

# ARTS 1303 Artwork Analysis Term Paper

## About this Assignment

In this paper, you'll delve into the history and significance of a **specific artwork**. The choice of artwork is **entirely yours**, and I highly recommend selecting something that already resonates with you, whether it be interesting, appealing, or intriguing.

The details to the right cover basic **mechanical aspects** of the paper, but do note that I will be expecting you to follow the **MLA 7** guidelines in this assignment.

You will be analyzing a single artwork of your choice based on the instructions below and the **Grading Rubric** provided. Use of the **Term Paper Glossary** (provided via D2L) will be essential for certain aspects of the paper, and you will need to conduct **light research**, as well.

### Paper Details

- **Required Length:** **2000-3000 words**.
- **Format:** **MLA 7** in-text parenthetical citations.
- **Submission:** Upload via **D2L**.
- **File Type:** **.doc/.docx, .pdf, .odt, or .rtf/.txt** formats accepted.

### Requirements

- Must have a **Works Cited Page**.
  - Minimum sources: **Three (3)**
  - **Only one (1) source can be the textbook.**
  - All sources must be of **appropriate academic quality**. See *Step 2 on page for more details*.
- Each section must be addressed and **clearly labelled**.
- Composed in a **clear** and **coherent** manner.
- **Little to no errors in spelling and grammar, or you will lose points.**

## Step 1: Selecting Your Artwork

### Info/Data to Collect

1. **Title** of the work.
2. Artist's **name** (if any).
3. **Year** of production.
4. What **materials** were used.
5. **Style/Movement/Period** the work is associated with.

This info will be used when **posting your selection**, and must appear at the **top of your term paper** itself.

Before you begin any research of writing, **you must visit a local museum in person to select an artwork to write about**. A list of museums you may choose your work from can be found on D2L.

You will then **post your selection** along with the **five pieces of info** listed to the left here in a Discussion Forum on **D2L**.

You must also provide **proof of your visit** to the museum and **attach an image of said proof** to your discussion post declaring/selecting your artwork. Proof can be a ticket from your visit, a selfie with the artwork in the background, etc.

### Keep in mind the following:

- ★ **No two students may use the same artwork.**
- ★ **You may not select a work that is featured in the textbook.**

Note: #5, 'style', is referring to the **movement** or **larger historical genre** that the artist's work falls within. Sometimes, without a clear genre-based style for the piece, academics will categorize pieces based on other details like the **historical period** the piece comes from.

A prime example of this is a work by **Pablo Picasso** during his most productive period, which would be classified as "**Cubist**" in style. Picasso's work is widely regarded as a **significant contribution to the broader**

**artistic style and movement** known as Cubism.

The case of an **Ancient Greek vase** from roughly **550 BCE** further illustrates the challenge. In the **absence** of evidence for artistic movements or genres in Ancient Greece comparable to those we use today, the most suitable stylistic description we can provide is "**Archaic**". This is because the vase's creation **falls squarely within the Archaic period** of art history in that region.

If your selection isn't posted by the due date below, **you will receive a "zero" for the paper.**

**Artwork must be selected online by 11:59 PM on Sunday, 3/1/26.**

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## Step 2: Gathering Sources & Planning

### Peer-Reviewed, Academic Sources<sup>1</sup>

Find and use **peer-reviewed secondary sources** as you conduct research and find answers to your questions. Unless you are going to do original research for a master's or doctoral thesis, most academic papers use **secondary sources from other researchers**. Secondary sources are **interpretations and analyses** of primary research sources, such as **books, articles, and documentaries**.

Make sure to **document all of the sources that you use** in a research paper. Keeping track of these sources will make your research easier. Collecting and tracking your sources during the research phase can also help when you're putting together bibliographical information for **citing sources**.

Students are expected to ensure their **research sources are properly cited**, both in-text and in the **bibliography page** at the end of the paper. Remember, you'll be citing sources based on the **MLA 7** ruleset.

*Note that we will be using the **citation rules only**. Anything in the MLA guide that details formatting and structuring of the actual paper should be ignored in favor of the instructions given here and in relevant course materials.*

### Using Databases & Search Engines

Utilize databases and search engines to conduct your research. **Academic databases** can help you find relevant published articles and other sources to use.

You can also use a **search engine** such as **Google Scholar** to supplement your research. Google Scholar is very helpful if you are researching a newer topic. This type of search engine might bring up fewer academic materials, but they are still research-based.

Students should only use **non-academic sites** (like Wikipedia) for research during the **beginning phases**. These sites are still useful when you're seeking **background information** or **understanding the big picture** about a broad topic. These sites are not scholarly (although they sometimes include **academic resources in their citations**) so they cannot be used directly when citing your sources.

### Keep Search Terms Specific and Narrow

Make sure to **use specific, narrow search terms** when you are searching for publications to use in your paper. Also, you can narrow your search results by using words such as **“and”** and **“or”** between two different words or put **quotation marks** around a search term. This way, a search engine or database is more likely to provide an exact match to the information you're seeking for your paper.

**Narrowing your search terms** helps you find the **most relevant** articles for your paper, rather than sifting through many articles from broad search terms that yielded too many results.

**For example**, if you do a search for:

Ancient Greek Art

you will **likely get a ton of articles**, with some databases yielding nearly **500k individual articles/papers/etc**. However, if you search:

Archaic Greek Pottery in the Sixth Century BCE

the same database yields only about **7,700 results**. Still a very high amount, but that's where **continued searching as you think of new terms** and making use of **search filters** comes in. It may seem daunting to find your sources amid the flood of information, but **persistence** and a mentality of **narrowing your search's focus more and more** will make it seem surprisingly less difficult.

### Databases to Search

The hyperlinks in the following two subsections will also be made available in **D2L**.

- [JSTOR](#)
- [Project MUSE](#)
- [Oxford Art Online \(includes Grove Art\)](#)
- [Credo Reference](#)
- [EBSCO](#)
- [Gale](#)
- [Academia.edu](#)
- [Google Scholar](#)
- [Google Arts & Culture](#)
- [Heibrunn Timeline of Art History](#)

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<sup>1</sup> Content in “Step 2” reproduced here with minimal editing from:  
Gordon, Robert. “Tips on Writing a Good Research Paper:  
American Public University.” APU, American Public Education, Inc.,  
22 May 2024,  
[www.apu.apus.edu/area-of-study/education/resources/tips-on-writing-a-good-research-paper/](http://www.apu.apus.edu/area-of-study/education/resources/tips-on-writing-a-good-research-paper/).

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## Step 3: Writing Your Paper

### Using an Outline to Organize Your Information

The last step before starting the writing process is to **organize the information** that you've decided to use. Once you've gathered your paper's information, organize it in a way that **makes sense to you**.

You may want to use an **outline** or another tool to help you structure your paper. You may also want to **start a list of key points or quotes** that you may want to use and **keep track of where they came from**.

The sections listed below should form the root structure of your outline. As with any other outline, these would then have lines or bullet points listed below to organize things. For those of you who may not be too familiar with the approach, below is an **example of what an outline for this paper might start out as**:

- I. Subject Matter
  - A. Point #1
    - 1. Citations
  - B. Point #2
    - 1. Citations
- II. Context
  - A. Point #1
    - 1. Citations
  - B. Point #2
- III. Content
  - A. Point #1
    - 1. Citations
  - B. Point #2
    - 1. Citations
  - C. Point #3
    - 1. Citations
- IV. Media & Technique
  - A. Point #1
    - 1. Citations
  - B. Point #2
- V. Formal Analysis
  - A. Term #1
  - B. Term #2
  - C. ...
- VI. Personal Interpretation
  - A. Point #1
    - 1. Citations
  - B. Point #2
  - C. Point #3

Your **Works Cited** page would then follow at the end of the paper. You are welcome to include a brief **Intro/Framing paragraph** to start things off, but this is **not necessary**. If you do choose to write one, please keep it **under 300 words**.

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### On Writing with an Academic/Scholarly Tone

The **tone** of your writing describes its **relative level of formality, polish, and complexity** in comparison to writing you would do elsewhere like emails, texting, journaling, etc. Writing with an academic or scholarly tone is **very important** both for this particular paper as well as your other courses.

Basic rules like **avoiding contractions, not using slang**, and **always completing your thought/sentence** obviously apply, but your **use of vocab** is worth noting, too. Beyond its use in the "Formal Terms" section, the **Glossary found on D2L** is also meant to give you a reference for some **scholarly art terminology to use elsewhere** in your paper. Don't over-use them by forcing multiple terms into a single sentence, but **make sure not to avoid using them**, either.

[This video by David Stuckler](#) does a great job of going through the basic ideas of **what makes a piece of writing "academic"** as well as **how to use this sort of tone** in your own work, like this very term paper (link available on D2L).

Keep in mind that mentions of "**linking paragraphs**" and the like don't really apply to your entire paper, but should be taken into account between paragraphs **in the same section**. There's just no need to "link" each section together in this assignment.

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## LSC Library Guides & Other Tools

[Writing Help for Students](#)

→ Check out the page on [Academic Writing](#)

[LSC Art Resources Guide](#)

[Getting Started](#)

[Research Planner](#)

[LSC Citation Guide](#)

[Chegg MLA Citation Generator/Formatter](#)

[Official MLA Style FAQ](#)

(again, all links available on D2L)

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## Required Sections

Here you can find a brief rundown of each section of the paper. The following sections **must appear** in your finished paper, clearly labelled:

- **Subject Matter**
  - This section describes the actual **visual/physical elements** that make up an artwork.
    - These are the things that actually comprise the artwork **both physically and conceptually**.
  - Tips on how to approach this:
    - First, establish your **sense of space**.
      - What do the **background, midground, and foreground** look like?
      - What's the floor **made out of**, is the background a nature scene, etc.?
    - From there, simply begin to **identify as many unique elements of the work as you can**. If it's clear what the element is meant to represent, **that should be conveyed to the reader** of your paper.
  - Now you need to begin studying the **relationships between these elements**—how they **interact** with one another.
    - Consider what the **focus** of the piece is? People, landscape, a portrait, etc.
    - If people, what are they **doing**? How are they **dressed**?
    - If landscape, what sort of **environment/biome** is represented? Mountains, plains, forest, urban/city/town, etc.?
  - Remember, try and write this section **as if you had to describe your chosen piece to a blindfolded person**. The idea is for your description to be well-written to the point where this person **won't be surprised** when they **take off the blindfold** and look at the piece for themselves.
- **Context**
  - These are the **conditions of the artwork's creation**.
    - This includes information like:
      - Where the artist was born/from
      - Where the work was actually made
      - The time period the work was made in
      - The artist's spiritual/religious identity
      - If the work was made for a specific patron
      - The artist's ethnic/cultural identity
      - The genre/movement the piece belongs to
  - This isn't really all that different from how we use the word 'context' in **everyday speech**. It's basically the **background info** for the piece you've chosen.
    - The only major difference is that you're likely going to have to **explain what certain things are** without unpacking their **symbolic meaning**.
- **Content**
  - This is the **meaning** behind the piece.
  - The most **reliable** way to get to this information is to take what you found in the **Subject Matter** section and **combine** it with what you found about the work's **Context**.
    - It's the **contextual information** that helps **explain** both **why** certain pieces of subject matter were used and **what they mean/meant** in the artwork's original time and place.
  - You should also look for papers and such by **established scholars** that speak to the **meaning of your chosen work**.
    - You can either use their work as a **foundation** for your own conclusions, as a point to **argue against**, and/or to **form part of your argument**.
- **Media & Technique**
  - Here you'll be discussing the **materials used in the artwork**, as well as the way they are used.
  - In other words, not just **what it's made of**, but also **how that material is used**.
    - Ex: If analyzing a painting, is the paint itself being "thrown around" wildly like Van Gogh and/or early Delacroix? Are the brushstrokes invisible like in a Renaissance or Neoclassical piece?
  - The same applies to the **use of color**.
    - How are they using this element of the artwork? Is it explicitly vital for understanding the content? Are there any points where the use of a certain color pops or stands out to you? How/why did that catch your attention?
  - You must also provide **comparative examples** in your analysis for maximum points in this section.
- **Formal Analysis**
  - This section will test your **correct usage of art history terms**.
  - The rubric details how many terms correctly used relates to the scoring of the section, but ideally you will **successfully use five (5) terms** from the Term Paper Glossary (*found on D2L*).
    - Also as stated in the rubric, more **insightful and/or complex application of terms** in a novel way will result in a higher score than just simply using five (5) terms correctly.

Continued on the following page...

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- **Personal Interpretation**
  - This is where you simply get to **share your thoughts on your work as you see fit**.
    - *You still need to maintain an **academic tone** and add **citations** as needed.*
  - I recommend you consider **why you were drawn to this particular work**. Was it the **color**, the **form**, the **detail**, the **skill**, it was just **pretty**, etc.?
- I want to see **evidence** that you've:
  - **Thought deeply** and genuinely considered what **connection** you have to this piece after researching it for the paper,
  - Actually **absorbed and understood** the information presented in your paper,
  - Taken the time to consider **how your perspective and personal context** might affect the meaning you see in the artwork.

Refer to the **Grading Rubric** for guidelines on what each of these aspects of your paper should cover. By using the rubric, you can safely estimate the grade you'll receive for your paper.

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## Step 3.5: Rough Draft

You will also be required to turn in a **rough draft** of your paper by the date listed below. The draft is required to be **at least 1000 words**, but they don't have to be consecutive sections.

For example, if you left the Content section for later and don't have it figured out by the date below, you would **simply turn in what you have written**. If that both **meets the minimum word count** and what is written shows **evidence of quality academic work**, then it won't matter which parts specifically have been completed.

Complete citations aren't required for the draft, but a **Works Cited page is required**.

**Rough Drafts are due by 11:59 PM on Sunday, 4/12/26.**

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## Step 4: Submitting Your Paper

Once you're happy with your work and have reviewed it against the Grading Rubric, you will **upload your paper to D2L**.

*Files must be in one of the **approved formats**.*

If the file is **unreadable**, I won't be able to assign it a grade and **it will be recorded as a "zero" for the assignment**.

### Google Docs Issue/Warning

If you use Docs to write your paper, and I highly suggest that you do, please make sure you are downloading your paper **in the correct format** and then uploading that file.

If you try to upload a **Google Docs formatted file**, it will **not be read** by the system.

Sharing the file via Google's **share menu** is also **disallowed** as it bypasses the *Turnitin.com* software we use at LSC. **You must upload a readable file** of your paper (*and/or email me a copy*) for full credit.

**Finished Papers are due by 11:59 PM on Sunday, 5/10/26.**

**LATE ASSIGNMENTS  
WILL NOT  
BE ACCEPTED**