



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
June 2012**

History of Art

HART1

(Specification 2250)

Unit 1: Visual Analysis and Interpretation

Report on the Examination

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HART1

General comments

There were some excellent responses that offered both full analyses of the selected works of art and architecture and fully met the demands of the questions. The majority of the responses fell into the 'Competent' or 'Good' category. Some less successful responses were based mainly on descriptions and or speculative comments.

The standard of English was generally reasonable, although spelling was often weak. The word 'rustication' was frequently misspelt as 'rustification', and there was a noticeable increase in the trend to mix tenses, for example 'is sat' and 'is stood' for 'is sitting' and 'is standing'. Unfortunately, in a few cases the handwriting was almost impossible to read.

Painting

Question 1

François-Hubert Drouais, *Madame de Pompadour at her Tambour Frame*, (embroidery frame), 1763-64 (oil on canvas) (217 cm x 156.8 cm) (National Gallery, London).

Analyse the figure and the setting in this portrait **and** discuss the representation of the sitter's gender.

Much time was often spent discussing the sitter's wealth as reflected in her elaborate dress and furniture, rather than giving an analysis of Madame de Pompadour and what she was doing. Most students mistakenly identified the sitter as writing with a pen rather than embroidering on an embroidery frame, as clearly stated in the title. Many students noted the bookcase and books and assumed that the sitter was intelligent and well educated. Less able students discussed the artist's technique, use of oils and the style of the painting which was not required by the question. The dog was often mentioned but usually as a symbol of fidelity, without considering its relationship to the sitter and formal function as a diagonal accent.

There appeared to be confusion between gender and status. Many students spent more time on the sitter's wealth as evidenced by her dress and setting than dealing with the issue of gender. There were some good responses in which students discussed gender in relation to her status in society, picking up on her flawless, pale complexion, soft hands and female leisure occupations suggested by the objects surrounding her, such as the tambour frame, books, a portfolio and a lute. Weaker responses speculated at length on the sitter's psychological state as being trapped by her lifestyle and being subservient to (usually) her husband.

Sculpture

Question 2

Henry Moore, *Draped Seated Woman*, 1957-58 (bronze) (height 185.5 cm) (Yorkshire Sculpture Park, England).

Analyse the figure in this sculpture **and** consider the ways in which the material and techniques have been used.

Although there were a few good responses, the figure was frequently described as being an abstract work rather than being 'abstracted' in appearance. Many students were keen to identify the style at the expense of analysing the figure. Among the weaker responses there was much speculation on what the figure was thinking but interpretation was not required.

In some responses gender was often discussed at the expense of analysis.

In a lot of cases a full account of the lost wax process of casting was given without relating it to the appearance of the sculpture. Most students mentioned that a wax or plaster model was created before the process could be carried out. Less successful students stated that the figure had been carved rather than modelled and cast. More successful students drew attention to the fact that bronze lends itself to varied surface textures and related this to specific details. Many students commented that the dress of the figure merged with her skin at the arms and neck. Additionally, more successful responses considered the advantages of the tensile strength of bronze and its ability to create open poses with projecting limbs, as seen in this image. Some students addressed the geometric contrast provided by the plinth but only a few stated that it was an integral part of the sculpture providing a seat for the figure. Few students picked up on the plinth being constructed from a different material. Most students commented on the green tone of the bronze figure fitting in with its natural outdoor location. Some students went so far as giving her a 'Mother Earth' identity, which was speculative rather than factual.

Architecture

Question 3

Robert Adam, *Kedleston Hall – south front*, c.1761 (stone) England.

Analyse the composition of this building **and** comment on how the features and characteristics indicate status.

On the whole, responses to this question were better than the essays produced in response to the other two questions. Sound analysis was employed for the composition element of the question with correct use of architectural terminology for a classically-styled building. Weaker responses tended to be descriptive and failed to address the specific requirements of the question ie composition and status.

Some less successful students gave a superficial description of the horizontal and vertical features and failed to relate them to the overall composition of Kedleston Hall. Others only discussed the central section and failed to relate it to the flanking wings.

Status was usually discussed competently. Students noted the imposing scale of the building, the double curved flight of steps leading to the *piano nobile*, the dome, the extravagant use of glass, the use of expensive stone for the building, including the ground floor rustication. The decorative features of statues and relief work in the central section were also discussed. The classical elements were recognised as reflecting the culture and educated taste of the patron and their position in society.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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