

THEMES IN ART HISTORY

Here are suggestions for **Big Ideas** Levels 1 and 2 classifications for AP Art History. They are broad, recurring, and unifying themes and topics for the course, including consideration for Art beyond the European tradition.

The **Level 1** unifying themes are indicated with the underlines while **Level 2** themes/topics are marked with bullet points.

Patronage and Art / Artist

- Motivation of the patron in art
- Role of the patron in art
- Role of the artist in society
- Relationship between artist and patron

Art as Propaganda

- Glorify the power of the state
- Exploited for religious purposes
- Illuminate a social cause
- Glorify the ruler

War

- Representations of battle scenes
- Protest against war
- Images of the warrior
- Memorial/tribute to fallen heroes
- Images of violence and hostility

Representations of Nature

- Nature and the landscape
- Attitude towards nature
- Perspective systems
- Man and nature

Sacred Spaces

- Burial places and grave monuments
- Places of worship and religious practices'
- Sites used for religious ritual.'
- Pilgrimage

Death and Burial

- Concepts of the afterlife
- Heaven and Hell
- Funerary practices
- Objects used in ritual

The Human Image in Art

- Depictions of the human body
- Representations of human identity

- Icons
- Deity figures in guise of human forms
- Hybrid man/beast figures

Cultural Attitudes About Women

- Depictions of motherhood and fertility figures
- Portraits representing power, wealth and status
- Depictions of female divinities and icons
- Representations of female heroism
- Depictions of geisha and courtesans
- Stereotypes of women in various role and scenes

The text as Sources

- Torah
- Bible
- Quran
- Vedas
- Tao Te Ching
- The Mayan Popol Vuh

Narrative in Art

This is an exercise in defining and clarifying what is "narrative in art.

(The essential characteristics are):

- Tells a story (visually and can include text).
- Illustrative of an event (in some form of a timed sequence).
- Sequence of events depicted can be continuous, linear, in multiple registers, and disjointed or juxtaposed. (Does not have to have a beginning and ending).
- Narrative theme or subject matter is culturally relevant - sociological, historical, political, personal, religious, mythological, popular.
- Includes figural characters (including animals) and setting in implied action and interaction within given time and space,
- May contain symbolic elements that aides in the delivery of a message.
- Narrative is meaningful to an audience and communicates shared understanding.
- The artwork can be completed in any medium.

Other THEMES / TOPICS for *Levels 1 and 2 Big Ideas:*

- Expressions of Power and Authority
- Representations of everyday life
- Representations of animals and birds
- Representations of seasons
- Vertical elements
- The dome
- Circle concepts in art
- Significance of light and dark
- Gender issues in art
- Women in Art / Women and Art
- Site art / Environmental art
- Guardian figures / Figures that protect and warn
- Art that "documents" an historical event
- Race, clan and class in art

- Family portraits
- Portrait of the artist
- Representation of marriage and the couple
- Dreams and fantasy images
- Art from Art
- Art Now
- Concept of beauty
- Social Protest
- Images of mother and child
- Symbols and allegory
- Words and Images
- Secular architecture
- Architecture: how to *read* a building
- The city
- Time

Other THEMES / TOPICS that are based more on form than content:

- Art and technology/technological innovations
- Challenge established traditions: rebels in art
- Alternative ways of seeing: visionaries in art
- Abstractions
- Treatment of the surface
- Development of artistic style
- Regional variations in style
- Determining artistic influences
- Identifying artistic medium
- Architecture: Elevation, facades, interiors
- Printmaking history and technique
- Photography history and technique

As you read and think through the list of topics and themes for Levels 1 and 2, keep in mind the wide range of two- and three- dimensional mediums, (including architectural spaces).