

ARTH207: Writing Assessment #3 Guide to Responding

Because this is an essay assignment and you can choose any work of art to write about, there can be many acceptable approaches. Depending on which work of art you chose to write about, you may have very different things to say. To help you check your own work, see the bullets below for just a couple samples.

1. *Oath of the Horatii* by Jacques Louis David, 1784, Neoclassicism in France General Points

- A striking, heroic image that tells the story of the Horatii family, setting out to war
- A story that places ideals above personal desires
- The style reinforces the mood of the story. All is orderly, rational, and heroic.
- The style is also classical: The story is from the ancient world, figures are dressed in ancient garb, the architectural setting is classical, and even the arrangement of the figures in the scene recalls classical relief sculpture.

How is this representative of Neoclassical art?

- Every detail in the image recalls the classical world.
- Not only are heroic details emphasized (the heroic oath of the men) but even nonheroic things are included to serve as a negative comparison (the emotional women to the right).
- The painting style is clear and crisp, in contrast to the more painterly styles of such artists as Rembrandt and Fragonard.
- This work, in subject and style, is perfectly in line with interests and aims of Neoclassical French culture in general.

2. *The Crucifixion of St. Peter* by Caravaggio, 1601, Baroque in Italy

General Points

- A dramatic scene in subject matter and style
- The story is religious, and the emotional depiction of the story fits with the needs of the Counter-Reformation.
- Use of chiaroscuro, a trademark of Caravaggio and effective in creating drama
- Sharp diagonals and an unstable composition relate the viewer to the scene, making it seem more real.
- Religious images and people are brought down to earth and made human—someone to whom we can relate.

How is this representative of Baroque art?

- Every detail in the image seems to heighten our engagement with the image and our sense of empathy. This heightened engagement connects us more to the Christian story and therefore furthers the cause of the Counter-Reformation Church.
- Also, typical of Baroque art is the sense of drama, movement, instability, and action throughout the composition.
- Caravaggio is an excellent example of a representative work of Baroque art because he influenced other artists and regions in the Baroque period—so much so that other artists were called “Caravaggisti.”
- This work, in subject and style, is perfectly in line with interests and aims of Baroque art in Italy and anticipates later movements to come.