



AP[®] Art History 2002 Sample Student Responses

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Question 9

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Hanna Hoch - The Last Beer-Belly Epoch
of Weimar Germany

René
Ceci N'est Pas Une Pipe - Magritte
(Surrealist)

9. Works of art often combine images with text.

Choose and fully identify two specific works made after 500 C.E. that combine images with text. The works must come from different art historical periods. Note: Do not choose works with text consisting only of names, labels, or artists' signatures.

Discuss the relationship between text and image in the two works you have chosen. (30 minutes)

A significant integration of images with text is a relatively recent development in Art History, only coming into its own in the 20th Century. Perhaps the most outstanding example is the work of the Dada collageist Hannah Hoch, and in particular her "The Last Beer-Belly Epoch of Weimar Germany." She uses text to reinforce the meaning of her images. In contrast, the Surrealist René Magritte uses the interplay to confuse rather than confirm in his work "Ceci N'est Pas Une Pipe". Each approach is unique to the artist.

In Höch's Collage, completed during the short-lived German Weimar Republic in the 1920s, she uses photographs of prominent political figures ~~like~~ like Lenin, Trotsky, and German leaders, alongside maps and pictures of modern devices to illustrate cultural and political decay in the Weimar Republic. She uses text to reinforce this message by using the word Dada over and over again to reinforce the absurdity of life in Germany at the time. She also uses the names of politicians and newspaper headlines to reinforce her message of the urgent need for political change in Germany. Here, image and text confirm and reinforce one another, conveying the same message, which would be incomplete in the absence of one or the other element.

In stark contrast, Magritte's ~~painting~~ ^{painting} executed in the 1940s of a bryar pipe with the words "Ceci n'est pas une pipe" (this is not a pipe) painted below, exhibits no such harmonious correlation between text and image. Rather, the text and

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image are openly contradictory and mutually exclusive ~~to~~ understanding. Whether one believes ~~in~~ the meticulously illusionistically rendered pipe or the text to be correct, both cannot be true. This presents a Surrealist message in which common and traditional assumptions must be rejected. Magritte gives us no clue as to which conclusion is correct, but rather forces us to accept that there is no way to resolve. This sort of "cognitive dissonance" is a common theme ~~in~~ Surrealist, and particularly Magritte's, art. Here, as distinct from Hoch's work, text and image conflict rather than collude.

In each case, the artist's use of text with image is consistent with his or her associated school. Dada advocated a childlike and preeminently simple approach to solving problems, be they artistic

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or political, and as such Höch's ~~is~~ straightforward alliance of image and text is right in line with this concept. ~~The~~ Surrealism, on the other hand, evoked the world of dreams and the subconscious, where no such simple resolutions were to be had. Here too, Magritte captured the essence of this guiding principle. In each case, the artist uses a combination of the two media to effect ~~in portraying the~~ consistent with their styles' underlying principles.

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Works of art often combine images with text. By incorporating art and pictures with text, the meaning of the work can be more clearly expressed. As it is said, "A picture is worth a thousand words." Two pieces that ~~incorporate~~ combine images with text are the Book of Kells and Lichtenstein's "Oh Jeff... I love you... but..."

The Book of Kells was written in the Carolingian period. It incorporated images that corresponded with the text. The image offered a visualization to the reader. Decorations were made in the enlarged first letter of the page. This was a circular relationship: The ^{ext} work embodied the art and the art embodied the text. In Lichtenstein's "Oh Jeff... I love you... but..." the art

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used popular culture and transformed it into an art style, hence the name Pop Art. The piece portrays a woman on the telephone and her dialogue in a bubble. The style derives inspiration particularly from comic books. It uses bold black lines as outlines for her face, hair, hands, and neck, while the telephone is a solid black with ~~white~~ 'dials' depicted white. The woman has blonde hair, reflective of the preferred color of hair during the time. The painting depicts also the comedy of pop^{lar} culture and satirizes social problems.

By combining images with text, artists can portray their art more clearly and expressively. Whether the subject matter is serious or not, words and text create ^{appealing} good art.