



Sample assessment task

Year level	10
Learning area	The Arts
Subject	Visual Arts
Title of task	Analysis – Vanitas

Task details

Description of task	Students will view and choose one of the Vanitas inspired artworks studied to critically analyse its content, compositional structure, style, meaning and purpose. Students will use the Four Frames to discuss subjective, structural, cultural and post-modern qualities of the artwork.
Type of assessment	Responding
Purpose of assessment	Using the Four Frames, the purpose of this task will provide both formative and summative assessment on students' ability to apply visual arts language to identify key features and analyse Vanitas artwork.
Assessment strategy	Analysis
Evidence to be collected	Written analysis
Suggested time	Two hours

Content description

Content from the Western Australian Curriculum	<p>Analysis</p> <p>Critical analysis frameworks (STICI, Feldman, Taylor or Four Frames) used to analyse a wide variety of artwork from contemporary and past times</p> <p>Use of visual art language (visual art elements and principles of design), visual conventions and art terminology to respond to artwork (e.g. short answer and extended essay form, video or verbal format)</p> <p>Visual conventions used to refine complex compositional arrangement of artwork (e.g. use of the rule of thirds to create a balanced composition)</p> <p>Social, cultural and historical contexts</p> <p>Artists from different cultural groups and their use of persuasive, communicative or expressive representation</p> <p>Viewpoints identified in a range of artwork from contemporary and past times</p> <p>Representations within a breadth of artwork</p> <p>Interpretation/response</p> <p>Evaluation of their own artwork and the work of others, including consideration of different viewpoints (gender, age, religion, culture) and judgement of the significance of the artwork in a given context</p>
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Task preparation

Prior learning	<p>Students have previously participated in Visual Arts in Years 7, 8 and/or 9. They have knowledge of the creative arts process, various studio techniques and art terminology, and have been introduced to critical analysis frameworks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students will use the Four Frames to respond to a practice sample image – Pieter Claesz’s painting, <i>Still Life with Musical Instruments</i>, with teacher guidance and support. The process of analysis will include group and whole-class discussion as prior learning.• Students will select and analyse one contemporary Vanitas-inspired artwork and make notes, using the Four Frames.• Elements of design: line, tone, colour, shape, texture, form and space• Principles of design: movement, balance, rhythm, emphasis, harmony, pattern, contrast, proportion and unity
Assessment differentiation	<p>Teachers should differentiate their teaching and assessment to meet the specific learning needs of their students, based on their level of readiness to learn and their need to be challenged.</p> <p>Where appropriate, teachers may either scaffold or extend the scope of the assessment tasks.</p>
Assessment task	
Assessment conditions	<p>Analysis notes to be completed in class. Final draft to be completed as homework.</p>
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sample image analysis – Pieter Claesz, <i>Still Life with Musical Instruments (1623)</i> and Vanitas background information• Responding – Vanitas artwork worksheet

Instructions for teachers

Teacher-directed class discussion and note taking on analysis based on a selection of images (Pieter Claesz, Jan Davidszoon de Heem, Chris Peters, Evert Collier, Ricky Swallow or Robyn Stacey) using the Four Frames.

- Class discussion and analysis of sample image – Pieter Claesz, *Still Life with Musical Instruments (1623)* - **one hour**.
- Students will select one contemporary artwork to analyse in detail. They are allowed **two hours in total** to complete their analysis.
- **One hour** for their first note-making draft, using a selected critical analysis framework. This session will also be teacher directed, to assist students with understanding of the stimulus image.
- **One hour** for their final written analysis, to be completed at home. Students are encouraged to use notes made in class to assist them with the assessment.

What to submit:

- Final written analysis.

Actual task instructions

Responding Lesson 1 (60 minutes) – Students will discuss and commence making notes about the features and meaning of the sample image analysis – Pieter Claesz, *Still Life with Musical Instruments (1623)*. Teacher-guided questions can be used to engage student critical discussion of the artwork. An art glossary may be appropriate to assist students with using art terminology, as they talk and write about the image.

Responding Lesson 2 (60 minutes) – Students select one Vanitas-inspired image from provided images. They will be given time to analyse and prepare notes in class and incorporate their personal response to the quote, “I believe in the brief eternity of the rose” – by Marty Rubin, in their analysis of the artwork.

Using notes prepared in class students will complete the analysis at home and submit by the due date. With reference to the quote provided, students re-examine and respond to the image by writing about the artwork, using the Four Frames.

Total – 28 marks

Sample Image Analysis for class discussion – Vanitas paintings

Vanitas is a type of symbolic work of art especially associated with still life painting and popular in the 16th and 17th centuries, during the Golden Age of Dutch art. The Latin word translates and corresponds to the meaningless of earthly life and the transient nature of all earthly goods and pursuits.

Vanitas paintings were often sumptuous arrangements of fruit and flowers, books, statuettes, vases, coins, jewellery, paintings, musical and scientific instruments, military insignia, fine silver and crystal and accompanied by symbolic reminders of life's impermanence. Additionally, a skull, an hourglass or pocket watch, a candle burning down or a book with pages turning would serve as a moralising message on the ephemerality of sensory pleasures. Often, some of the fruits and flowers themselves would be shown starting to spoil or fade to emphasise the same point. Paintings executed in the Vanitas style were meant to remind viewers of the transience of life, the futility of pleasure, and the certainty of death. They also provided a moral justification for painting attractive objects.

These paintings frequently display:

- **Skull:** death, this is a clear *memento mori* message on the transience of life, a universally recognised symbol of death.
- **Watch or hourglass:** time is limited and is passing: therefore, use it wisely.
- **Books:** human knowledge and its temporary nature.
- **Artist instruments**, e.g. palette, brushes, easel: indulgence in the arts, very few could afford to be painters.
- **Shell:** they were normally exotic ones not commonly available in the Netherlands. They were a symbol of the vanity that comes with wealth, as these were exotic items at the time; only a very wealthy person would have one.
- **Insects, decaying flowers:** transience of life. They were inserted in paintings depicting expensive objects as a reminder that life is temporary and moral considerations deserved more attention than material things.
- **Broken or tipped over glassware:** transience of life, or life is fleeting.
- **Musical instruments:** indulgence of the senses as a luxury, sometimes present as artistic inspiration.
- **Silk or velvet tablecloths:** vanity, as these were expensive things: silk being the ultimate fabric material and purple the most expensive dye, hence Roman emperors wore purple tunics.
- **Oriental rugs or carpets:** these were prohibitively expensive items: carpets were placed on tables to avoid stepping on them and causing decay in their colours or integrity. They were a symbol of wealth but also a sign of pride as they were items brought into the United Provinces through trade and commerce.
- **Jewellery, clothes or mirrors:** remember the temporary nature of beauty, wealth and wisdom. Earthly riches are temporary and, therefore, life should be carried out according to the modesty traditions that were in place at the time.
- **Mirror:** a clear symbol of the vanity that should be avoided.
- **Jars:** stoneware or porcelain were used for water or oil, both substance sustain life at the time.

[Adapted from: *Vanitas*. (2015). Retrieved November, 2015, from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vanitas>
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Pieter Claesz
Still Life with Musical Instruments (1623)
Oil on canvas
69 x 122cm

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Claesz,_Pieter_-_Still-Life_with_Musical_Instruments_-_1623.jpg]

Teacher-guided questions

- What is your first impression of this artwork?
- What does this image remind you of? Is there anything that you recognise?
- What emotional reaction do you have to this artwork?
- What puzzles you?
- What are three questions that come to mind when viewing this artwork?
- In what ways are you able to connect with this artwork (memories, personal experiences, dreams...)?
- What do you think creates a barrier between you and this artwork?
- What would you ask the artist?
- When you look at this artwork, where does your eye go first?
- Imagine taking a walk into this painting. Describe what you would see, touch, hear, smell and taste. Look for things that are not shown directly, but are suggested.
- With what medium is this artwork made? What techniques are used?
- What style has the artist employed?
- What subject matter has the artist used?
- What do you think the artist is trying to say through this artwork? What is the meaning?
- Which elements are most significant in this artwork? Use adjectives to describe their particular qualities, e.g. a bold use of line.
- Which principles are most significant in this artwork? Use adjectives to describe their particular qualities, e.g. an informal use of balance.
- Where is the focal point or area of emphasis in this artwork? What do you think makes this part of the image stand out?
- What feelings or emotions does this artwork elicit?
- What is this artwork about? What is the 'story'?
- What big idea does this artwork represent? What themes might the artist have been investigating?
- Does this artwork symbolise something else?

- Does the title add to the meaning of this artwork?
- How do you think you would interpret the artwork differently if you were looking at the original as opposed to a print or digital reproduction?
- How would other people interpret this artwork?
- How does your point of view influence your interpretation of this artwork?
- Can this artwork be interpreted using a particular theory?
- What purpose might it have served or how was it used?
- In what condition is the artwork? Why is it in this condition? What would it have looked like in its original condition?
- For whom was this work made? Who was originally intended to look at this artwork (i.e. individuals, groups, cultures)?
- What period in history was this made? How would this have affected the making of the artwork? How would this time in history have influenced the artist? How would it have determined the visual style and choice of content?
- What connection does this piece have with our present society/culture?

Responding – Vanitas artwork

Contemporary Vanitas paintings

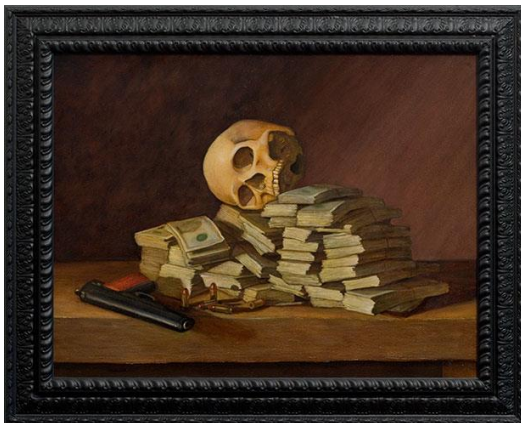
Today, the Vanitas theme is being rediscovered to express our modern-day anxieties about our future. Similar symbols are still used:

- mirrors, glass vases and candles to suggest ephemerality
- bones and skulls to depict death
- books that imply the devalued nature of print culture.

More contemporary items may include:

- plastic bottles of hair and beauty products showing our fascination with commercialism
- photos or suitcases to suggest the transience of life.

Choose from one of the following Vanitas-inspired contemporary artworks studied. Using the Four Frames, analyse its context, composition, structure, style, meaning and purpose. In your response, refer to the quote, “I believe in the brief eternity of the rose” by – [Marty Rubin](#).



Chris Peters
No Protection, 2005
Oil on Canvas
20 x 26 inches
<http://www.chrispeters.com>



Robyn Stacey
Leidenmaster, 2003
Number 1
Type C print
90 x 150cm
<http://www.australianphotographers.org/artists/robyn-stacey/photos#527>



Ricky Swallow

Killing Time

2003–2004

Laminated Jelutong, maple

108.0 x 184.0 x 118.0 cm

<http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/125.2004/>

Using the Four Frames, critically analyse a Vanitas painting of your choice

Attribute your chosen artwork –

TITLE: _____

ARTIST: _____

MEDIUM: _____

YEAR: _____ SIZE: _____

<p>SUBJECTIVE FRAME The personal and psychological experience of the artwork What do you see? What do you feel? In your opinion, what is the dominant mood? What is the intent of the artist? How does the artist <i>want</i> the audience to react? Does this match how you think audiences <i>will</i> react? What techniques does the artist use? <i>Why</i>? Do the colours and shapes used evoke any emotions? What does the artwork remind you of? Are there any connections to your own artwork?</p>	
<p>STRUCTURAL FRAME The methods of communication and the systems of signs Describe the visual language of line, shape, colour, texture, tone, focal point, visual devices lighting, composition and space. To which style, period or art movement does this artwork belong? How do you know? What materials and processes have been used? What symbolic value do the elements and objects in the artwork convey? What are the relationships between the symbols and signs? What formal conventions can you see, e.g. use of perspective, tonal modelling? What cultural conventions can you see, e.g. landscape, portrait, nude? How do all of these elements explain the world at the time and now?</p>	
<p>CULTURAL FRAME The cultural and social meaning of the artwork What cultural group, race, place, identity are represented? Is a particular social class or gender represented? Does the artwork represent a political stance (dissent or support, propaganda or protest)? What ideology is revealed in ideas, concepts, shared beliefs? Are spiritual beliefs explored, either secular or religious? What signs and symbols reveal cultural information? How do these cultural and social meanings affect the art practice of this artist?</p>	
<p>POST-MODERN FRAME The ideas that challenge mainstream values of histories and ideas Is the artwork mainstream or is it outside the mainstream? What makes you say this? Are any elements appropriated or quoted from another source? Explain the source and what meaning is added. Does the appropriation produce humour, irony, parody, wit or playfulness? What is omitted or disregarded? What is re-configured and reinterpreted? What is challenged in social cultural values, beliefs spiritual/secular, power authorities? What is challenged in art practices – classifications, conventions, art movements/styles? What is challenged about art history; the masterpiece, art for art's sake, the role of art?</p>	

Sample marking key	
Description	Marks
Analysis	
Use of art terminology and visual evidence to describe artwork	
Provides a comprehensive description of the artwork, using correct art terminology and relevant visual evidence.	7–8
Provides a clear description of the artwork, using appropriate art terminology and some visual evidence.	5–6
Provides a simple description of the artwork, using some art terminology.	3–4
Provides a cursory description of the artwork, using minimal or no art terminology.	1–2
	8
Use of visual art language and visual conventions and how they contribute to the artwork	
Provides detailed comments about the use of visual art language and visual conventions and how they contribute to the artwork.	7–8
Provides considered comments about the use of visual art language and visual conventions and how they contribute to the artwork.	5–6
Provides general comments about the use of visual art language and visual conventions and how they contribute to the artwork.	3–4
Provides a cursory opinion about the use of visual art language and visual conventions, with little or no reference to how it contributes to the artwork.	1–2
	8
Social, cultural and historical contexts	
Viewpoints in a range of artwork	
Cohesive discussion of contextual viewpoints represented in the artwork.	4
Appropriate discussion of contextual viewpoints represented in the artwork.	3
Literal discussion of contextual viewpoints represented in the artwork.	2
Inconsistent and/or irrelevant discussion of contextual viewpoints represented in the artwork.	1
	4
Representations within artwork	
Accurately describes, in detail, meaning and purpose represented in the artwork.	4
Appropriately describes, in some detail, meaning and purpose represented in the artwork.	3
Literally describes meaning and purpose represented in the artwork.	2
Briefly describes meaning and purpose represented in the artwork.	1
	4
Interpretation/response	
Personal opinions and judgements on the artwork of others	
Provides informed opinions and judgements, with specific reference to the artwork and quote.	4
Provides considered opinions and judgements, with appropriate reference to the artwork and quote.	3
Provides simple personal opinions and judgements with some reference to the artwork.	2
Provides little or no personal opinion and/or judgement about the artwork.	1
	4
Total	28