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91201



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Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

Level 2 Classical Studies 2023

91201 Examine the significance of features of work(s) of art in the classical world

Credits: Four

Achievement	Achievement with Merit	Achievement with Excellence
Examine the significance of features of work(s) of art in the classical world.	Examine, in-depth, the significance of features of work(s) of art in the classical world.	Examine, with perception, the significance of features of work(s) of art in the classical world.

Check that the National Student Number (NSN) on your admission slip is the same as the number at the top of this page.

You should answer ONE of the questions in this booklet.

If you need more room for your answer, use the extra space provided at the back of this booklet.

Check that this booklet has pages 2–11 in the correct order and that none of these pages is blank.

Do not write in any cross-hatched area (KUPURU WHIRI). This area will be cut off when the booklet is marked.

YOU MUST HAND THIS BOOKLET TO THE SUPERVISOR AT THE END OF THE EXAMINATION.

Excellence

TOTAL 07

Page 1

INSTRUCTIONS

Answer ONE of the questions below with reference to one or more **classical art works or buildings**.

You must answer using paragraphs.

QUESTIONS (Choose ONE)

1. Explain how the features of a classical art work or building reflected the societal ideal of beauty.
2. Explain how an artist communicated one or more beliefs through a classical art work.
3. Explain how the purpose of a classical building was enhanced by its design and decoration.
4. Explain how a classical art work or building influenced a later culture.

SELECTED QUESTION

Copy and paste the question you have chosen into the space below.

Explain how an artist communicated one or more beliefs through a classical art work.

CLASSICAL ART WORK(S) OR BUILDING(S)

The Death of Pentheus

PLANNING


Beliefs: Women need restraint
Gods are vindictive. Will punish those who offend them.

Narrative techniques:
Blue
Thyrus
Facial Expressions, body language,
Setting

ANSWER

Type your answer in the space below. You should aim to write a concise answer of no more than 750–800 words. (The counter will change colour when you reach the recommended word count.) The quality of your response is more important than its length.

Support your answer with evidence from one or more classical art works or buildings.

B *I* U    

The Death of Pentheus is one of three frescos that are found in what is known as 'The Pentheus Room' in the house of the Vettii. The Death of Pentheus is situated on the back wall, on the other two walls are Hercules Strangling Snakes and Dirke Tied to a Bull. These frescos are thematically connected by the city of Thebes, Dionysus, and the colour blue. This room was most likely used as an outside lounge, oecus, due to its position and the movement of the sun. The position of The Death of Pentheus at the back wall and at eye level where anyone passing the room would have seen it is evidence that the beliefs which it communicates were relevant to Roman society. These beliefs would also have been held by Greek society as this fresco was likely created by a Greek artist due to the Roman's interest in Greek art. This fresco is painted in the 4th style and would have been created between the earthquake in 62 AD and the eruption of Mt Vesuvius in 79 AD. The beliefs that it communicates are that gods are vindictive and amoral, they will punish those who offend them, the male fear of unrestrained women, and their belief that women need to be restrained

The Death of Pentheus depicts a known myth of a king of Thebes, Pentheus. He strongly disliked the maenads, female worshippers of Dionysus, because of their secretive religious rituals. He wanted to ban them from worshipping Dionysus but he was tricked by the god to hiding in a tree and spying on the woman as they worshipped. However, he was seen by the women and Dionysus created a blue mist that sent the women into a frenzy. In their frenzy, they mistook Pentheus for a wild animal and tore him apart in an execution ritual known as sparagmos. This fresco depicts the moment before the women begin to tear Pentheus apart.

The first belief that is communicated through The Death of Pentheus is the belief that gods will punish those who offend them. In this myth, Pentheus offended Dionysus by being hubristic and believing that he should have to authority to tell the maenads to stop worshipping the god. This belief in punishment is communicated through the narrative techniques of body language, facial expressions, and the setting. Pentheus is depicted as kneeling on one knee and his right arm is extended, palm out like he is seeking forgiveness, his facial expression is pained and pleading which gives the same effect. These aspects allow the narrative of the myth to be communicated and allow the viewer to establish the exact moment that this fresco depicts. They also communicate the belief in punishment and the vindictive nature of gods. This is a belief that is repeated in other Greek and Roman art and literature, notably the play Antigone of which the main message is that gods will punish people who offend them, particularly for hubris. However, unlike Creon the antagonist in Antigone, Pentheus does not break a significant law of the gods, he only offends Dionysus. This communicates that the Romans believed that the gods did not only punish people for breaking the laws of heaven but would do so at their leisure. Therefore, it was important to Romans to always honour the gods which communicates that those beliefs were incredibly significant in their society.

Another belief that is communicated is that women need restraint and it demonstrates the male fear of unrestrained women. This is communicated using colour, symbolism, body language, facial expression, and composition. The five figures that surround Pentheus in this fresco are all maenads, however, the maenad to the right of Pentheus is believed to represent his mother, Agave. This is significant because it communicates the power of the gods as Agave is so deeply entranced by Dionysus' power that she does not recognise her own son. Therefore, it highlights and communicates the belief and deep reverence for the power of the gods and their ability to punish whomever. Agave is holding a thyrsus which is a symbol and narrative technique because the thyrsus is a symbol of Dionysus and his followers, and it allows the audience to identify these figures as maenads and communicates their power as the maenads have weapons and Pentheus is therefore helpless against them. Another symbol that is used is the colour of the mist which is blue. The colour blue is used to represent the presence of Dionysus in paintings and is how the viewer would be able to recognise the narrative and beliefs that are being communicated.

The body language of the maenads communicates the power of Dionysus and also the belief that women need to be restrained as they all have determined and crazed facial expressions. The figure on Pentheus' left has her knees bent, she is leaning back and gripping onto Pentheus' arm as though she is putting all of her effort into pulling his arm from his body. Another way that the belief in restrained women is communicated is through their clothing. They wear chitons which are painted as though they are falling from their bodies, exposing their chests. This symbolises that their mental state is falling apart and they have become crazy because they have no restraint due to their isolation from men. This symbolism is used to communicate the belief that without the influence of men in women's lives, they become crazy and irrational to the point where they could be influenced to kill. The composition is yet another technique that communicates the power that the women have over Pentheus. The fresco is composed in a formal 'X' shape through the limbs of the maenads above Pentheus and his outstretched leg. This is a technique used to symbolise the power imbalance that communicates how the women are in charge of this image and puts Pentheus in a weak position, again communicating the deadly consequences of disrespecting the gods.

The artist of The Death of Pentheus uses narrative techniques, symbolism, and other aspects of the fresco to communicate the story of the myth and the important Roman beliefs that the gods will punish those who offend them, they have the power to do so, and women need to be restrained. These beliefs were most likely shared by ancient Greek society as these messages also appear in their art. In the myth, once the maenads have torn Pentheus apart his mother mounts his head on her thyrsus and marches into Thebes, however, the influence of Dionysus wears off and she realises their mistake. The beliefs communicated in this fresco about the meaning of the myth are emphasised by the positioning of the fresco in the house of the Vettii, which illustrates that these beliefs about amoral gods, and the role of women, were likely talking points within Roman society are common beliefs shared by many.

1151 WORDS / 800 RECOMMENDED



Mana Tahu Mātauranga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

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assessment, please contact the
supervisor.

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Excellence

Subject: Classical Studies

Standard: 91201

Total score: 07

Q	Grade score	Marker commentary
Two	E7	<p>This is a popular art work at this standard and this candidate establishes an insightful argument from the outset about male anxieties about the unrestrained behaviour of women and the vindictive nature of the gods as the “beliefs conveyed”. A brief description of the myth allows the candidate to focus the argument in the following paragraphs. Well-selected evidence from the artwork is unpacked to justify points. For a more secure Excellence, the candidate may have articulated why such beliefs were conveyed in classical society more confidently.</p>