
AP[®] Art History

Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary

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Free-Response Question 1

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Question 1: Long Essay Comparison

8 points

A. Select and completely identify another painting that depicts human activity within a natural landscape.

1 point

Point 1 One point for at least two accurate identifiers beyond the titles given in the question prompt.		
Comparison object: <i>The Swing</i>	Comparison object: <i>Travelers among Mountains and Streams</i>	Comparison object: <i>The Court of Gayumars</i>
Examples of acceptable responses may include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Artist: Jean-Honoré Fragonard• Date: 1767 CE, or any date within 50 years of creation• Materials: Oil on canvas• Culture of origin: France• Style: Rococo	Examples of acceptable responses may include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Artist: Fan Kuan• Date: About 1000 CE, or any date within 100 years of creation• Materials: Ink, silk• Culture of origin: China• Style: Song Dynasty	Examples of acceptable responses may include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Artist: Sultan Muhammad• Date: 1522–1525 CE, or any date within 50 years of creation• Materials: Ink, opaque watercolor, gold on paper• Culture of origin: Persia or Iran• Style: Safavid Dynasty

B. Describe one visual characteristic of *Hunters in the Snow* and one visual characteristic of your selected painting.**2 points****Point 2**Response accurately describes a visual characteristic of *Hunters in the Snow*.**Point 3**

Response accurately describes a visual characteristic of the selected work.

**Object shown:** *Hunters in the Snow***Examples of acceptable responses may include the following:**

- Accurate descriptions of imagery in the work, such as:
 - It is a winter scene.
 - Men are walking with dogs.
 - There is snow on the ground.
 - A village is in the valley.
 - Birds are flying, etc.
- The objects in the distance get smaller and diminish in size.
- The point of view looks down from a hilltop to a village below.
- The placement of the homes, trees, and men indicates the artist's use of perspective.
- There is a smooth finish/blended brushwork.
- The work is created using oil paint on wood panel.

Comparison object: *The Swing***Examples of acceptable responses may include the following:**

- Accurate descriptions of imagery in the work, such as:
 - A woman is on a swing.
 - The landscape is dense/lush.
 - There are two statues in the scene.
 - Men are in the bushes, etc.
- The work has strong diagonal lines.
- The diagonals suggest movement.
- Strong contrasts of color and light are used.
- The woman is in the center.
- The color palette is dominated by pink, green, and blue.

Comparison object: *Travelers among Mountains and Streams***Examples of acceptable responses may include the following:**

- Accurate descriptions of imagery in the work, such as:
 - There are tall mountains.
 - Tiny figures walk on the road.
 - A dense forest is beneath the mountains, etc.
- The painting is monochromatic.
- The work is in a vertical format (hanging scroll).
- Mountains occupy the entire upper part of the composition.
- The composition includes empty spaces and painted scenery.
- There are contrasting areas of light and dark.
- The brushwork is varied.

Comparison object: *The Court of Gayumars***Examples of acceptable responses may include the following:**

- Accurate descriptions of imagery in the work, such as:
 - The man/ruler is the central figure.
 - Figures surround a man/the ruler.
 - The central figure wears leopard pelts.
 - There are mountains in the background, etc.
- The trees lead the viewer's eye around the composition.
- There is a gold sky above the scene.
- The artist rendered precise details/used colored washes.
- The gardens extend onto the page of the manuscript.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The landscape is depicted from an overhead perspective.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This page is bordered with a gold-flecked background.• The top and bottom edges of the image contain calligraphy.
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C. Using specific visual evidence from both *Hunters in the Snow* and your selected painting, explain two differences in how the artists depicted human activity in the natural landscape in their work.

2 points

<p>Point 4 Response accurately uses visual evidence from both <i>Hunters in the Snow</i> and the selected work to explain ONE difference in how the artist depicted human activity in the natural landscape in their work.</p> <p>Point 5 Response accurately uses visual evidence from both <i>Hunters in the Snow</i> and the selected work to explain ANOTHER difference in how the artist depicted human activity in the natural landscape in their work.</p>		
Comparison object: <i>The Swing</i>	Comparison object: <i>Travelers among Mountains and Streams</i>	Comparison object: <i>The Court of Gayumars</i>
<p>Examples of acceptable responses may include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fragonard’s work focuses on aristocrats at leisure, while Bruegel shows ordinary people at work and at leisure. Fragonard emphasizes playful eroticism, while Bruegel shows daily activities. Bruegel shows activities during a gray winter, and Fragonard shows people enjoying a bright warm day. The people in <i>The Swing</i> are shown in a stage-like setting for a play, while <i>Hunters in the Snow</i> is a more realistic and recognizable landscape for the figures. 	<p>Examples of acceptable responses may include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> While Fan Kuan focuses more on the awe-inspiring wild landscape, Bruegel focuses more on the human beings in his work. Bruegel shows villagers going about their daily activities, while Fan Kuan depicts the travelers as tiny figures in a massive landscape. Fan Kuan used an overhead perspective to create the sense that the landscape is dominating the human beings, while Bruegel uses one-point perspective to present a view of human activity across a deep landscape. 	<p>Examples of acceptable responses may include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The Court of Gayumars</i> shows people sitting still and talking outside, while Bruegel shows an active scene of people at work and play. <i>The Court of Gayumars</i> depicts lavishly dressed figures from the social elite, whereas <i>Hunters in the Snow</i> shows humbly dressed figures. <i>The Court of Gayumars</i> depicts people in an idealized landscape, while Bruegel depicts people in a realistic landscape.

D. Make a claim that explains one similarity or difference in why the artists depicted human activity in the natural landscape. Support your claim using specific contextual evidence from *Hunters in the Snow* and specific contextual evidence from your selected painting.

3 points

Point 6 Response articulates a claim about ONE similarity or difference in why the artists depicted human activity in the natural landscape.		
Comparison object: <i>The Swing</i>	Comparison object: <i>Travelers among Mountains and Streams</i>	Comparison object: <i>The Court of Gayumars</i>
<p>Examples of acceptable responses may include the following:</p> <p>Similarities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The artists set the scenes in the natural world because they are interested in humans' relationship to nature. Both works demonstrate the European emphasis on human subjects as changing the landscape or dominating it. Both artists used realistic detail to reinforce their messages about society. <p>Differences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fragonard depicts landscape as a stage for human leisure, whereas Bruegel suggests the land is a resource used by people. Fragonard's scene was intended to appeal to French noble elite, while Bruegel's seasonal landscape was intended to appeal to the rising Dutch merchant class. Fragonard's painting shows the influence of the Rococo and 18th-century aristocratic culture, while Bruegel's realism was influenced by Renaissance culture and Humanism. 	<p>Examples of acceptable responses may include the following:</p> <p>Similarities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both artists use realistic attention to detail to situate a scene within a contemporary relatable setting for their audience. Both artists wanted to depict the drama of nature. Both artists chose subjects to express cultural ideas about humans' relationship to nature. Both Fan Kuan and Bruegel wanted to evoke a spiritual connection between humans and the natural world. Both works are deeply rooted in spiritual philosophies that place special value in the natural world. <p>Differences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fan Kuan used the landscape to communicate spiritual ideas about nature, while Bruegel follows a tradition of image making that depicted seasonal human activities. Fan Kuan used landscape painting to express ideals of Neo-Confucianism, while Humanist ideas of the Renaissance influenced Bruegel's use of the landscape as a setting for the world of human affairs. 	<p>Examples of acceptable responses may include the following:</p> <p>Similarities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both artists want to show humans in a harmonious relationship with nature. Both artists show the grandeur of the natural world through the idealized depiction of the mountains. <p>Differences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The Court of Gayumars</i> was meant to show an idealized view of both society and the natural world, while Bruegel was more interested in the physical aspects of nature and the world of human affairs. <i>The Court of Gayumars</i> expresses ideas of an ideal kingdom of the past, while Bruegel's realism reflects the influence of Renaissance and Humanist ideas on the artist. <i>The Court of Gayumars</i> depicts an idealized historical scene, while Bruegel depicts aspects of contemporary life. <i>The Court of Gayumars</i> shows humans occupying the mountains, while Bruegel depicts the mountains as an inhospitable place that contrasts with the domesticated landscape in the foreground.

(D continued)**Point 7**

Response accurately uses specific contextual evidence from *Hunters in the Snow* in the explanation.

Point 8

Response accurately uses specific contextual evidence from the selected work in the explanation.



Object shown: *Hunters in the Snow*

Examples of acceptable responses may include the following:

- The influence of humanism on Renaissance artists is demonstrated by Bruegel's attention to realistic details.
- *Hunters in the Snow* was one of a series of paintings depicting the seasons.
- The painting would have been hung in the patron's home.
- The depiction of seasonal activities and specific months is related to calendars found in the Christian Books of Hours.
- The church in the background of the painting symbolizes piety/Christian belief.
- Bruegel's painting demonstrates his knowledge of Italian Renaissance art.
- Bruegel's travels through the Alps/Italy influenced the depiction of mountains in the background.
- Bruegel often depicted the ordinary lives of villagers and people who worked the land.

Comparison object: *The Swing*

Examples of acceptable responses may include the following:

- The work is typical of 18th-century French painting created to appeal to the aristocracy.
- This work was commissioned for the patron's home.
- The work would have been viewed by men in a small group setting.
- The French aristocracy was critiqued for frivolous/corrupt behavior.
- Artists of the Rococo often highlighted the erotic exploits of the French upper class.

Comparison object: *Travelers among Mountains and Streams*

Examples of acceptable responses may include the following:

- East Asian religions emphasize interconnection between the human, natural, and spiritual worlds.
- Chinese cultural tradition connected mountains to the sacred and spiritual realm.
- During the Song period, scholars and artists emphasized the symbolic connection between the natural landscape and human virtues.
- Like other scholars and artists during the Song period, Fan Kuan lived as a recluse and looked to nature for spiritual enlightenment.
- Fan Kuan was influenced by Daoism and Neo-Confucianism, which emphasized the importance of a harmonious relationship between humans and the universe.

Comparison object: *The Court of Gayumars*

Examples of acceptable responses may include the following:

- Rich visual elements symbolically express the majesty of the king and his dominion over nature.
- Shah Tahmasp, the Safavid ruler, commissioned *The Court of Gayumars* from Sultan Mohammed.
- The work is a folio depicting a scene from a larger epic work, the *Shahnama*, which details the mythical creation of Iran.
- The luxurious and extravagant details (e.g., borders flecked in gold, calligraphy) enhance the epic nature of the *Shahnama* and the elite status of the king of Iran/Shah Tahmasp.
- The supportive figures, family members, and the tame animals surrounding the king symbolically reinforce his status.
- This image reinforces a positive message about his ability to create a civilized society and his strength to govern.

One work that also depicts human activity within a natural landscape is the Chinese ink on paper work *Travelers among Mountains and Streams* by Fan Xuan.

One visual characteristic of *Hunters in the Snow* is the use of color, as well as value, to depict different natural elements, as well as the use of silhouette to depict many of the human beings within the image. One visual characteristic of *Travelers among Mountains and Streams* is the monochrome nature of the image, as it is created solely with black ink, using many different techniques to apply the ink with brushes, such as ink washes and raindrop strokes to create texture and contrast through value.

One difference in how the artists depicted human activity in the landscape is in the importance and size of humans in the painting relative to the importance and power of nature. In *Hunters in the Snow*, Bruegel places a party of humans with their dogs in the foreground of the painting, and makes their silhouettes quite large, making them relatively more important in the image. In contrast, *Travelers among Mountains and Streams* depicts humans as much smaller; although they are also in the foreground, their importance is diminished by their small stature, overtaken by trees, boulders, and the monumental mountain in the background.

Another difference in how the artists depicted human activity in the landscape is in how much evidence there is for the impact of human activity on the environment. In *Hunters in the Snow*, there are many human-built buildings, and the humans are going out to hunt animals, as evidenced in the title and in the spears they are carrying. In contrast, *Travelers among Mountains and Streams* depicts a landscape pretty much untouched by human activity -- the trees are untouched, the stream undammed; despite the presence of human travelers in the painting, they merely navigate the natural environment around them.

Hunters in the Snow and *Travelers among Mountains and Streams* show a difference in the size and importance of humans in the painting relative to the power and importance of nature due to differing cultural understandings of the role of human beings in the world and in nature. *Travelers among Mountains and Streams* reflects the Daoist understanding of humans as merely a small part of the greater world, reflected in how the humans depicted in the paintings are merely a small part of the greater landscape. In contrast, *Hunters in the Snow* reflects the reality of European relationships with nature in the 16th century, a relationship where they saw no issue in using nature's resources to support their life, whether through farming, the use of

natural materials to build homes and other structures, or hunting, similar to the buildings and activities of hunting, etc. shown in the painting.

"The Swing" that was created in France during the Baroque period with oil paint on canvas depicts human activity, similar to "Hunters in the Snow." Hunter's in the snow shows a very cold environment with dark gray colors. The swing is has lots of natural warm colored lighting. The men in Hunters in the snow are depicted working hard with weapons in hand to go and find food for their families; while the women in the swing is a a very fancy royal that doesn't need to work to live so she gets to have fun and play all day. The artist of Hunters in the snow includes people on the bottom of the mountain skating on a lake having fun and being carefree, when one of the men in the swing painting is sneaking around with this royal women and is hiding in the bushes worrying and trying not to get caught by her husband. The artist's depicted human activity in their natural landscapes to show how the setting of where a person lives can impact their day-to-day. The Lady in the Swing is warm in a beautiful garden that servants would have made and the Men in the Hunters in The Snow have to work hard for what they need to survive unlike royal families.

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The painting shown is *Hunters in the Snow* by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, created in 1565 CE. The painting depicts human activity within a natural landscape. Another painting that depicts human activity in natural landscape is *The Swing*, a well known famous painting. One visual characteristic in *Hunters in the Snow* is the people armed and with dogs following them shows the came back from hunting. One visual characteristic of *The Swing* is the woman in the swing having her shoe hanging on her foot and her dress opened as a way of flirting with the man hiding in the bush looking at her. One difference in how the artists depict human activity in a natural landscape is that in *Hunters in the Snow* it gives the feeling of dissapointment because the hunters came back to the village with no food and in *The Swing* it gives the feeling of sneakyness or unfaithful because the woman in the swing is being pushed by her husband while she flirts with a guy hiding in the bushes. Another difference is the backround setting because both painting show different weathers and how people normally react to it. *Hunters in the Snow* shows the weather being cold winter and people react by going to skeeing on ice and in *The Swing* it shows a warm weather and people react by going out to play or have fun.

Question 1

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

Overview

NEW for 2025: The question overviews can be found in the *Chief Reader Report on Student Responses* on [AP Central](#).

Sample: 1A

Task A (Point 1): 1

Task B1 (Point 2): 1

Task B2 (Point 3): 1

Task C1 (Point 4): 1

Task C2 (Point 5): 1

Task D1 (Point 6): 1

Task D2 (Point 7): 1

Task D3 (Point 8): 1

Score: 8

Task A: Accurately identifies a work of art that depicts human activity within a natural landscape. (1 point)

The response earned the point for accurately identifying *Travelers among Mountains and Streams* from the “Chinese” culture and made with “ink.” The response also identifies the artist, “Fan Xuan,” which is close enough to the correct spelling to be scored as an accurate identifier.

Task B: Accurately describes a visual characteristic of *Hunters in the Snow* AND the selected work. (2 points)

The response earned the first point for accurately describing *Hunters in the Snow* with “the buildings and activities of hunting.”

The response earned the second point for accurately describing *Travelers among Mountains and Streams* with “the monochrome nature of the image.” The response could have also earned the point for accurately describing “ink washes ... create texture” or “humans depicted in the paintings are merely a small part of the greater landscape.”

Task C: Accurately explains TWO differences in how BOTH artists depicted human activity in the natural landscape. (2 points)

The response earned the first point by accurately explaining a difference by contrasting how the figures in *Hunters in the Snow* are shown as more important relative to the landscape than the figures in *Travelers among Mountains and Streams*. The response explains, “One difference in how the artists depicted human activity in the landscape is in the importance and size of humans in the painting relative to the importance and power of nature. In *Hunters in the Snow*, Bruegel places a party of humans with their dogs in the foreground of the painting, and makes their silhouettes quite large, making them relatively more important in the image. In contrast, *Travelers among Mountains and Streams* depicts humans as much smaller; although they are also in the foreground, their importance is diminished by their small stature, overtaken by trees, boulders, and the monumental mountain in the background.”

Question 1 (continued)

The response earned the second point by accurately explaining another difference by contrasting the settled landscape of *Hunters in the Snow* versus the wild landscape of *Travelers among Mountains and Streams*. The response explains, “Another difference in how the artists depicted human activity in the landscape is in how much evidence there is for the impact of human activity on the environment. In *Hunters in the Snow*, there are many human-built buildings, and the humans are going out to hunt animals, as evidenced in the title and in the spears they are carrying. In contrast, *Travelers among Mountains and Streams* depicts a landscape pretty much untouched by human activity -- the trees are untouched, the stream undammed.”

Task D: Articulates a claim about a similarity or difference in why the artists depicted human activity in the natural landscape. The response accurately uses specific contextual evidence from BOTH *Hunters in the Snow* and the selected work in the explanation. (3 points)

The response earned the first point by claiming that “*Hunters in the Snow* and *Travelers among Mountains and Streams* show a difference in the size and importance of humans in the painting relative to the power and importance of nature due to differing cultural understandings of the role of human beings in the world and in nature.”

The response earned the second point by supporting the claim using specific contextual evidence from *Hunters in the Snow*, explaining how “*Hunters in the Snow* reflects the reality of European relationships with nature in the 16th century, a relationship where they saw no issue in using nature’s resources to support their life.”

The response earned the third point by supporting the claim using specific contextual evidence from *Travelers among Mountains and Streams*, explaining how “*Travelers among Mountains and Streams* reflects the Daoist understanding of humans as merely a small part of the greater world.”

Sample: 1B

Task A (Point 1): 1

Task B1 (Point 2): 1

Task B2 (Point 3): 1

Task C1 (Point 4): 1

Task C2 (Point 5): 1

Task D1 (Point 6): 1

Task D2 (Point 7): 0

Task D3 (Point 8): 0

Score: 6

Task A: Accurately identifies a work of art that depicts human activity within a natural landscape. (1 point)

The response earned the point for accurately identifying *The Swing* from the culture of “France” and the materials as “oil paint on canvas.”

Question 1 (continued)

Task B: Accurately describes a visual characteristic of *Hunters in the Snow* AND the selected work. (2 points)

The response earned the first point for accurately describing how “Hunter’s in the snow shows a very cold enviornment with dark gray colors.”

The response earned the second point for accurately describing how “The swing is has lots of natural warm colored lighting.”

Task C: Accurately explains TWO differences in how BOTH artists depicted human activity in the natural landscape. (2 points)

The response earned the first point for accurately explaining a difference by contrasting how the figures in *Hunters in the Snow* enjoy winter activities, while *The Swing’s* figures engage in clandestine activities. The response explains how the “artist of Hunters in the snow includes people on the bottom of the mountain skating on a lake having fun and being carefree” in contrast to “one of the men in the swing painting is sneaking around with this royal women and is hiding in the bushes worrying and trying not to get caught by her husband.”

The response earned the second point for accurately explaining another difference by contrasting the themes of work in *Hunters in the Snow* versus play in *The Swing*. The response explains that the “men in Hunters in the snow are depicted working hard with weapons in hand to go and find food for their families” in contrast to “the women in the swing is a a very fancy royal that doesn’t need to work to live so she gets to have fun and play all day.”

The response also explains a third difference by contrasting themes of affluence in *The Swing* to themes of survival and need in *Hunters in the Snow*. The response explains that the “Lady in the Swing is warm in a beautiful garden that servents would have made and the Men in the Hunters in The Snow have to work hard for what they need to survive unlike royal familes.”

Task D: Articulates a claim about a similarity or difference in why the artists depicted human activity in the natural landscape. The response accurately uses specific contextual evidence from BOTH *Hunters in the Snow* and the selected work in the explanation. (1 point)

The response earned the first point by claiming that the artists depicted humans in a natural landscape to show how setting impacts lifestyle. The response states, “The artist’s depicted human activity in their natural landscapes to show how the setting of where a person lives can impact their day-to-day.”

The response did not earn the second point because it does not attempt to use specific contextual evidence from *Hunters in the Snow* in the explanation.

The response did not earn the third point because it does not attempt to use specific contextual evidence from *The Swing* in the explanation.

Question 1 (continued)

Sample: 1C
Task A (Point 1): 0
Task B1 (Point 2): 1
Task B2 (Point 3): 1
Task C1 (Point 4): 1
Task C2 (Point 5): 1
Task D1 (Point 6): 0
Task D2 (Point 7): 0
Task D3 (Point 8): 0
Score: 4
Task A: Accurately identifies a work of art that depicts human activity within a natural landscape. (0 points)

The response did not earn the point because it does not attempt the task.

Task B: Accurately describes a visual characteristic of *Hunters in the Snow* AND the selected work. (2 points)

The response earned the first point by accurately describing *Hunters in the Snow* with “people armed and with dogs.”

The response earned the second point by accurately describing *The Swing* with “the woman in the swing.” The response could have also earned the point for describing “her shoe hanging on her foot” or “the man hiding in the bush.”

Task C: Accurately explains TWO differences in how BOTH artists depicted human activity in the natural landscape. (2 points)

The response earned the first point for accurately explaining a difference by contrasting the feeling of loss in *Hunters in the Snow* and the feeling of illicit secrecy in *The Swing*. The response explains that *Hunters in the Snow* “gives the feeling of disappointment because the hunters came back to the village with no food” and that *The Swing* “gives the feeling of sneakyness or unfaithful because the woman in the swing is being pushed by her husband while she flirts with a guy hiding in the bushes.” Although “by her husband” is inaccurate, this reference does not negate the accurate explanation provided.

The response earned the second point for accurately explaining another difference by contrasting how the subjects in each painting interact with the different weather conditions. The response explains that *Hunters in the Snow* “shows the weather being cold winter and people react by going to skeeing on ice” in contrast to *The Swing* that “shows a warm weather and people react by going out to play or have fun.”

Task D: Articulates a claim about a similarity or difference in why the artists depicted human activity in the natural landscape. The response accurately uses specific contextual evidence from BOTH *Hunters in the Snow* and the selected work in the explanation. (0 points)

The response did not earn the first point because it does not attempt the task.

The response did not earn the second point because it does not attempt the task.

The response did not earn the third point because it does not attempt the task.