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2

91181



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Mana Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa  
New Zealand Qualifications Authority

## Level 2 Art History 2025

### 91181 Examine the meanings conveyed by art works

Credits: Four

Achievement	Achievement with Merit	Achievement with Excellence
Examine the meanings conveyed by art works.	Examine in depth the meanings conveyed by art works.	Examine critically the meanings conveyed by art works.

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 attempt ONE of the questions in this booklet.**

Make sure that you have Resource Booklet L2-ARTR.

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 the margins (//////). 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.**

Merit

TOTAL 06

## SELECTED QUESTION

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

Select and name TWO art works that depict individuals and / or groups of people. ONE work must be from

Plates 1–6 in the resource booklet. The other may be from Plates 1–6 OR may be an art work of your own choice.

(a) In each of your chosen art works, describe at least TWO symbols or motifs and their meanings.

(b) Explain how these symbols or motifs were important in conveying meaning about individuals and / or groups of people in this period.

Select your first art work from the resource booklet:

3: Géricault, Raft of the Medusa

Type your second art work here:

Jacques-Louis David, The Oath of the Horatii, 1784

## PLANNING

Medusa - INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS

- Man at top of Pyramid

- Symbol of hope his body standing tall, mirroring the raft's sail.

- Is held up by the other people of the raft symbolizing their dependence on him to flag down the passing boat

- The red cloth he holds - red and white, the red showing the hardship and

- Symbolic light

## ANSWER SPACE

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

B I U     

Artists such as Theodore Gericault and Jacques-Louis David use symbols and motifs within their works to deepen a sense of meaning and convey a message, specifically about individuals and groups of people during the time it was created. In his work, *The Raft of the Medusa*, Theodore uses symbolic light and the symbol of the man waving a cloth to show this group of people as ordinary people as heroes despite the tragic and dramatic scene. In David's painting, *The Oath of the Horatii*, the symbols of the three brothers, and the weeping woman convey a meaning for self-sacrifice for the good of the state.

*The Raft of the Medusa* is a Romanticism painting, that depicts a scene from the aftermath of a tragic and fatal crash of the ship Medusa. The reason for this fatal crash was a navigational error at fault of the captain. He was unexperienced, and only chosen to captain the Medusa due to his ties to the monarchy. His incompetence led to the ship's crash, where himself and higher class people on-board used the few lifeboats to secure their own safety, leaving those of the lower classes to perish at sea. However these abandoned people were determined and strived to survive. They constructed a raft out of the broken ship and attempted to seek refuge. Their journey

was long and hard, with many being lost to the sea, starvation or fatal injuries. The use of chiascuro is the symbolic light which is used all throughout this painting, to heighten a sense of drama and tragedy within the work. It is complimentary to the Romanticism style where people were being depicted as self-acclaiming heroes. These strongly contrasting highlights and shadows further reveal the figures and their physical struggles on the raft. It sharpens their muscular idealized forms, despite many of these men dying of malnourishment and in reality would have much skinnier, weaker bodies. The light feels as if it is spread throughout the canvas, illuminating different scenes within the primary scene. Faces of desperation and struggle are bathed in intense highlights and shadows heightening the sense of drama and tragedy within the painting. These people may seem ordinary, but through this contemporary event have emerged as strong, enduring heroes.

The raft itself is a symbol for the bridge between life and death. Many of these starving struggling people have lost the battle and lay at the bottom or edge of the raft. Slowly being taken by the sea and on into the afterlife. However on the right side of the raft there is a man standing tall, waving a red and white cloth, attempting to flag down a nearby boat. He acts as a focal point in this chaotic scene, offering us a sense of hope for their survival. This reveals to the audience that not matter the suffering and discrimination these people have faced, they are not going to give up and give in to this mistreatment. The symbol for the thin barrier between living the dying heightens a sense of drama as viewers wonder the outcome, if these personal heroes will find refuge or be taken by the sea, amplifying the emotional connections between viewers Gericault desired for this work.

*The Oath of the Horatii* is a Neoclassical painting which depicts the scene of 3 brothers swearing to their father that when they battle at Alba they will serve their nation proud and show self-sacrifice for the good of the state. This is almost a suicide mission, promising to not return until the enemy has been overthrown. The brothers themselves are a symbol for the heroism that the French Monarchy aimed to display. This painting was commissioned by King Louis XVI, as almost a propaganda piece for the manerisms and mindset the people of France should display. By painting French people as they were to aspire to be, giving them a moral and human purpose. These three brothers symbolize unity of the French people, sacrificing personal emotion and even their life in order to provide the country with their great service and bring honour to their family. The brother's stance is strong and triangular, the strongest shape revealing their resilience and strength, a symbol of what the French people should aspire to be. As this painting was created during the Neoclassical movement, figures were idealized and the composition was thought-out in order to convey a political message to its viewers. The three brothers appear ready to fight and bring honour to their country.

A second symbol in *The Oath of the Horatii* is the contrasting women on the opposing side of the painting. These women are sisters, and wives of the brothers, weeping and appearing to be overcome by grief and solemn as their loved ones prepare to fight till the death. They are a symbol for the fragile emotional state women during this time were believed to have, as well as the emotional effect the brother's sacrifice would have on those other than themselves. The sharp gender contrast shows that women were not 'strong' enough to endure such hardships and should not be taken seriously. The depiction of this group of people reveals the meanings conveyed about them. The women, bearing the role of wife and mother, but could never be seen as anything more. Their emotions only got in the way, and their slumped figures suggest they don't possess the strength to keep up a brave face. The state of these women reveals the further sacrifice as these brothers are giving up lives spend with their loved ones to show their loyalty to their country, and provide it with a sense of security and power.

Symbols and motifs within art works are very important in order to convey ideas about the time and movement in which the artwork was created. *The Raft of the Medusa* uses symbols of the raft and the chiascuro light to convey the idea of these ordinary, lower-class people harnessing their inner strength to endure this tragic suffering. Whereas in *The Oath of the Horatii*, David uses symbols of the strong agile men, and weeping women to encourage France to fight for the good of their country, despite the emotional turmoil. Symbols and motifs within art allow the viewer to deepen their sense of understanding and emotional connection with it, forging a deeper connection and clarity of what life was like for people when the piece was created. We get to understand not only how people expressed themselves but also how they were aimed to be perceived.

## Merit

**Subject:** Art History

**Standard:** 91181

**Total score:** 06

Grade score	Marker commentary
M6	<p>A well-structured response with meanings related to individuals / groups described in depth in each response. Many responses at this level have a lot of description and contextual background included for each work. While some context should support evidence used, a lot is irrelevant to the question and does not provide significant interpretation of meanings.</p> <p>The specific symbols are explained in depth and use other supporting contextual ideas of propaganda, resilience, and strength vs female emotional weakness in David's work. Ideas of light and personal heroism underpin the <i>Raft</i> evidence.</p>