

# AP<sup>®</sup> ART HISTORY

## 2015 SCORING GUIDELINES

### Question 6

**The work shown is the Virginia State Capitol in Richmond, constructed between 1785 and 1789 C.E.**

**Attribute the building to its specific art-historical style. Justify your attribution by discussing characteristics of the building that are commonly associated with that art-historical style. What was the significance of the use of that art-historical style in the United States during this period? (10 minutes)**

#### Background

This question asks students to correctly attribute a building to its specific art-historical style. Students are asked to justify the attribution by discussing characteristics of the building that are commonly associated with that art-historical style and to explain the significance of the use of that art-historical style in the United States during this period. The intent of this question is to have students apply their knowledge of both the characteristics and the significance of a style to their discussion of a presumably unknown work.

The work shown is the Virginia State Capitol in Richmond, constructed between 1785 and 1789 C.E. The intended stylistic attribution is Neoclassical, though Classical Revival, Federalist, and Jeffersonian are acceptable responses.

Prevalent in Europe and North America from roughly 1740 to 1820 C.E., Neoclassicism was inspired by ancient Greek and Roman sources. At this time, a renewed interest in antiquity had been fueled by the Grand Tour and by archeological excavations of sites such as Pompeii and Herculaneum. Additionally, the decline of the influence of the church, the troubled state of monarchy across Europe, and the rejection of absolutism by scientists and philosophers in favor of empirical knowledge resulted in a renewed appreciation of ancient Greek and Roman civilizations as models of intellectual integrity and enlightened government. Greek and Roman forms were used to offer contemporary lessons in liberty, moral behavior, and civic virtue. Neoclassical architecture celebrated harmony, clarity, and balance in terms of style and were intended to inspire patriotism, nationalism, and courage in defense of the state.

In 1785 C.E., the Directors of Public Buildings of the Commonwealth of Virginia asked Thomas Jefferson to design the new Virginia State Capitol building. Jefferson's knowledge of classical architecture was extensive, and he championed the Neoclassical style as a way to construct new symbolic forms and to promote the ideals of democracy in the new republic. Jefferson suggested that the building be modeled after the Maison Carrée, the best preserved Roman Republican temple in Europe dating from 16 B.C.E. Since Jefferson did not visit the Maison Carrée until 1787 C.E., his choice was most likely based on the architectural drawings of Charles-Louis Clérisseau, who had recently published a book on antiquities in Nîmes. Jefferson believed that the Maison Carrée "was the most perfect and precious remain of antiquity in existence." He admired the purity of its form and its simple geometry, and he understood that architecture had the power to communicate noble ideals to the public.

The result in the Virginia State Capitol building was a reinterpretation of the classical temple type as civic architecture for a democratic government. Jefferson embraced the monumentality of classical architecture and chose for the capitol's site Shockoe Hill in Richmond, where it would occupy the most prominent place in the city. Consequently, rather than elevating the importance of religion, Jefferson used the classical temple form to signal the civilizing force of the new government and to anchor that government in the forms and ideals of classical Greece and republican Rome.

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### Question 6 (continued)

Jefferson's original building is the middle structure of the present day capitol complex. At the center of the capitol is the rotunda, a two-story space capped by a dome and illuminated by skylights. The dome was added to the building in 1794 C.E. Between 1904 and 1906 C.E., architect John K. Peebles completed Jefferson's original architectural intent by adding the wide front steps to the building. In addition, Peebles complemented the original capitol with the compatible classical wings for each house of the Virginia General Assembly, flanking the original temple structure.

In justifying the attribution, students may cite a range of visual characteristics that connect the Virginia State Capitol to formal or conceptual features found in classical architecture. They may observe architectural elements of Greek or Roman temples such as columns, orders, entablatures, friezes, architraves, and pediments. They may note the stairs and deep porch that focus attention on the entrance to the building, or the site, on top of a hill. Some may focus on the solemn dignity of the building achieved through its proportion, symmetry, and balance or reference the white color that recalls the white marble of classical temples. Students may observe similarities between ancient Greek or Roman models and the Virginia State Capitol.

### Three Tasks for Students

1. Correctly attribute the Virginia State Capitol to its specific art-historical style.
2. Justify the attribution by discussing characteristics of the building that are commonly associated with that art-historical style.
3. Explain the significance of the use of that art-historical style in the United States during this period.

### Points to Remember

This is an attribution question. The question requires attribution to a specific art-historical style. The intended stylistic attribution is Neoclassical, though Classical Revival, Federalist, and Jeffersonian are acceptable responses. The highest score a response can earn if the Virginia State Capitol is not correctly attributed is 2 points.

When a response is granted partial credit, attention should be paid to the plausibility of the evidence cited for the incorrect art-historical style and whether such evidence could reasonably be applied to the Virginia State Capitol. In general, an incorrect attribution that references classicism will be a stronger response than an incorrect attribution to a style that shares no formal similarities with the Virginia State Capitol.

The highest score a response can earn if it does not both discuss characteristics of the building that are commonly associated with that art-historical style and explain the significance of the use of that art-historical style in the United States during this period is 2 points.

Note that the name of the building, its location, and the dates of its construction are all provided in the question.

Students are not required to identify Thomas Jefferson, although some students may include such detail in their responses.

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### Question 6 (continued)

#### Scoring Criteria

##### 4 points

###### **Response demonstrates thorough knowledge and understanding of the question.**

The Virginia State Capitol is clearly and correctly attributed to its specific art-historical style. The response justifies the attribution by discussing characteristics of the building that are commonly associated with that art-historical style and explains the significance of the use of that art-historical style in the United States during this period. The response may include minor errors that do not have a meaningful effect on the discussion.

##### 3 points

###### **Response demonstrates sufficient knowledge and understanding of the question.**

The Virginia State Capitol is correctly attributed to its specific art-historical style. The response justifies the attribution by discussing characteristics of the building that are commonly associated with that art-historical style and explains the significance of the use of that art-historical style in the United States during this period. However, the response may be somewhat unbalanced, with a stronger discussion of either the characteristics of the building that are commonly associated with that art-historical style or the significance of the use of that art-historical style in the United States during this period, although both are represented. The response may include minor errors that have some effect on the discussion.

##### 2 points

###### **Response demonstrates some knowledge and understanding of the question.**

The Virginia State Capitol is correctly attributed to its art-historical style, although this attribution may be implied rather than stated directly. The response justifies the attribution by discussing characteristics of the building that are commonly associated with that art-historical style and/or explains the significance of the use of that art-historical style in the United States during this period, but the discussion may be overly general, simplistic, or descriptive. The response includes errors that affect the discussion.

###### **OR**

The Virginia State Capitol is attributed to an incorrect art-historical style, but the characteristics of the building cited as justification and the significance of the use of that art-historical style in the United States during this period can reasonably be applied both to the Virginia State Capitol and to the incorrect art-historical style.

**NOTE:** This is the highest score a response can earn if it does not correctly attribute the Virginia State Capitol to its art-historical style **OR** if the response does not discuss both the characteristics of the building that are commonly associated with its art-historical style and the significance of the use of that art-historical style in the United States during this period.

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**Question 6 (continued)**

**1 point**

**Response demonstrates little knowledge and understanding of the question.**

The Virginia State Capitol is correctly attributed to its art-historical style, but there is no other discussion of merit.

**OR**

The Virginia State Capitol is attributed to an incorrect art-historical style. The response includes an attempt at justification, but the discussion may be overly general, simplistic, or descriptive, even if the characteristics of the building cited as justification and/or the significance of the use of that art-historical style in the United States during this period can reasonably be applied both to the Virginia State Capitol and to the incorrect art-historical style.

**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.

6. The work shown is the Virginia State Capitol in Richmond, constructed between 1785 and 1789 C.E.

6A.11

Attribute the building to its specific art-historical style. Justify your attribution by discussing characteristics of the building that are commonly associated with that art-historical style. What was the significance of the use of that art-historical style in the United States during this period? (10 minutes)

This building is in the Neoclassical style. Neoclassical artists applied techniques and forms from classical art to produce new pieces around the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In this building, the Roman ideas of temple design have been applied to a secular context. The building features a classical pediment and columns in the Ionic order on a porch in front of the entrance, a direct allusion to the Roman synthesis of Greek decorative style and Etruscan temple plan in buildings such as the Temple of Portunus. The white stone used for the facade is reminiscent of classical marble architecture. At the same time, the building incorporates contemporary glass windows, a technique not available to the Greeks and Romans. This building exemplifies the Neoclassical style of architecture in its use of a classical design ideology with modern techniques.

This building was built in the first years of the development of the United States. By employing a Neoclassical style, early American architects drew a connection from the political experiment of the United States to its roots in Greek democracy and the Roman Republic. Classical decoration also provided a sense of stability in a nation beginning to take shape in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

6B11

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Attribute the building to its specific art-historical style. Justify your attribution by discussing characteristics of the building that are commonly associated with that art-historical style. What was the significance of the use of that art-historical style in the United States during this period? (10 minutes)

This building is most notably done in the Neoclassic, or Federal Style as <sup>it came to be</sup> ~~the~~ called in the US. ~~There are~~ The Neoclassic style harkens back to the style of ancient Greek and Roman temples. In the Virginia State Capitol, there are many influences of Greek architecture, such as the Ionic columns and the entablature with a cornice and pediment above the ~~columns~~ columns. The use of white materials also calls to the clean, classic look of the Neoclassic period.

The Neoclassic style ~~came~~ became known as the ~~Fede~~ Federal style in the United States since it was the preferred style for many federal buildings, such as the Capitol, the White House, and the Justice Department. The Founders liked its ~~clean~~ classic look that lent an air of dignity and nobility to the buildings. Jefferson liked this style so much that he modeled his own home, Monticello, after Neoclassic ~~work~~ works, like the Villa Rotonda by Palladio.

6C 1/2

6. The work shown is the Virginia State Capitol in Richmond, constructed between 1785 and 1789 C.E.

Attribute the building to its specific art-historical style. Justify your attribution by discussing characteristics of the building that are commonly associated with that art-historical style. What was the significance of the use of that art-historical style in the United States during this period? (10 minutes)

Although the Virginia State Capitol in Richmond is an American structure, it can easily be attributed and compared to the style of Classical Greece architecture. For a number of reasons, this Capitol is very reflective of ancient Greece. For example, the Capitol building has a similar structure; it is built with steps leading up to the porch, which is placed in front of the structure. It has a roof topped with a triangular pediment, which was another staple of Greek temples. In addition, the Capitol is lined with Ionic columns, that have scrolls, on the front side of the building. These structural characteristics are identical to those seen in ~~the Parthenon~~ Classic Greek temples such as the Parthenon, among others. However, there are differences within the Richmond Capitol. For example, the columns are only on the front face of the building instead of surrounding the whole perimeter. In addition, the temple structure as a whole - the steps, columns, & pediments, are only decoration on the front, where windows and normal walls line the rest of the building instead of lining it entirely around.

The use of this Classical Greek style was

6C 2/2

significant during this time period because it shows the strong influence that ancient, established civilizations such as classical Greece can have on new, up and coming, modern civilizations born recently such as the United States.



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## 2015 SCORING COMMENTARY

### Question 6

#### Overview

This question asked students to correctly attribute a building to its specific art-historical style. Students were asked to justify the attribution by discussing characteristics of the building that are commonly associated with that art-historical style and to explain the significance of the use of that art-historical style in the United States during this period. The intent of this question was to have students apply their knowledge of both the characteristics and the significance of a style to their discussion of a presumably unknown work.

#### Sample: 6A

##### Score: 4

The Virginia State Capitol is clearly and correctly attributed to Neoclassicism. The response justifies the attribution by discussing characteristics of the building that are commonly associated with Neoclassicism. The response begins with an observation that in the Virginia State Capitol “the Roman ideas of temple design have been applied to a secular context.” The response then follows by citing several specific Neoclassical features of the Virginia State Capitol as well as their sources. The response states, “The building features a classical pediment and columns in the Ionic order on a porch in front of the entrance, a direct allusion to the Roman synthesis of Greek decorative style and Etruscan temple plan.” The response goes further with Neoclassical characteristics by observing, “The white stone used for the façade is reminiscent of classical marble architecture.” The response explains the significance of the use of Neoclassicism in the United States at this time by noting that the Virginia State Capitol “was built in the first years of the development of the United States” and adding that American architects used Neoclassicism to draw “a connection from the political experiment of the United States to its roots in Greek democracy and the Roman Republic.” The response concludes by explaining that “Classical decoration also provided a sense of stability in a nation beginning to take shape in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.” In this way, the response demonstrates thorough knowledge and understanding of the question.

#### Sample: 6B

##### Score: 3

The Virginia State Capitol is correctly attributed to Neoclassicism. The response justifies the attribution by discussing characteristics of the building that are commonly associated with Neoclassicism. The discussion begins with the statement that “[t]he Neoclassic style harkens back to the style of ancient Greek and Roman temples.” It follows with a discussion of specific architectural elements seen in the Virginia State Capitol: “Ionic columns and the entablature with a cornice and pediment above the columns.” The response cites “[t]he use of white materials” as a signature of “the clean, classic look of the Neoclassic period.” The response is unbalanced in that this discussion of the characteristics of the building commonly associated with Neoclassicism is stronger than the explanation of the significance of the use of Neoclassicism in the United States during this period. The response notes that Neoclassicism “was the preferred style for many federal buildings.” The response adds that the country’s founders, such as Thomas Jefferson, liked this style because it “lended [*sic*] an air of dignity and nobility to the buildings.” In this way, the response demonstrates sufficient knowledge and understanding of the question.

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**Question 6 (continued)**

**Sample: 6C**

**Score: 2**

The Virginia State Capitol is incorrectly attributed to Classical Greece. The response justifies the incorrect attribution by observing several characteristics associated with Classical Greek architecture that can also be observed in the Virginia State Capitol, beginning with a description of the structure as having “steps leading up to the porch which is placed in front of the structure.” The response adds that the building has “a roof topped with a triangular pediment which was another staple of Greek temples.” In addition, the Ionic order present in the Virginia State Capitol is acknowledged as something seen in Classical Greek temples. The response explains the significance of the use of this style in the United States at this time by explaining that “ancient, established civilizations such as Classical Greece” can have a strong influence on “new, up and coming, modern civilizations born recently such as the United States.” In this way, the response demonstrates some knowledge and understanding of the question.