

Analyzing Cultural Context

These are vocabulary you might find helpful when analyzing cultural context or formatively assessing art:

Category	Question Words	Example
evaluation	Judge, appraise, evaluate, assess	How effective is Munch's use of color to express his feelings?
synthesis	Compose, construct, design, predict	Make a color study in Munch's style.
analysis	Compare, contrast, examine, analyse	Contrast Edvard Munch's use of color to that of Van Gogh and Caspar David Friedrich
application	Interpret, apply, use, demonstrate	Take a series of photographs influenced by Edvard Munch's compositions.
comprehension	Restate, discuss, describe, explain	Describe the differences between Friedrich's and Munch's use of color.
knowledge	Who, what, when? Define, recall, list	List five key aspects of Edvard Munch's style.

Why was this art piece made?		
For Status	To enhance the power or social standing of the owner. To display wealth (through the use of precious materials, skilled craftsmanship or the creative originality of the artist).	
For Ritual	As a part of a religious celebration, or as a votive offering to ask for forgiveness, as an icon to worship, to attain spiritual enlightenment	
For Education	To teach, to tell a story	
To Understand the Human Condition	Through the representation of abstract concepts and feelings	
As Propaganda	A one-sided message aimed to distort the truth for political advantage	
As Documentary	To record an event	
To Question	The role of art is often to make us see with fresh eyes	
For self Expression	For personal expression of the artist	
For contemplation	To enjoy art for its aesthetic beauty Art for art's sake	
For decoration		
For catharsis	To release emotions Art therapy	

What key historical events occurred at the time the work was created?

Example: How did the French Revolution influence the paintings of Jacques Louis David?

Where was this artist living and working?

What events in the world were happening around them?

What scientific discoveries or technological innovations may have influenced the artist?

Example: How did the invention of the printing press in Europe influence the spread of religion, ideas, and art?

Example: How did Freud's theories on the unconscious and dreams influence the paintings of Salvador Dali?

Were there any scientific discoveries during the time the artist was working?

How does technology impact the artists ability to create work? Does it make it easier or harder for them?

What are the other artistic influences on the work?

Example: How is Picasso influenced by the paintings of Cezanne?

Who were the other artists working at the same time?

Was the artist a pupil or did they study under another artist?

How is their art different than these other people they knew? How is it similar?

What are the philosophical ideas of the time?

Example: How does The Matrix reflect Post Modern Theory?

What are the prevailing artistic theories during the time the artist was working?

How might those theories be reflected or rejected by the artist in their work?

What are the cultural influences?

Example: The impact of socialism on the art of early Communist Russia.

Does the artist live in a society that is individualistic or collectivistic?

How are women regarded in the culture that produced the work?

Is society highly classified by social or economic status?

Who is the intended audience?