

Visual Analysis 2

Respond to one of the following essay prompts for the second Visual Analysis assignment.

Option 1

Use a feminist approach to compare and contrast a work by a female and a male artist working in the same artistic period. Consider who the artist assumes the viewer of the work to be, and from whom's perspective the action or story unfolds. Who is the main subject, and what significance does their gender play in understanding the meaning of the work? What subjects exhibit power in the work, and how is that power understood (for example, logical, rebellious, odd, or conforming)? Do all subjects depicted in the work exhibit agency (power, freedom of choice, action)? Is there a gender division in the display of authority and/or action as depicted? Consider whether the work reinforces or critically evaluates gender stereotypes? Finally, discuss how the works were received, and whether the two works were equally valued in their time.

Option 2

Nicolas Poussin's work exemplified what the French Academy considered to be "good" art just as academicians had formulated and prioritized artistic expression through the Hierarchy of Genres. Discuss Poussin's work relevant to arguments evaluating the merits of various forms of art (painting, sculpture, architecture) and their subjects (portraiture, landscape, genre, history) from the Renaissance through the 18th century. What position did Poussin's work take in the debate and how was it used by the French Academy to assert its goals for art making? Choose an exemplary work by Poussin to illustrate your observations and describe key ideas in the debate.

Option 3

Read the first chapter in John Berger's *Ways of Seeing*.

Consider Frans Hals' *Regentesses of the Old Men's Alms House* and *Regents of the Old Men's Alms House*, 1664 as they are discussed by Berger. Do you feel that the artist has presented his sitters in a favorable or unfavorable manner? Compare the work to Hals' earlier group portrait, *Officers of the Haarlem Militia Company of Saint Adrian*, 1627. How did the artist's approach and intention change in the later work? What would his motivation have been for portraying his subjects favorably or unfavorably? Discuss Berger's concept of "mystification" and the meaning that has traditionally been explained away in the portrait of the Regentesses. What problems does Berger identify with mystification, and how does he urge the viewer to respond?

Option 4

Jacques-Louis David and Francisco de Goya present two very different images of warfare in *Oath of the Horatii*, 1784 and *Third of May 1808*, 1814. Compare and contrast each work. How do the works differ in approach, intention and style? How are they similar? Discuss how these differences and similarities relate to the artistic movements of Neoclassicism and Romanticism. What circumstances or events influenced the artist's choices, and what did the artist wish to convey about their subjects?