



General Certificate of Education

History of Art 1251

HART1 Visual Analysis and Interpretation

Report on the Examination

2009 examination - June series

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HART1 Visual Analysis and Interpretation

General

Candidates responded well to the question paper. Most candidates wrote essays which flowed and showed good development of their ideas.

However, some candidates still offered rehearsed material without reference to the image and the question and introduced art historical terms, which were often misleading. Less successful candidates often relied on narrative speculation, especially in Question 2.

There were some scripts where either the handwriting was bordering on the illegible or was very small. The quality of written communication was also poor in quite a few scripts and often it was difficult to understand what was being communicated. However, the majority of the responses were of a high standard and demonstrated perceptive analyses of the given images.

Painting

Question 1

Joseph Wright of Derby, *An experiment on a Bird in an Air Pump*, 1768.

Describe the figures and their setting in this painting **and** analyse how the artist has used light and tone to create mood.

Generally this question was comprehensively answered and many candidates gained their highest marks in response. Some candidates were very articulate and wrote with clarity and perception. The most successful responses were essays in which the analysis of light and tone to create mood was answered in conjunction with the description of the figures and their setting. There was often an accurate, full description of the pose, dress and expression of each figure plus the apparatus and what could be seen of the setting, although few mentioned the gap left at the table for the viewer to enter. Again, the most successful candidates identified the light sources, analysed carefully how light was used to draw attention to the experiment, the faces and emotions of the onlookers as well as creating a mood full of drama, suspense and anticipation. Most candidates, even the less able, identified the moon seen through the window and made a comment about the mysterious effect created, although there was often irrelevant speculation from candidates that it was an illegal animal experiment which had to be carried out at night. Many candidates referred to ways in which light modelled form, showed colour and often included a reference to Caravaggio. Some gave definitions of chiaroscuro and tenebrism but did not make reference to the ways in which light was used to create mood in the painting. Quite a few fanciful responses were seen which had little connection to the image they had been asked to analyse and describe.

Sculpture

Question 2

Auguste Rodin, *Balzac*, 1898.

Describe the portrayal of the figure in this sculpture **and** comment on the artist's interpretation.

Some candidates scored high marks for this question and gave a full description of the portrayal of the figure. They covered the majority of the points on the artist's interpretation, although few stated that his head was "leonine". Most candidates referred to Balzac being wrapped in a

cloak with only the head exposed, but less able candidates did not go on to describe the details of the head or the pose evident under the cloak. Some responses suggested that he was a tramp, homeless or cold and wasted time on developing these ideas. Obviously some candidates had learnt a certain number of facts regarding bronze sculpture in general and were anxious to state them although the question did not require them to do so. Overall, the responses to this question were less confident and the visual analysis of the image not as perceptive. There was some misunderstanding of the term "patination" although most referred to the green colour of the sculpture.

Subjects and Genres

Question 3

Robert Smythson, *Hardwick Hall*, c.1597.

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

There were many successful responses to this question in which candidates thoroughly analysed the composition of the building using accurate architectural terminology and the status was perceptively commented upon. Most candidates referred to the symmetry, the articulated façade and the windows, although some had difficulty identifying their alignment and regularity and wrote copiously on the number of windowpanes in each window and the number of windows on each floor. Less able candidates referred to it being a classical building and repeated rehearsed responses which had little to do with Hardwick Hall. Bays, where they were mentioned, were often discussed in great detail. More successful candidates interwove points on status with the analysis of the composition of the building. The lack of an obvious doorway confused some candidates who presupposed that it was within the colonnade.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.