

Assignment 1

Please choose one of the following essay prompts.

Conduct an iconographic analysis on a work of art made during the Renaissance. Identify at least five objects or subjects in the work that act as symbols and discuss their connotative and denotative meanings. Keep in mind that your intention is to unpack the meaning of the work in a clear, concise graphic that helps the viewer understand it better. You may find a dictionary of symbols in art or your textbook to be useful in providing interpretations for symbols used in a work.

Next, create an infographic that combines an image of the entire work with the explanations of the iconographic meaning you have written. You may want to include smaller, magnified details of important parts of the work, or reference other works/ concepts through images. Be sure to create an organized system that carefully connects visual with textual information and meaning. Include a summary paragraph considering the work's historical context, style, and artist. The infographic should include at least two CMS footnote citations from different credible, scholarly sources. These footnotes need to appear alongside your infographic (on the front, if you're making a poster, or as End Notes if you're creating a Powerpoint).

- or -

Read Erwin Panofsky's *Jan Van Eyck's Arnolfini Portrait*.

Choose an Early Renaissance painting and consider the artist's use of iconography, a.k.a. "disguised symbolism." Panofsky suggested a three step approach to developing an understanding of a work through its iconology: 1. Consider the practical - the general sense of the painting, where your eye is drawn, and what elements your eye returns to repeatedly; 2. Identify the objects and figures depicted in the painting, and decode their symbolic meaning by comparing them to other cultural sources (for example, paintings by the artist's contemporaries, or literary works); 3. Consider the system of symbols that the artist uses to convey meaning and what that system says about the culture that produced it. Use this three step approach to discuss the general sense of the painting, the painting's symbolic meaning, and what that system of meaning reflects about the culture (place and time period) in which the artist lived and worked. Identify at least five objects depicted in the painting and discuss the connotative and denotative meanings of those symbols. Are there other interpretations, perhaps even contrasting interpretations, of this same work? Does the work fit into a geographic and/or historical tradition, or is it unusual in its imagery? Why?