

2025



AP[®] Art History

Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary

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Free-Response Question 6

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Question 6: Continuity and Change**5 points**

A Point 1	Accurately describes ONE visual characteristic of the Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus. Examples of acceptable responses may include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The work is white/marble.• The figures project from the background (high relief carving).• The figures are crowded on top of one another.• There is little negative/empty space.• The relief shows a scene of people fighting.• The Goths have beards.• The Romans are depicted as calm/composed/determined.• The barbarians have emotional facial expressions.• The battle scene appears chaotic.• The figures are depicted in twisted/active poses.• The composition is dominated by diagonal lines.• The clothing/drapery is created from deep carving.• The deep carving creates dynamic lines/dramatic shadows.• The main figure is in the center of the composition.• The main figure is emphasized through his pose and scale (extending his right arm outwards).• The central figure is shown without a helmet/with an x-shaped symbol on his forehead.• There are dead/wounded figures.• There are lions at the base.• There is a horse present.	1 point
B Point 2	Accurately describes ANOTHER visual characteristic of the Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus. Examples of acceptable responses may include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Another example from those listed in Part A.	1 point
C Point 3	Accurately uses ONE example of specific visual evidence to explain how the work shown demonstrates continuity with Classical Greek sculpture. Examples of acceptable responses may include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The sarcophagus shows continuity with Greek sculptures because the figures have naturalistic/idealized features.• The work demonstrates an interest in musculature/anatomical details that can be seen in other works of Classical Greek sculpture.	1 point

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- The use of drapery that reveals bodily contours demonstrates continuity with other sculptural works from Greece.
 - The calm faces of the Roman soldiers demonstrate continuity with the Classical Greek tradition of emphasizing emotional control.
 - The Ludovisi sarcophagus demonstrates continuity through the use of marble, which was often used as a sculptural medium in Greece.
 - The depiction of battle scenes to highlight cultural supremacy demonstrates continuity with other Classical Greek sculptures.
 - As in Classical Greek sculpture, the work's large size/complexity indicates its patron's elite status.

D Point 4 Accurately uses ONE example of specific visual evidence to explain how the work shown demonstrates change from Classical Greek sculpture. **1 point**

Examples of acceptable responses may include the following:

- The chaotic composition demonstrates change from the more balanced Classical style.
- The densely packed composition differs from open spaces in Classical Greek sculpture.
- The focus on emotion/drama deviates from the Classical style, which emphasized emotional control.
- The emphasis on emotion/action is closer to Hellenistic art than Classical Greek style.
- The proportions differ from the (mathematically calculated) proportions of Classical works like *Doryphoros*.
- Religious symbols in the work differ from those used in Classical Greek sculptures.

E Point 5 Accurately uses specific visual or contextual evidence to explain why this work might be interpreted as a demonstration of social or political change. **1 point**

Examples of acceptable responses may include the following:

- The crowded composition suggests the conflicts of a culture going through social change.
 - The lack of symmetrical balance suggests political instability occurring in the Roman Empire.
 - The change in aesthetic preferences/figural style may indicate cultural changes in Rome.
 - The introduction of new religious beliefs in late Roman society is indicated by the sarcophagus imagery.
 - The geographic region that Rome controlled included a variety of cultures with different artistic traditions that influenced works created during this time.
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Two visual characteristics of the Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus are its crowded composition with many figures depicted close together and its depiction of Roman heroism and victory over barbarian enemies. The crowded composition consists of many figures and different scenes crowded together in a small space with very little space (if any) separating them, invoking a sense of a frantic and disorganized battle. The scenes of Roman heroism and victory over barbarian enemies are indicated primarily through the figure in the top center of the sarcophagus, who holds out his left arm in a gesture symbolizing bravery and victory.

The work demonstrates continuity with Classical Greek sculpture through the use of its medium, which is marble. Marble was a material utilized in a wide variety of Greek sculptures from the Classical Period such as Dorophyorus the Spear-Bearer for its purity and ability to accenuate idealized Classical forms. This work demonstrates change from previous examples of Classical Greek sculpture through its crowded composition and ambiguity of forms, symbolizing a departure from the highly idealized and clearly separated figures present on Classical sculpture examples such as Nike Adjusting Her Sandal from the freize of the Parthenon.

This work could be interpreted as a demonstration of political/social change within Roman society because of its hectic composition. The appearance of this work as crowded and violent contrasts strongly with the confident regality of previous Roman works such as Augustus of Prima Porta, suggesting it is reflective of a more cahotic and unstable Roman society that had been seen previously. Here, instead of largely brave and heroic (though there are still elements of military glory), war is depicted as brutal and unpredictable, perhaps a reflection of a Roman society more fearful of barbarian incursions than ever before.

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The Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus has a very cluttered composition, where there's almost no negative space. The scene is a very chaotic battle scene where the late Ludovisi is in the top center. This work is very characteristic of the time with some characteristic of Classical Greek work and some of Hellenistic Greek sculpture. The work shows continuity through its emphasis on musculature. Many Greeks at the time believed in not just a healthy mind, but a fit body as well. Emphasis on muscles at the time was common within Greek sculptures which we can see in the Battle Sarcophagus as well. One way it departs from Classical Greek Sculpture is in its posing and composition. This dynamic style of posing is not as loose as later Hellenistic Greek sculptures but it's still very innovative for the time. This Sarcophagus symbolized social change at the time because of its emphasis on battle. Most commemorative sculptures for the dead at the time were simple portraits of the deceased typically either freestanding or in a very simple domestic scene. This sarcophagus however examines Ludovisi's accomplishments in battle which shows how societal ideals shifted from valuing domesticity to valuing success.

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2 visual characteristics we can see from the "Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus" is the human anatomy is idealized and would be considered naturalistic. This shows continuity within Classical Greek Sculpture through the various poses including contrapposto and the use of hierarchical scale within the figures. The work of art can demonstrate social and political change through the embodiment of its narration/depictions of rulers, soldiers, everyday people, etc. It is a symbol of unifying all of those into one piece and having intents of hierarchy as seen with Augustus in the middle/top.

Question 6

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: 6A

Task A (Point 1): 1

Task B (Point 2): 1

Task C (Point 3): 1

Task D (Point 4): 1

Task E (Point 5): 1

Score: 5

Task A: Accurately describes ONE visual characteristic of the Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus. (1 point)

The response earned the point by accurately describing a “crowded composition with many figures depicted close together.” The response could also have earned the point for the description of either “very little space (if any) separating them” or a “frantic and disorganized battle.”

Task B: Accurately describes ANOTHER visual characteristic of the Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus. (1 point)

The response earned the point by accurately describing “the figure in the top center of the sarcophagus, who holds out his left arm in a gesture.”

Task C: Accurately uses specific visual evidence to explain how the Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus demonstrates continuity with Classical Greek sculpture. (1 point)

The response earned the point by explaining that marble is “a material utilized in a wide variety of Greek sculptures from the Classical Period.” The response goes on to reference “Dorophyorus the Spear-Bearer,” but this additional specificity is not needed to earn the point.

Task D: Accurately uses specific visual evidence to explain how the Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus demonstrates change from Classical Greek sculpture. (1 point)

The response earned the point by accurately explaining that this “work demonstrates [a] change from previous examples of Classical Greek sculpture through its crowded composition ... symbolizing a departure from the highly idealized and clearly separated figures present on Classical sculpture.” The response goes on to reference “the frieze of the Parthenon,” but this additional specificity is not needed to earn the point.

Question 6 (continued)

Task E: Accurately uses specific visual or contextual evidence to explain why the Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus might be interpreted as a demonstration of social or political change. (1 point)

The response earned the point by accurately explaining the demonstration of a social change with the “hectic composition ... is reflective of a more chaotic and unstable Roman society that had been seen previously.” The response could also have earned this point for accurately explaining how “war is depicted as brutal and unpredictable, perhaps a reflection of a Roman society more fearful of barbarian incursions than ever before.”

Sample: 6B

Task A (Point 1): 1

Task B (Point 2): 1

Task C (Point 3): 1

Task D (Point 4): 0

Task E (Point 5): 0

Total Score: 3

Task A: Accurately describes ONE visual characteristic of the Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus. (1 point)

The response earned the point by accurately describing “a very cluttered composition, where there’s almost no negative space.”

Task B: Accurately describes ANOTHER visual characteristic of the Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus. (1 point)

The response earned the point by accurately describing “a very chaotic battle scene.”

Task C: Accurately uses specific visual evidence to explain how the Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus demonstrates continuity with Classical Greek sculpture. (1 point)

The response earned the point by accurately explaining that “[e]mphasis on muscles at the time was common within Greek sculptures.” The response provides additional contextual evidence by explaining the emphasis on musculature reflects value placed on “not just a healthy mind, but a fit body as well.” This information is not necessary to earn the point, and it would not earn the point on its own because it is not visual evidence.

Task D: Accurately uses specific visual evidence to explain how the Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus demonstrates change from Classical Greek sculpture. (0 points)

The response did not earn the point. The response attempts the task with “[t]his dynamic style of posing is not as loose as later Hellenistic Greek sculptures but it’s still very innovative for the time.” However, this statement is inaccurate and does not explain how the work represents a change from Classical Greek sculpture.

Question 6 (continued)

Task E: Accurately uses specific visual or contextual evidence to explain why the Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus might be interpreted as a demonstration of social or political change. (0 points)

The response did not earn the point. The response attempts the task by stating “[t]his Sarcophagus symbolized social change at the time because of it’s emphasis on battle. Most commemorative sculptures for the dead at the time where simple portraits of the deceased typically either freestanding or in a very simple domestic scene,” but this information is inaccurate.

Sample: 6C

Task A (Point 1): 1

Task B (Point 2): 0

Task C (Point 3): 0

Task D (Point 4): 0

Task E (Point 5): 0

Total Score: 1

Task A: Accurately describes ONE visual characteristic of the Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus. (1 point)

The response earned the point by accurately describing the “hierarhical scale within the figures.”

Task B: Accurately describes ANOTHER visual characteristic of the Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus. (0 points)

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

Task C: Accurately uses specific visual evidence to explain how the Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus demonstrates continuity with Classical Greek sculpture. (0 points)

The response did not earn the point. The response attempts the task by stating that “This shows continuity within Classical Greek Sculpture through the various poses including contrapossto.” However, this statement is inaccurate because contrapposto is not evident in the work. The response also attempts this task by explaining how the “human anatomy is idealized,” but the response does not make a connection to Classical Greek sculpture.

Task D: Accurately uses specific visual evidence to explain how the Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus demonstrates change from Classical Greek sculpture. (0 points)

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

Task E: Accurately uses specific visual or contextual evidence to explain why the Ludovisi Battle Sarcophagus might be interpreted as a demonstration of social or political change. (0 points)

The response did not earn the point. The response attempts the task by stating “[t]he work of art can desmonstrate social and political cahnge through the embodiment of its narration/depictions of rulers, soldiers, everyday people, etc.,” but this statement is inaccurate.