

ARTH207: Writing Assessment #2 Guide to Responding

Because this is an essay assignment, there can be many acceptable approaches. Depending on which pair you chose to write about, please see the bullets below for some of the major points that should have made it into your essay. (These points are just some of the more obvious points. It is okay—indeed, it is expected—that you will make points that are not listed below. Just use these as general guidelines for the kinds of points you will make in your essay.) Remember, a comparison essay requires more than just description or a listing of similarities and differences. You must use careful observations and comparisons to make a broader point about Rococo art as it relates to the Baroque; your observations should help you argue the broader point you want to make.

1. *The Meeting* by Jean-Honoré Fragonard and *The Nightwatch* by Rembrandt van Rijn

Identifying Information

- A) *The Meeting* from the Progress of Love series, Jean-Honoré Fragonard, 1771–1773, Rococo
- B) *The Nightwatch*, Rembrandt van Rijn, 1642, Dutch Baroque

Similarities

- Each painting shows figures in elaborate, stage-like settings.
- Figures do not seem to be posing; rather, they are caught in the moment.
- Both convincingly depict space and the human figure.
- Both artists construct dynamic scenes with many diagonals running at varied angles.
- Both images have an intricate layering of space, with different details taking up different points back in space.

Differences

- Rembrandt's painting depicts real people; Fragonard's is a fantasy.
- Indoors vs. outdoors
- Rembrandt's painting uses darker colors and a more limited palette than does Fragonard's.
- Rembrandt's use of light is more dramatic—in the tradition of Caravaggio.
- Fragonard's theme is love and pleasure; Rembrandt's is practical and civic.
- Fragonard evokes the classical world (see the sculpture); Rembrandt's work is entirely grounded in the present.
- Rembrandt's painting was made for a town hall; Fragonard's was made for a personal, elegant room.

Larger Ideas/Themes

- Fragonard's painting epitomizes, in style and subject, the tastes of the Rococo period: decadence, pleasure, beauty, gaiety, etc.
- Compared with Rembrandt's much more sober style, Fragonard's painting shows the radical shift in tastes during the Rococo period.
- Different places in which these would be viewed reveals the character of the culture that produced each of these. While the Baroque era was more public and civic-minded, Rococo art is of the private world and for private enjoyment. The styles used for each of these paintings support this.