

Art Analysis

One way of analyzing anything is by separating the whole into parts in order to ultimately better understand the whole. When analyzing a work of art, in this case a painting, fundamental questions can be asked about those parts in order to gain an understanding of the piece.

Before you get started, always notice these things that you can find with simple research.

1. Who is the artist?
2. What is the title?
3. When and where was the work made?
4. What purpose did it serve? You may or may not know this from the image. *But notice if it is a religious painting, a painting of someone famous, if a painting of landscape does it look like it was meant to elevate, honor, respect, the land. Does it make the land look scary or welcoming to humans? Does it show humans dominating the land or are they included as part of it?*

5. The next thing to think about doing is a clear and thorough description. Now this may sound simpler than it really is. To describe a painting you need to find a way to organize visual and formal elements. So you need to talk about:

- *Subject* – What are the main elements (or objects) in the painting? What are these things doing? What is happening in the painting? Are there humans in the painting? What are they doing? It could be fruit, a mountain, a boat, people walking in a forest, etc.
- *Style* - What is the style of painting and what does that style suggest about the artists point of view or place in time? Style can often tell us something about the time period in which the work was created. If it's a contemporary work, the artist has reference or been influence by some other artist or style. These things might be obvious or you may have to do research.
- *Color* – Is there much use of color or not? Do the colors evoke a mood? Are the colors imitative or expressive?
- *Line* - Are the lines definitive and hard or are they irregular and indistinct? Do the objects blend in with their background or do they stand out off the canvas? Can you even see lines or are they implied?
- *Light* - What is the effect of light in the painting? Does it illuminate a scene or character in the painting, or does it shadow? Does the light (dark) unite or divide the a painting?
- *Angle* - In what direction is the artist trying to direct your gaze by use of posture or light?
- *Other Elements to consider* - include depth/space, medium, shape, size, and scale.

6. What is the meaning of the painting? How do all these things work together to create meaning?

Your analysis should be in an in depth study. It does not need to include all answers to all questions but make sure you discuss each aspect included above. Write about 2 pages, no larger than 12 point type and 1.5 line spacing.

Also, write and edit your paper carefully. This is not a list of things to talk about in order but some suggestions about what to include. Depending on the painting, some things may be more important than others.