

AP[®] ART HISTORY

2014 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 8

The painter Jacques-Louis David made the following statement to his pupils in speaking of the work shown, *The Battle of the Sabines*.

“I want to work in the pure Greek style. I feed my eyes on antique statues, I even have the intention of imitating some of them. The Greeks had no scruples about copying a composition, a gesture, a type that had already been accepted and used. They put all their attention and all their art on perfecting an idea that had already been conceived.”

With which art-historical movement is David associated? Making specific reference to the quotation and to the work shown, analyze how both reflect the ideals of this art-historical movement. (10 minutes)

Background

This question asks students to correctly identify the art-historical movement with which Jacques-Louis David is associated as Neoclassicism. Students are then asked to make specific reference to the quotation and to *The Battle of the Sabines* to analyze how both reflect the ideals of Neoclassicism. The intent of the question is to prompt students to analyze how statements made by an artist are visually expressed in the same artist's work.

Jacques-Louis David (1748–1825 C.E.) is one of the most celebrated Neoclassical painters. Inspired by Greek statuary and ancient texts, David championed the use in painting of Greek and Roman artistic forms as a means of instilling national pride and civic virtue in the French public.

Created in 1799 C.E. in France in the wake of the Reign of Terror, *The Battle of the Sabines* exemplifies the emotional intensity, moral fervor, and classical severity of David's Neoclassicism. David chose the subject of *The Battle of the Sabines* from the early history of Rome recounted in Livy's *History of Rome* and Plutarch's *Lives*. Specifically, David painted the battle that erupted following the abduction of the Sabine women by neighboring Romans. According to the story, Romulus and his followers did not have enough women to bear the children they needed to ensure the survival of their community. To remedy the problem, Romulus invited the neighboring Sabine tribe to a festival, at which he commanded the Romans to forcibly abduct as many unmarried Sabine women as they could carry. Three years later, the Sabines attacked Rome to rescue the captive women. The Sabine women, with babies in their arms, interposed themselves between their fathers and brothers on one side and their new husbands on the other in an attempt to establish peace. David's contemporaries understood the painting as an appeal for reconciliation following the Reign of Terror. More broadly, the work idealizes patriotism, self-sacrifice, and empathy, as evidenced by the central role of the Sabine women.

Yet while the painting depicts an event from Roman history, David's words reveal his intent “to work in the pure Greek style,” as exemplified by ancient Greek sculpture. For David and his fellow Neoclassicists, ancient Greece was perceived as the apogee of artistic production. In exhorting his students with these words to study and copy Greek works, David was encouraging them to seek the historical sources of classicism while underscoring the fundamental importance of copying in academic tradition. Just as ancient Greeks “had no scruples about copying” and “put all their attention and all their art on perfecting an idea that has already been conceived,” so should Neoclassical artists devote themselves to the study of great Greek works.

As such, the postures, proportions, and smooth sculptural quality of the male figures in *The Battle of the Sabines* were intentionally modeled by David on the idealized forms of ancient Greek sculpture. This

AP[®] ART HISTORY

2014 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 8 (continued)

conscious imitation of Greek art also informs the painting's frieze-like composition, minimal spatial depth, controlled brushwork, and somewhat limited color palette. These qualities, which derive from David's study of ancient Greek bas-reliefs, provide a legibility and iconic quality that is characteristic of Neoclassicism. David's intentional and scandalous depiction of the warriors fighting naked further highlights his devotion to the Neoclassical doctrine of purity of form, authenticity of appearance, and invention through imitation.

Two Tasks for Students

1. Correctly identify the art-historical movement with which David is associated as Neoclassicism.
2. Making specific reference to the quotation and the work shown, analyze how both reflect the ideals of Neoclassicism.

Points to Remember

This question asks students to combine skills of both formal and contextual analysis. Since students are given the title and artist of the work, they should be able to focus their responses on how the quotation and *The Battle of the Sabines* reflect the ideals of Neoclassicism.

Students must engage with the quotation and *The Battle of the Sabines*. A response that fails to do both is not fully answering the question. The highest score a response can earn if it does not discuss both the quotation and *The Battle of the Sabines* is 2 points.

The correct art-historical movement is Neoclassicism. The highest score a response can earn if the art-historical movement is not correctly identified is 2 points.

When granting partial credit, attention should be paid to the plausibility of the evidence cited for the incorrect art-historical movement and whether such evidence really could apply to the incorrect art-historical movement, the quotation, and to *The Battle of the Sabines*.

AP[®] ART HISTORY

2014 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 8 (continued)

Scoring Criteria

4 points

Response demonstrates thorough knowledge and understanding of the question.

The art-historical movement is correctly identified as Neoclassicism. The response makes specific reference to the quotation and to *The Battle of the Sabines* to analyze how both reflect the ideals of Neoclassicism. 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 art-historical movement is correctly identified as Neoclassicism. The response makes reference to the quotation and to *The Battle of the Sabines* to analyze how both reflect the ideals of Neoclassicism. However, the response may be somewhat unbalanced, with a stronger analysis of how either the quotation or *The Battle of the Sabines* reflect the ideals of Neoclassicism, although both are represented. It may include minor errors that have some effect on the analysis.

2 points

Response demonstrates some knowledge and understanding of the question.

The art-historical movement is correctly identified as Neoclassicism, although the identification may be implied rather than stated directly. The response makes reference to the quotation and/or to *The Battle of the Sabines* to discuss the ideals of Neoclassicism, but the discussion is less analytical than descriptive. It may be overly general, simplistic, or unbalanced. The response includes errors that affect the discussion.

OR

The art-historical movement is misidentified, but the evidence cited can reasonably be applied to the incorrect art-historical movement, to the quotation, and to *The Battle of the Sabines*.

NOTE: This is the highest score a response can earn if it does not correctly identify the art-historical movement as Neoclassicism **OR** if it does not make reference to both the quotation and to *The Battle of the Sabines*.

1 point

Response demonstrates little knowledge and understanding of the question.

The art-historical movement is correctly identified as Neoclassicism, but there is no other discussion of merit.

OR

The art-historical movement is misidentified, but the evidence cited can reasonably be applied either to the incorrect art-historical movement, to the quotation, or to *The Battle of the Sabines*.

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.

8. The painter Jacques-Louis David made the following statement to his pupils in speaking of the work shown, *The Battle of the Sabines*.

"I want to work in the pure Greek style. I feed my eyes on antique statues, I even have the intention of imitating some of them. The Greeks had no scruples about copying a composition, a gesture, a type that had already been accepted and used. They put all their attention and all their art on perfecting an idea that had already been conceived."

With which art-historical movement is David associated? Making specific reference to the quotation and to the work shown, analyze how both reflect the ideals of this art-historical movement. (10 minutes)

Jacques-Louis David is associated with the Neoclassical era of Art. Classical Art began with the Ancient Greeks, and as David points out he wants "to work in the pure Greek style". Also, he shows his intentions to be true in his painting by emulating figures from antiquity. The figures have perfectly anatomically correct bodies, they have traditional Roman headaddresses and shields with ~~the~~ the Captive work on one of them (alluding to Rome and the story of Remus and Remus). Additionally, the figures are made, as were figures depicted in ancient Greece and Rome. Both the Romans and the Greeks copied art work of their times to perfect what had already been done and to create better images. David mentions this notion in his quote saying that "The Greeks had no scruples about copying a composition, a gesture, a type that had already been accepted and used. They put all their attention ~~on~~ and all their art on perfecting an idea that had already been conceived". The main idea of neoclassical artists were to bring back the values of Antiquity. To revive the heroic nature of Ancient Greece and Rome, and apply it to their times of war and life. In his painting, David cites traditional classical pieces of Greek art especially in the soldier in the front who is going to throw his spear. This representation is figurally in the same position as Zeus or Poseidon about to throw their lightning bolt or Triton in classical Greek sculpture and links the work of David to ~~the~~ Antiquity in the way as well.

Furthermore, the figures in David's piece are all idealized, reserved, aloof, and heroic as were traditional classical Greek pieces of art, and highly finished as were pieces from Antiquity. In this way David encompassed the ideals of the neoclassical era by relating highly finished Art back to that of Antiquity and hiding messages of modern conflict within the new art.

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE.

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With which art-historical movement is David associated? Making specific reference to the quotation and to the work shown, analyze how both reflect the ideals of this art-historical movement. (10 minutes)

Jacques-Louis David is associated with the movement of Neo-classicism. In the *Battle of the Sabines*, David represents the people of Sabine in Classical Greek attire and in idealized body forms. The soldiers are nude, idealized, and wearing Classical Greek weapons & armor which captures the Neoclassical ideals David wanted in his work. David says, "I feed my eyes on antique statues, I even have the intention of imitating some of them". This accurately represents Neoclassical ideals because during that time period there was a revival of Ancient Greek and imperial Rome qualities. The painting itself has idealized human forms, while also being aloof, in relaxed contraposto forms. The ancient architecture in the background shows David's want to revive antiquity. In the foreground is an idealized woman who is very restrained looking in her effort to break up the fighting. The woman on the floor with the bare chest could be a reference to the Aphrodite of Knidos with her subtle sensuality and "caught-in-the-moment", relaxed facial expression. David also says and shows in his piece, "They put all their attention and all their art on perfecting an idea that had already been conceived". This shows that David wants to do everything to his best ability and bring back the Classical Greek values he loves into the new Neoclassical time period ~~which is~~ ^{he takes part} in.

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Neoclassical painter Jacques-Louis David was at the forefront of ~~the Neoclassical Movement~~ his movement. He clearly describes his philosophy and shows his approach, ~~by~~ approach to painting with this speech. He ~~very roughly~~ brings sculptural elements of Greek sculpture to his painting. He shows us how the drapery ~~of Greek art~~ of Greek sculpture looks in painted form with the woman in the center who ~~steps~~ steps forth. ~~Her~~ Her posture almost copies the ~~idea~~ posture of the Nike of Samothrace, ~~like he intends it to~~ which is an example of his copying of great composition. He also includes ~~Greek~~ a Greek subject which shows how he intends to ~~create~~ create as ~~new~~ classical styled art as possible. This idea ~~is~~ is central to Neoclassical art, and he ~~sum~~ summarizes it in this single paragraph, and a painting to show

AP[®] ART HISTORY

2014 SCORING COMMENTARY

Question 8

Overview

This 10-minute question asked students to correctly identify the art-historical movement with which Jacques-Louis David is associated as Neoclassicism. Students were then asked to make specific reference to the quotation and to *The Battle of the Sabines* to analyze how both reflect the ideals of Neoclassicism. The intent of the question was to prompt students to analyze how statements made by an artist are visually expressed in the same artist's work.

Sample: 8A

Score: 4

The art-historical movement is correctly identified as Neoclassicism. The response makes specific references both to the painting and to the quotation. The response demonstrates that David's admiration for Greek art resulted in his "emulating figures from antiquity" with "perfectly anatomically correct bodies" that are "idealized, reserved, aloof, and heroic." The response identifies various other classical elements in David's painting, including historically accurate clothing and objects. A specific "classical piece of Greek art . . . Zues [sic] or Poseidon about to throw their Lightning Bolt or Triton" is cited as a possible source for David's foreground figure. The response analyzes multiple aspects of the quotation and connects these aspects to Neoclassical art in general as well as to David's painting more specifically. The response acknowledges that the artist's emphasis on the role of copying and perfecting from pre-existing classical models led to "highly finished Art" that "bring back the values of Antiquity" and "retrieve the heroic nature of Ancient Greece and Rome." In this way, the response demonstrates thorough knowledge and understanding of the question.

Sample: 8B

Score: 3

The art-historical movement is correctly identified as Neoclassicism. The response makes specific references both to the painting and to the quotation. The response identifies classical elements in the painting such as "Classical Greek Attire" along with the weapons, armor, and "idealized body forms" that are "aloof," "nude," and "in relaxed contraposto [sic] forms." The response analyzes some aspects of the quotation and connects these aspects to Neoclassical art as well as to David's painting. The response acknowledges that David's interest in imitating and perfecting antique sculpture is part of Neoclassicism's "revival of ancient Greek and imperial Rome qualities." The response also points out that David's interest in classical art as "perfecting an idea that had already been conceived" led the artist to want to "bring back the Classical Greek values he loves." However, the specific sculpture cited to demonstrate these practices in David's work—the *Aphrodite of Knidos*—is not particularly apt. The response is also somewhat unbalanced with a stronger analysis of the painting than the quotation. In this way, the response demonstrates sufficient knowledge and understanding of the question.

Sample: 8C

Score: 2

The art-historical movement is correctly identified as Neoclassicism. The response makes references both to the painting and to the quotation, but the discussion is less analytical than descriptive. The response points out that David "brings the sculptural elements of Greek sculpture" to his painting, as is evident in the drapery and the central female figure with "the posture of the Nike of Samothrace." The response identifies this connection as an example of the copying emphasized in the quotation. The response indicates that the choice of "a Greek subject" leads to "as classical styled art as possible." However, the

**AP[®] ART HISTORY
2014 SCORING COMMENTARY**

Question 8 (continued)

response is somewhat general and unbalanced with more discussion of the painting than the quotation. In this way, the response demonstrates only some knowledge and understanding of the question.