

Glossary of Art History Terms (for use with the graphic organizer)

1. **Identification:** artist, title, patron, date, medium, size, location, period, style, etc.
2. **Elements and Principles:** A discussion of the piece in terms of the formal elements and principles of design.
 - a. The elements are line, shape, color (hue, value, and saturation), texture, value, space, and form.
 - b. Design principles are balance/symmetry, rhythm/pattern, movement, harmony, contrast, emphasis, proportion/scale, and unity. *Form* is investigated through visual analysis.
3. **Content/Subject:** Content may be narrative, symbolic, spiritual, historical, mythological, supernatural, and/or propagandistic (satirical, protest-oriented, for example).
 - a. Subject matter is visible imagery that may be formal depictions (minimalist or nonobjective works, for example), representative depictions (portraiture and landscape, for example) and/or symbolic depictions (emblems and logos, for example).
 - b. Iconography is pictorial or symbolic material relating to or illustrating subject matter.
4. **Artistic Convention/Innovation:**
 - a. Artistic conventions are traditions or norms of artistic production and artistic products. Artistic conventions are demonstrated through art-making processes (utilization of materials and techniques; mode of display), interactions between works of art and audience, and within form and/or content of a work of art.
 - b. Artistic innovations are changes in artistic choices demonstrated through art-making processes, interactions between works of art and audience, and within form and/or content. Conventions and innovations in form and content may be described in terms of style.
5. **Context/Audience/Function/Purpose:** Context includes information about the time, place, and culture within which a work of art was created as well as information about when, where, and how subsequent audiences interacted with the work. The artist's intended purpose for a work of art is contextual information, as is the chosen site for the work (which may be public or private) as well as subsequent locations of the work. Characteristics of the artist and audiences, including aesthetic, intellectual, religious, political, social, and economic notions of the artist and audiences, are context. Patronage, ownership of a work of art, and other power relationships are also aspects of context. Contextual information includes audience response to a work of art.
 - a. Audiences of a work of art are those who interact with the work as participants, facilitators, and/or observers. Audience characteristics include gender, ethnicity, race, age, socio-economic status, beliefs, and values. Audience groups may be contemporaries, descendants, collectors, scholars, and other artists
 - b. Function includes the artist's intended use(s) for the work and the actual uses of the work, which may change according to the context of audience,

time, location, and culture. Function may be utilitarian, intercessory, decorative, communicative, commemorative, spiritual, social, political, and/or personally expressive.

- c. It is also critical to be able to inquire about the original purpose of a work, since the works we encounter in our lives (in museums and textbooks) are far removed from their original and intended settings. The term “purpose” asks why a work is created in the first place and often refers to its function. Both are ultimately tied to some specific cultural value.

6. ***Art Making Process (Materials and Technique):***

- a. Materials include raw ingredients (such as pigment, wood, limestone), compounds (such as textile, ceramic, ink), and components (such as beads, paper, performance) used to create a work of art.
- b. Techniques include art-making processes, tools and technologies (which accommodate and/or overcome material properties). Techniques range from simple to complex, easy to difficult, and may be practiced by one artist or may necessitate a group effort.

7. ***Comparison:*** Comparing work across time periods and cultures allows for advanced understanding of how art relates to history and to the development of the world. It is important to be able to identify similarities and differences between works and to categorize works based on overarching themes.