



Pearson
Edexcel

Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2019

Pearson Edexcel GCE A Level
In History of Art (9HT0)
Paper 2 Periods

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Introduction

Overall, we were delighted with the performance of students on the first year of this new specification. Students seemed to cope admirably with the marathon experience of a three-hour exam and the varied length and challenges of the different questions was more interesting and accessible for them than four 45 minute essays would have been. The addition of the requirement for critical texts certainly seems to have prompted wider reading which is good to see and hopefully good preparation for university life. Some students wanted to use these in every single answer though – and it might be worth reminding them, that they only really add value/earn credit in the long answers.

The final debate questions were undoubtedly the jewel in the crown of this new paper. Some of the answers were simply superb with carefully selected works, fantastic wider contextual evidence and insightful critical responses. Students enjoyed the freedom to select the works they wanted to explore to suit the question and to build their own argument. Hopefully the move away from the prescription of '3 works' will also reassure teachers: in the case of students who used works which were not valid, examiners were instructed to read around these parts of the response rather than automatically deducting marks. The short questions were accessible to all and offered a good warm up exercise, although the ability of a candidate to select relevant information was the main differentiator here. The part c) obviously offered a mid-point in the length and demand, but, as made clear in the support material for the specification, we were not expecting students to write a full essay in 20-25 minutes, but rather simply to get on with exploring and evaluating their chosen works in response to the question.

C1 Renaissance

Part a) and Part b): The challenge of these short questions was for candidates to select the relevant points from their knowledge of an appropriate work to answer the question. Too often, weaker candidates simply wrote everything they knew about the work, harking back to GCSE style learning. These answers do not need to be an essay, nor to have introductions or conclusions, indeed the most successful candidates wrote succinctly: selecting accurate and precise detail from the work and then explaining its significance in the impact of the patron (part a) or how it represented the sitter (part b). Selection was a very important key to success here: most had a range of choices for part a) but often picked works where the impact of the patron was limited or less easy to gauge/explain quickly which obviously reduced their chance of success.

The most popular choices for part a) were Michelangelo **David** or Donatello **David**. Some students wrote very effectively about Michelangelo **Pieta** and his **Moses** too. For part b) Bellini **Doge Loredan** and Donatello **Gattamelata** were the most frequent choices we saw. Across the entire cohort, only one student wrote about Donatello **St George** which was highlighted throughout all the specification support material as being too early for this period. For part b) there were just a couple of rubric infringements, where one or two students ignored the requirement to select a Venetian portrait (which can include

Mantuan or Paduan works) and they were unfortunately unable to score any points for Leonardo **Mona Lisa**.

Part c): This architecture question was straightforward and asked each candidate to again be specific about the detail of each building and then to evaluate its significance. Some candidates wasted time by comparing and contrasting their chosen structures and therefore never managed to demonstrate good or detailed/accurate knowledge required for the top Levels. Others were keen to demonstrate their learning of critical texts, but again this took time away from the focus of the question which was to explore and evaluate the design and composition of the building. Introductions and conclusions were, almost always, generalised and added nothing to a candidate's score. This time would have been better spent on the analysis of the buildings.

There were few validity infractions, although **Villa Madama** was problematic as candidates struggled to say much about the building within the time period allowed for this Period. The most popular options were, unsurprisingly, the Michelozzo **Palazzo Medici** in Florence and Bon **Ca' d'Oro** in Venice. Candidates knew both buildings well and many integrated superb and insightful detail into their responses. Weaker candidates were less precise – in many ways, this question builds on their skills developed through the Visual Analysis part of this specification and a similarly methodical approach was helpful.

Part d): There were some exceptional answers to this question. Candidates explored the statement in a wide variety of ways which was exactly what we hoped for. Some argued that Rome was indeed the place where the Renaissance found its most 'pure expression' because in Florence, the Renaissance was combined with ideas from International Gothic, and in Venice with ideas from the north and the east. Others argued that 'pure expression' was better placed in Florence because it showed the early experiments and ideals of the style. Others argued that it was Michelangelo who best showed the 'pure expression' of the Renaissance and that it mattered not whether he was working in Florence or in Rome. Others approached the question by date, and argued that Rome was the most 'pure' expression because it was the synthesis of all that had gone before.

Candidates did much better when they defined their terms in their introduction – either Renaissance and/or pure – as they then had a clear debate and direction. This clearly also allowed them to select works for their argument more effectively. This was an important element of this question. AO1 refers to the selection of knowledge to show understanding as well as AO3 requiring a reasoned argument. Thus, those candidates who simply ignored the question and wrote a pre-planned essay or a narrative account of the story of the development of the Renaissance received disappointing scores. This was a real shame because in many cases, they were clearly articulate and knowledgeable, but again, lacked the confidence to leave the learnt scripts of GCSE behind and move on to the debate and rigour that is expected at A Level. Some candidates failed to achieve a high AO2 score because they name checked a large number of works, but failed to explore or analyse them in sufficient depth to explore how/why they demonstrated 'pure expression' in terms of their composition, handling of colour, space etc.

This question referred to 'the Renaissance' as a Period and the bullet point guidance required them to explore named works of art. As explained in all the initial material and

training on this specification, a 'named work' is not necessarily one by a specified artist – but it must give the examiner enough detail to identify which work they are discussing. 'Works of art' means painting and sculpture (or 2D/3D) not architecture, but, as long as they explored some works of art, candidates were also free to explore architecture – and many used the Tempietto to great effect. However, if the original statement had said Renaissance **art**, then only 2D/3D works would have been valid (see the Baroque question as an example). Again, this distinction has been clearly made throughout all the initial material and we saw no students struggle with this, but some teachers have asked for clarification.

C2 The Baroque

Part a) and Part b): The challenge of these short questions was for candidates to select the relevant points from their knowledge of an appropriate work to answer the question. Too often, weaker candidates simply wrote everything they knew about the work, harking back to GCSE style learning. These answers do not need to be an essay, nor to have introductions or conclusions, indeed the most successful candidates wrote succinctly: selecting accurate and precise detail from the work and then explaining its significance. For the first part, they needed to select a work which gave plenty of scope for discussion of the impact of the location and for the second to explore the meaning of their mythological work.

There were very few invalid works chosen by candidates, although a few Italian/religious works made their way into part b) and some declared that their chosen work for part a) was not affected by its location and went on to describe it nevertheless. These answers could not receive any credit. The most popular choices for part a) were Bernini **Ecstasy of St Theresa** and **St Longinus**. For part b) students engaged impressively with both Rubens **Allegory of Peace and War** and Puget **Milo of Crotona**, showing excellent knowledge and an ability to select information wisely and concisely.

Part c): As for the previous option, this question generated some good responses, although again, with only two buildings and no comparison required, many wasted time with general introductions explaining why religious buildings were important in Catholic Europe during the 17th century. The most effective responses simply got going with an accurate and detailed discussion of their first building, evaluating its significance as they went through, before moving on to a similar approach for their second building.

The most popular Italian choices were Bernini **Sant' Andrea al Quirinale** or Borromini **San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane**. Outside Italy, there was an interesting range of choices including Mansart **Val de Grâce** in Paris, Huyssens **San Carlo Borromeo Church** in Antwerp and Cano façade of **Granada Cathedral** in Spain.

Part d): There were some fantastic responses to this question. As in Question 1, those candidates who defined what they thought was meant by the 'illusion of movement' in their introduction seemed to go on to write much more confident essays with a clear sense of argument and appropriate selection of works. Many explored the importance of movement in the work of both Bernini and Caravaggio as expected. Some went on to

consider that while Bernini's movement spread out to include and embrace the viewer, Caravaggio's was often most effective when it was a single frozen moment. Others explored the idea of the movement through life or time, using the still life works by Zurbaran and Cotan to very good effect. Some challenged the question by arguing that, although the 'illusion of movement' was important, the essential quality of Baroque art was stirring emotion in the viewer. Some were able to harness this to their main argument so that movement, whether in the work or of the viewer, was fundamental to the art of the period.

A less successful approach was to list works where movement either could, or could not be seen, and then conclude to agree with the statement in part. It is important that candidates explore the formal choices of the artists in the works they select as well as the range of other influential factors that gives strength to the synoptic quality of their essays. We saw some excellent integration of factors such as location, patronage, scale and context and this made for very strong responses. In general, candidates answering this question seemed to feel less need to revert to pre-learnt answers than for Question 1 which was good to see. Critical texts were often very well used and formed evidence of good wider reading. Hopefully, this means that candidates who have successfully completed this qualification will be well suited to further independent study at university if they so choose. This question was on 'Baroque art' and so architectural examples would not have earned extra credit. Across the entire cohort, only two students included architecture in their essay and neither used just architecture. Examiners were instructed to read around this and give credit to the valid discussion of Baroque art. This meant that both of these students were still able to score at their full potential.

C3 Rebellion and Revival

Part a) and Part b): The challenge of these short questions was for candidates to select the relevant points from their knowledge of an appropriate work to answer the question. Too often, weaker candidates simply wrote everything they knew about the work, harking back to GCSE style learning. These answers do not need to be an essay, nor to have introductions or conclusions, indeed the most successful candidates wrote succinctly: selecting accurate and precise detail from the work and then explaining its significance. In part a) on this question, students needed to draw on their understanding of the genre and really on their skills of visual analysis learnt for the first paper. Therefore, they needed to select ways in which space had been depicted such as perspective/s, overlapping, composition, etc not simply to describe the iconography of the work.

The most popular choices for part a) were Holman Hunt **Our English Coasts** and Monet **Impression: Sunrise**. The **Albert Memorial** was the stand out favourite for part b) but again, those who simply described it in general terms could not achieve a Level 3 score. Gilbert's **Shaftesbury Memorial Fountain** at Piccadilly Circus was an alternative, and often very successful, choice for this part.

Part c): The requirement for two public buildings posed no problems for students on this question. All had been well prepared and had good knowledge on two appropriate buildings, although some were less successful at selecting relevant knowledge and

evaluating it succinctly. Introductions giving a general introduction to the changes and demands of the second half of the nineteenth century were often too vague to earn credit. Garnier **Opera** and Paxton **Crystal Palace** were the most popular choices. Both are obviously large buildings and students at the top end were able to explore the design of the whole building rather than simply describe the façade (particularly in the case of the **Opera**). On **Crystal Palace**, some wasted time with a long explanation of Paxton's background as a gardener, rather than exploring the detail of the design and structure.

Part d): Again, this question was superbly answered by many students. Some argued that it was class not gender that was the most controversial subject, and others that it was the style that was the most controversial. Students who thought through the debate before writing performed more strongly than those who saw the question as an opportunity just to compare and contrast Manet's **Olympia** and Cabanel's **Birth of Venus**. A strong introduction which outlined their understanding of the terms was usually a good indicator of future success. There was a tendency in these answers to stray into long passages of narrative description on a work of art (particularly Hunt **Awakening Conscience**) without linking back to the question, analysing the formal features or securing the work within their debate.

Stronger answers looked at the wider environment, such as exhibition success, social context and influences around their key works rather than just at the content of the painting itself. Selection of works was again important: the stronger responses used Cabanel as a counter to the controversy around the female nude rather than a demonstration of it. Some argued that the dates were significant to identifying what was the most controversial element, suggesting that Courbet **Stonebreakers** placed class as central in the years after the revolutions, then style and finally the female figure in the later years. Almost all candidates successfully managed to explore examples from both Britain and France and made some interesting analysis of sculpture in addition to painting. Many commented insightfully on the different challenges and responses across the channel and used their critical texts (particularly Baudelaire and Ruskin) to very good effect.

C4: Early European Modernism

Part a) and Part b): The challenge of these short questions was for candidates to select the relevant points from their knowledge of an appropriate work to answer the question. Too often, weaker candidates simply wrote everything they knew about the work, harking back to GCSE style learning. These answers do not need to be an essay, nor to have introductions or conclusions, indeed the most successful candidates wrote succinctly: selecting accurate and precise detail from the work and then explaining its significance. Brancusi **The Kiss** or **Adam and Eve**, Epstein, **Rock Drill**, Giacometti **Woman with her throat cut** and Boccioni **Unique Forms of Continuity in Space** were all popular choices for part a) on innovation and/or experimentation. Students who wrote about both versions of **Rock Drill** made their jobs harder (and ours!). As the question clearly stated that only one work should be used here, examiners were instructed to select the stronger response and credit accordingly. In part b) Kirchner **Street Scene, Berlin** made a frequent

appearance and was well used, but candidates needed to make clear which version they were using. Dix and Grosz were often very well used, as was Boccioni.

Part c): Almost all candidates wrote confidently about two domestic buildings in response to this question. Le Corbusier **Villa Savoye** in Paris and Rietveld **Schroder House** in Utrecht were the most popular choices. Stronger candidates wrote with carefully detailed evidence and explored the significance of the design and structure very impressively. Weaker candidates tended to tell the story of the widow Schroder and Mrs Savoye's desire for hygiene which tended to be both a distraction and time waster. A few candidates wrote about the **Barcelona Pavilion** or **Bauhaus** school building which were not valid as domestic buildings.

Part d): This question provoked a wide range of debate, some of which was truly inspiring to read. Most candidates explored the obvious impact of technology on Futurism, but many went much further, articulating how the period of such rapid change provoked a fundamental change in the ways of seeing and need for a new kind of painting and sculpture. These students explored the impact of the camera, cinema and new transport to change the options for artists in ways that went far beyond subject matter but into the locations they chose to work, sources of inspiration and their developments of new techniques. Many students explored too, how the technology was both advantageous and problematic, dividing their essays between the positive (new opportunities) and the negative (the war). Weaker students often looked only at the question of subject matter, presuming that if a work did not show technology, it was not influenced by it.

The only real problems came when students declared early in their essay that technology was not the most important influence and then proceeded to write a pre-prepared essay on the importance of 'primitivism'. Whilst it is absolutely not a problem for a candidate to disagree with the statement, it is important that they keep the thrust of the question central to their response and explore how technology might have been important to each of their selected works as well as investigating other influences. The selection of art works was important here to ensure that students had sufficient material to use on their chosen key works. Critical texts (often Robert Hughes and Henri Bergson) were well used and there was some superb discussion of wider social and political contexts across Europe. Many students were able to create excellent synoptic responses and clearly enjoyed the opportunity to engage with a debate.

C5: Pop Life

Part a) and Part b): The challenge of these short questions was for candidates to select the relevant points from their knowledge of an appropriate work to answer the question. Too often, weaker candidates simply wrote everything they knew about the work, harking back to GCSE style learning. These answers do not need to be an essay, nor to have introductions or conclusions, indeed the most successful candidates wrote succinctly: selecting accurate and precise detail from the work and then explaining its significance. For part a) Smithson **Spiral Jetty**, Goldsworthy **Iceberg Star** and Holt **Sun Tunnels** were frequently and effectively cited. For part b) Hockney, **Mr and Mrs Clark and Percy** Emin

Everyone I have ever slept with and Ofili **No Woman No Cry** were all popular choices, but to earn marks in Level 3, candidates did need to select relevant information about the representation of the sitter in these portraits. In the Hockney examples in particular, candidates often failed to identify the sitter/s and produced only vague commentary around the figures.

Part c): This question was well answered by many. Students obviously enjoyed exploring and evaluating Moore **Piazza d'Italia** in New Orleans in particular. **City Hall, the National Theatre, Lloyds Building** and Graves **The Portland Building** also made frequent appearances. **Trellick Tower**, on the other hand, is not a public building and was not valid for this question. As with other part c) responses, introductions were often too general to earn credit and comparisons were not required and often proved a distraction from detail rather than a helpful elucidation. Critical texts are not required for this question and again, distracted students from the need for specific detail and their own evaluation of significance.

Part d): There were some superb responses to this question on 'social change'. Some candidates selected their works very effectively, using Ofili, Hockney, Warhol, Himid and Boyce to explore the response to both globalisation and multiculturalism. Some explored the differences between artists and art works in Britain and the USA, ending up with a final conclusion that these aspects of social change were more important in one country than the other. Others evaluated by date, suggesting (and successfully citing evidence to support their argument) that social change and/or globalisation/multiculturalism were more crucial at one end or other of the 1960-2015 time frame.

A few students were keen to write essays on commercialism and feminism and avoided the key argument set out in the question which was disappointing. In some cases, artists of nationality other than British or American were used. There is a huge range of suitable artists in both categories here and we would urge centres to explore artists who are clearly valid. As with other part d) questions on this paper, this question required an exploration of 'art' which was reinforced in the bullet point reminding students to write about 'named works of art'. In fact, we saw almost no problem with this but it is worth reminding future students that 'art' includes 2D/3D not buildings.

10-point Summary for future guidance:

1. For short questions (part a) and part b)), ensure the work is valid for the question and points are selected in response to the particular demands of the question.
2. Critical texts are only required in the long, part d) questions. They may, of course, be used elsewhere, but students should ensure that they are contributing to the relevance and detail of their response rather than detracting from it.
3. The part c) questions are not expected to be full essays and therefore introductions and conclusions are not required.
4. For part c) detailed comment and analysis of the works in accordance with the question is necessary for high marks, together with an evaluation of the significance. This can be done as a student moves through the work or in a final paragraph across the two works as preferred by the individual candidate.

5. For the long part d) questions, selection of appropriate works is essential.
6. Candidates must ensure that they analyse and discuss the detail of some of their works, including the use of formal features, context, patronage, location etc to create a synoptic response. However, this is not required for every work and candidates may find it useful to cite further works to add weight to their arguments with a more limited discussion.
7. Whilst candidates are free to agree or disagree with the statement in the question either in whole or in part, they must continue to engage with its premise throughout their essay. Those students who disagree with the statement, turn their back on it and revert to a pre-planned essay on another aspect or topic are likely to be disappointed with their final mark.
8. Candidates should make clear which question they are answering, particularly when using additional sheets of paper.
9. All students and teachers are reminded of the need to select key works which fall clearly within the date and location parameters for each period. These are clearly marked in the specification and support material and there is always plenty of choice. Examples which are of only marginal validity do not set students up for success in the examination.
10. All students are reminded too, of the distinction between art (works in 2D or 3D) and architecture in this specification. Bullet point guidance must always be followed but does not limit the students' response to only these works. (eg: you must refer to works by your Specified artist). The requirement for 'named works' is to allow the examiner to identify the work under discussion: it does not mean works by a specified artist.

