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# AP<sup>®</sup> Art History

## Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary

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#### **Free Response Question 5**

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**Question 5: Attribution****5 points**

**(A)** Correctly attributes the work shown to the specific African culture in which it was created. **1 point**

**Examples of acceptable responses include the following:**

- The work was created by the Kongo people.
- Also acceptable: a culture from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

**(B)** Accurately uses ONE example of specific visual evidence to justify the attribution by describing relevant similarities between the work shown and other work of the same type created by the same African culture. **1 point**

**Examples of acceptable responses include the following:**

- Nails and other metal objects hammered into figure.
- Wooden figurative sculpture carved to resemble a standing human form.
- The stance of the figure, with one raised arm pointing up, is a posture of power and authority.
- The facial expression of the figure, with wide-open eyes and open mouth.
- Powerful substances, bilongo, are packed into containers placed within the abdomen, a mirror in this example (in other examples a cowrie shell).
- The eyes or abdomen have embedded reflective materials.
- The carver increased the size of the head for emphasis.

**(C)** Accurately uses ANOTHER example of specific visual evidence to justify the attribution by describing relevant similarities between the work shown and other work of the same type created by the same African culture. **1 point**

**Examples of acceptable responses include the following:**

- One from list in B.

**(D)** Accurately uses specific contextual evidence to explain the function of this type of work. **1 point**

**Examples of acceptable responses include:**

- Nkisi n'kondi are carved by an artist, activated by the nganga (spiritual practitioner or trained priest), who activated its spiritual forces for clients or the community.
- Nkisi n'kondi is owned/kept/activated by a nganga to resolve disputes, to avenge a wrong, in healing, in oath taking, or as a guardian against malevolent forces.
- Nkisi n'kondi were often displaced, purchased, or stolen away from their original settings and became collectable objects bought and sold as objects of curiosity and study by Western ethnographers and artists. This is a changed function from the original, but still a function in the history of the object.
- Nkisi n'kondi from the Kongo were inspirations and sources for similar objects in Afro-Atlantic religions (Vodun, Palo Monte, Macumba, Santería), as well as contemporary art.

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- (E)** Accurately uses specific contextual evidence to explain how the function influenced either the form OR the content of this type of work. **1 point**

**Examples of acceptable responses include:**

- In order to activate spiritual forces residing in/connected with the sculpture, spikes, nails, or pegs were inserted into the sculpture by the nganga (spiritual practitioner or trained priest). A particularly effective nkisi n’kondi will have many insertions, as this one does.
- Belief structures that include an “other world”/spiritual world/world of the dead are referenced in the sculpture through reflective (mirrors) or white (kaolin) material that represents vision into the world beyond ours.
- The nganga’s role as an intermediary between the realms of the living and the dead is represented by the presence of the kaolin/white eyes.
- The sculpture’s role in human affairs, such as oath taking, avenging, or acting as a guardian, is reflected by its depiction in human form.
- The sculpture’s function/purpose to combat malevolent forces as a protector or avenger is communicated by its active gesture (with raised arm) and facial expression (wide-open eyes and open mouth).
- The sculpture’s ability to access the “other world” or spiritual world is conveyed by the inclusion of reflective material and white pigments.
- The objects that would have been held in the medicinal cavity represent the power of the nkisi n’kondi and would have been activated through the insertions of metal objects into the sculpture.
- The confiscation of nkisi n’kondi by colonial forces or missionaries meant that parts of the sculpture were often removed or lost; the item shown, for example, is lacking an object in the raised hand.

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**Total for question 5 5 points**

Q1

Q2

Q3

Q4

Q5

Q6

Sample 5A

Begin your response to each question at the top of a new page. Do not skip lines.

This work was created by the Kongo peoples of the present-day Democratic Republic of the Congo. A very similar work created by the Kongo peoples is the nkisi nkondi, or Power Figure. The main similarity is all of the nails and metal shards sticking out of this work, which are also present on the nkisi nkondi. Another aspect shared by both works ~~are~~ are the two small compartments in the center torso part of the figures. The enlarged eyes, open mouth, and slightly forward-leaning stance are also characteristics of both this work and the nkisi nkondi.

The Kongo peoples used this work in a variety of ways, but the common thread between all Power Figures is their connection to the divine, their power to invoke (connect with spirits and the heavens). Power Figures could cure physical ailments, settle disputes, or even establish alliances between different groups. Every nail or metal shard sticking out of the figure represents one instance in which a member of the community asked for spiritual help to cure illness, settle a dispute, or form an alliance. This function influenced the form of the <sup>wooden</sup> figure; ~~the~~ the sculptor had to leave a lot of torso space for members of the community to nail in their wishes (this is one reason why the arms of the figure are pulled back, to increase space). The nails also of course represent years of history, and this part of the content ~~of~~ of the work was influenced by its function.

Q 1

Q 2

Q 3

Q 4

Q 5

Q 6

Sample 5B

Begin your response to each question at the top of a new page. Do not skip lines.

The work shown is a Nkisi Kandi power figure from the Kuba people in Africa. The figure is made of wood, has white paint, and is smaller than life-size. The figure has twine and nails attached, along with a raised fist and opened mouth. All of these visual characteristics ~~are~~ ~~can~~ can be attributed to the Nkisi Kandi power figure. The function of this work is to demonstrate tribal tradition of the Kuba people. A nail is placed in the figure in order to give guidance from ancestors and create a sense of unity. This function greatly impacts the form, which constantly changes as new things are added into the torso of the figure. The figure is also meant to display the power and prosperity of the people.

Q1



Q2



Q3



Q4



Q5



Q6



Sample 5C

Begin your response to each question at the top of a new page. Do not skip lines.

The work of art shown belongs to that of the Lukasik people of Africa. This sculpture's face uses wide eyes and a large mouth which was common within similar sculptures from the region, as the head was a representation of wisdom. Additionally, its whole <sup>upper</sup> body has nails penetrating the surface which was commonly used in ancestral worship in religious symbolism. This work was created for ancestral worship and connection in the afterlife. The function influenced the form because it had specific detailings from whomever commissioned it which would identify and guard them.

## Question 5

**Note:** Student samples are quoted verbatim and may contain spelling and grammatical errors.

### Overview

Responses were supposed to demonstrate primarily the art historical thinking skill of attribution of an unknown artwork, as well as argumentation, comparative analysis, and visual and contextual analysis. To be awarded all five score points, the response needed to successfully accomplish the following tasks:

- Attribute the figure to the specific African culture that produced it.
- Provide two pieces of visual evidence that supported the attribution by identifying similar characteristics of other works of art from the appropriate cultural context.
- Use contextual evidence to explain the function of the figure and how that function shaped either the form or the content of this type of figure.

### Sample: 5A

Score: 5

**Task A: Correctly attributes the work shown to the specific African culture in which it was created. (1 point)**

The response earned this point by correctly attributing the work to “the Kongo peoples of the present-day Democratic Republic of the Congo.”

**Task B: Accurately uses ONE example of specific visual evidence to justify the attribution by describing relevant similarities between the work shown and other work of the same type created by the same African culture. (1 point)**

The response earned this point by identifying “all of the nails and metal shards sticking out of this work” as visual evidence to justify the attribution.

**Task C: Accurately uses ANOTHER example of specific visual evidence to justify the attribution by describing relevant similarities between the work shown and other work of the same type created by the same African culture. (1 point)**

The response earned this point by discussing “the two small compartments in the center torso part of the figures” as a second piece of visual evidence. The point could have also been earned by the further evidence the response provides, such as “the enlarged eyes, open mouth, and slightly forward-leaning stance.”

**Task D: Accurately uses specific contextual evidence to explain the function of this type of work. (1 point)**

The response earned this point by demonstrating a strong understanding of the use of these items to “cure physical ailments, settle disputes, or even establish alliances between different groups.”

**Task E: Accurately uses specific contextual evidence to explain how the function influenced either the form OR the content of this type of work. (1 point)**

The response earned this point by demonstrating understanding that each nail or shard represents an instance of a community member asking for spiritual help. The response continues, adding that this is why “the sculptor had to leave a lot of torso space for members of the community to nail in their wishes (this is

### Question 5 (continued)

one reason why the arms of the figure are pulled back, to increase space).” The response further demonstrates understanding that the accrual of nails represents years of history or activity.

**Sample: 5B**

**Score: 3**

**Task A: Correctly attributes the work shown to the specific African culture in which it was created. (0 points)**

Although the response includes an attempt to address this task and recognizes the work as a power figure, the attribution to the Kuba people is incorrect, and the point was not earned.

**Task B: Accurately uses ONE example of specific visual evidence to justify the attribution by describing relevant similarities between the work shown and other work of the same type created by the same African culture. (1 point)**

The response earned this point by identifying that the work has “nails attached” as visual evidence to justify the attribution. It should be noted that at first this reads as just simple description. However, the statement “[a]ll of these visual characteristics can be attributed to the Nkisi Kandi power figure” makes it clear that the description is provided as evidence for an attribution.

**Task C: Accurately uses ANOTHER example of specific visual evidence to justify the attribution by describing relevant similarities between the work shown and other work of the same type created by the same African culture. (1 point)**

The response also states “with a raised fist and an opened mouth,” providing more evidence to support the attribution. As with Task B, this initially reads as simple description. Here, too, the statement “[a]ll of these visual characteristics can be attributed to the Nkisi Kandi power figure” makes it clear that this is provided as evidence for an attribution.

**Task D: Accurately uses specific contextual evidence to explain the function of this type of work. (0 points)**

The response includes an attempt to address this task by stating, “The function of this work is to demonstrate tribal tradition ... to give guidance from ancestors and create a sense of unity.” However, this statement is not sufficient to describe the active way the power figure works to mediate, bind agreements, cure ills, or protect. The response did not earn this point.

**Task E: Accurately uses specific contextual evidence to explain how the function influenced either the form OR the content of this type of work. (1 point)**

The response earned the point by explaining, “A nail is placed in the figure ... This function greatly impacts the form, which constantly changes as new things are added into the torso of the figure.” This statement reveals an understanding that not only does the work change over time but that objects other than nails can be added to a power figure.

## Question 5 (continued)

**Sample: 5C**

**Score: 2**

**Task A: Correctly attributes the work shown to the specific African culture in which it was created. (0 points)**

Although the response attempts to address this task, the attribution is incorrect, and the point is not earned.

**Task B: Accurately uses ONE example of specific visual evidence to justify the attribution by describing relevant similarities between the work shown and other work of the same type created by the same African culture. (1 point)**

The response earned this point by connecting the “wide eyes and a large mouth” of this work to those of similar sculptures.

**Task C: Accurately uses ANOTHER example of specific visual evidence to justify the attribution by describing relevant similarities between the work shown and other work of the same type created by the same African culture. (1 point)**

The response earned this point by referring to the nails penetrating the upper body for the second piece of visual evidence.

**Task D: Accurately uses specific contextual evidence to explain the function of this type of work. (0 points)**

The response includes an attempt to address this task, but it is inaccurate, and the point was not earned. These figures were not used for ancestral worship, but instead were used to resolve disputes, avenge a wrong, heal the ill, bind an oath, or guard against malevolent forces.

**Task E: Accurately uses specific contextual evidence to explain how the function influenced either the form OR the content of this type of work. (0 points)**

The response includes an attempt to address this task, but it did not earn the point. The response does not provide a specific element of form or content that is rooted in either the object’s function or its context.