this case late Gothic sculpture.

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Question 5

Overview

This question asked students to use evidence to analyze how both the form and the content of a work of art are characteristic of a particular art-historical period; in this case, the late Gothic. The intent of this question was to give students an opportunity to apply skills of formal and contextual analysis to demonstrate their understanding of key aspects of works produced during a specific art-historical period.

Sample: 5A Score: 4

The response clearly and accurately uses specific contextual evidence to analyze how the subject of the *Virgin of Paris* is characteristic of the late Gothic period. The response also clearly and accurately uses specific visual evidence to analyze how the form of the *Virgin of Paris* is characteristic of the late Gothic period. The response explains that “[d]evotion to the Virgin Mary was spreading across Europe during the late Medieval period” and elaborates that this devotion “was strongest in France,” providing the specific evidence that “many cathedrals such as Chartres, Paris and Amiens were dedicated to her.” The response correctly states that “as the regality and Queenship of Mary was a theological development that occurred relatively late in the Medieval period, the presence of a crowned Mary firmly places this sculpture in the Late Gothic style.” The response also analyzes how the visual evidence of Mary’s “massively oversized crown” is connected to an attempt to appeal to “a more wealthy and aristocratic audience.” The response analyzes visual evidence of the late Gothic style in the *Virgin of Paris*, including the “distinct ‘S-curve’” and the “wealth and elegance” shared with other works of this period. The response connects this visual evidence to the fact that the “Late Gothic period was primarily spearheaded by the aristocracy.” The response places the *Virgin of Paris*’s “flowing garments” within the trajectory from the early Gothic style to the late Gothic style, explaining, “While in early Gothic periods [*sic*], fabric was depicted as falling and folding straight downwards, reminiscent of fluted Classical columns, by the late Gothic, fabric was depicted more organically, with flowing curved [*sic*] revealing multiple layers of clothing.” In this way, the response demonstrates thorough knowledge and understanding of the question.

Sample: 5B Score: 3

The response accurately uses specific contextual evidence to analyze how the subject of the *Virgin of Paris* is characteristic of the late Gothic period. The response also clearly and accurately uses specific visual evidence to analyze how the form of *Virgin of Paris* is characteristic of the late Gothic period. The response analyzes the connection between Marian devotion at that time and the visual evidence of Mary’s crown, citing another example of an artwork, the *Röttgen Pietà*, which similarly is connected to Marian devotion. This is the only point at which the response uses contextual evidence to address how the subject of the *Virgin of Paris* is characteristic of the late Gothic period, which makes the response as a whole unbalanced. The response then uses visual evidence to analyze how the form of the sculpture is more three-dimensional than that of earlier Gothic artworks. The response identifies the “unnatural S-curve of Mary’s body” and rightly explains that this visual convention was popular “before the international Gothic period, when the sculptures get more natural and goes [*sic*] to the Renaissance (the revival of classical perfection).” The response also analyzes how the meaning of symbolism (the orb and lily) found in the *Virgin of Paris*

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Question 5 (continued)

is typical of late Gothic artworks. The response addresses the unusually mature visage of the Christ child, incorrectly ascribing this feature to a lack of artistic ability on the part of late Gothic artists, who “haven’t mastered the skill for creating a baby-like baby,” rather than to an attempt to symbolize Christ’s wisdom. And while the response correctly notes that the *Virgin of Paris* is located in the cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris, the response incorrectly asserts that Notre Dame was built in the late Gothic period and that “this sculpture was created at roughly the same time, so it is late Gothic.” These minor errors have some effect on the analysis. In this way, the response demonstrates sufficient knowledge and understanding of the question.

Sample: 5C

Score: 2

The response clearly and accurately uses visual evidence to analyze how the form of the *Virgin of Paris* is characteristic of the late Gothic period, but the response does not sufficiently address how the subject of the *Virgin of Paris* is characteristic of the late Gothic period. The response explains that in the late Gothic period “there should be a sense of movement in the drapery, which the Virgin of Paris perfectly depicts.” The response also notes the way in which the drapery “seems to ripple and fall just how it would on a person, suggesting a body underneath the fabric.” The response describes the focus on intricate details typical of late Gothic art and identifies examples of this in “the trim of the fabric that has some sort of pattern in it, the lace on the robes of Christ, the details of the Virgins [*sic*] hair . . . and most importantly the details on the crown.” Although the response mentions that “the Gothic period began in France, particularly in Paris,” it incorrectly claims that it “was meant to align [*sic*] the French Monarchy with the Papacy [*sic*].” The response also states that “while the Gothic period was mostly known for its architecture, Gothic sculpture held its place in the period.” This is the only point at which the response attempts, unsuccessfully, to address how the subject of the *Virgin of Paris* is characteristic of the late Gothic period. In this way, the response demonstrates some knowledge and understanding of the question.