



AP[®] Art History 2002 Sample Student Responses

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Influenced greatly by the Impressionists

6. The city of Calais commissioned this sculpture to memorialize an event from the city's past.

Identify the sculptor. Discuss ways in which the sculptor's conception, which was not acceptable to city officials, broke with traditional notions of heroic sculpture. (10 minutes)

This piece, by Auguste Rodin, is called the Burgbers of Calais. It depicted a heroic tale where a handful of men chose to give up their lives in order to save the lives of Calais' citizens. The piece itself depicts their march through the streets to what they thought would be their execution. This piece was unacceptable to city officials because it does not ~~depict~~ portray the "burgbers" of Calais as heroic, valiant men. They are obviously deeply troubled men. ^{Today's} Rodin used deep drillwork in order to make shadows stand out around the men's eyes. The group seem hopeless and downcast. They do not go to meet their ~~deaths~~ presumed deaths without fear, but rather they ~~seem~~ are unmanned by their fate. For example one man holds his head in despair and lets out a silent scream of agony. City officials wanted stoic, idealized figures - certainly not scared, older men. Additionally, Rodin cut off the base of the statue, instead of putting it on a pedestal above the ~~group~~ crowd, so that viewers would feel more connected with the piece. ~~They~~ Viewers could walk around it. Rodin's conception of the piece was unacceptable because he portrayed the individuals suffering from real fear, rather than the ~~classic~~ ~~are~~ heroes of classical Greek that the city officials envisioned. Furthermore, the clothing of the men did not fit in with the traditional concept of heroism. Their clothes are drab and ordinary. Most heroic sculpture depicted people nude, or at least in rich robes to depict not only ^a heroic ~~the~~ inner life but also a rich outer life.

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It is evident why the sculptor's conception broke with traditional notions of heroic sculpture. First and foremost, the figures in the sculpture are bare footed. Most of the figures look distraught and weep, and some even look sad and hurt. ~~When heroes are usually~~ When sculptures of heroes are usually made, the heroes are idealized and are portrayed as being strong and flawless. They are usually clothed nicely and are shown with a stern or sometimes happy look as oppose to looking hurt or sad. These are some of the reasons why this piece broke with traditional notions of heroic sculpture. The sculptor portrayed the people ^{not} after the event instead of portraying them when they look "ideally pleasant".