

## SAMPLE ESSAY

### Arts 1301 Introduction to Visual Arts

1. Student's Name
2. Course #1301
3. Session (16-week or 12-week)
4. Essay #
5. Chapters:
  - A. Chapter Nineteen: Arts of East Asia: India, China, and Japan
  - B. Chapter Twenty-One: The Modern World: 1800-1945
6. Concepts:
  - A. Art for Everyone: Edo from Chapter 19.
  - B. Realism from Chapter 21.
7. Examples:
  - A. For Art for Everyone: Edo, the example I chose is titled, "Evening Shower at Nihonbashi Bridge" (1832) by Utagawa Hiroshige. It can be found on the Brooklyn Museum website:  
[http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/633/Evening\\_Shower\\_at\\_Nihonbashi\\_Bridge,\\_from\\_Celebrated\\_Places\\_in\\_the\\_Eastern\\_Capital\\_\(Toto\\_Meisho\)](http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/633/Evening_Shower_at_Nihonbashi_Bridge,_from_Celebrated_Places_in_the_Eastern_Capital_(Toto_Meisho))
  - B. For Realism, my internet example is "Going to Market" (1851) by Rosa Bonhuer and can be found at the Art Institute of Chicago website:  
<http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/artwork/111611>
8. Quotations:
  - A. "But the great artistic event of the Edo period was the popularity of woodblock prints, a new form that made art available to everyone" (p.485).
  - B. "Realist artists sought to depict the everyday and the ordinary, rather than the historic, the heroic, or the exotic" (p. 508)
9. For Art for Everyone: Edo, my personal example is artwork in waiting rooms.
10. For the Realism, my personal example is my reaction to realist artists (my sister).

Japanese art, just as all other art across the world, has evolved and gone through trends. Although there are many differences among countries at one period of time, you will find that trends seem to make their way around the globe and expand to represent a certain style of that certain period. One example would be art from the modern world, which includes a time frame from 1800 through 1945. Realism was a popular theme and style for many artists in this particular time period. Basically, artists chose to produce pieces which displayed everyday actions instead of unordinary or extraordinary subjects. Everyday activities can often make for beautiful pieces of artwork.

One example of Japanese art which encompasses the theme of realism is Utagawa Hiroshige's piece titled, "Evening Shower at Nihonbashi Bridge" (1832). This piece depicts a situation we have all found ourselves in, even in our modern times. People are crossing a bridge in a hurry because it has started raining. All of the people in the piece are holding Japanese umbrellas to shield themselves from the rain. Due to the depiction of everyone carrying an umbrella is an implication that the rain was not unexpected. It is not clear where they are coming from, but it seems that they are returning home. The one side of the bridge is represented and it appears that this side contains houses and shelter. One may assume that the other side of the bridge may be the market place and more urban part of the town. Another clue to the absent side being urban and the shown side being housing is that all of the people are running in the same direction. There is not one person traveling in the opposite direction. If the other side is in fact a market place, once the rain started, all of the activity and business probably ended. This is only my opinion of the absent side of the bridge. I could be entirely wrong since no person seems to be carrying any bags or items. However we are only getting glimpses of their backs and one view of the image. I only stated my guess of where they are coming from because I am trying to show the realistic approach the artist has used. Regardless of where the people are coming from, it can be implied that they are running home. To relate this and show just how common the activity is, think about when you run errands. If you hear in the forecast that it might rain or walk outside and see clouds when you are about to leave, you first grab an umbrella. Then you try to run as many errands as possible before it starts raining. In addition, for the most part, once it actually starts pouring, we all do our best to get home as soon as possible. This is not an everyday situation, but it is common everywhere across the globe and is not unfamiliar to anyone.

As stated earlier, there are common themes across the globe, but each particular region has a way of characterizing the theme to fit their own specific style. Using Hiroshige's piece as the same example, we can further go into detail about the piece and see that it is a woodblock print which was a part of the Edo period of Japan. The Edo period was a period in which just about anyone was able own a nice piece of artwork. Art was not only available to the wealthy anymore. Although this type of artwork seems simple, it still carries artistic beauty. The artists who created the woodblock prints created simple and flat designs that could be produced easily, so many people could purchase and have their own art. Furthermore, if the pieces contained the theme of realism, just about anyone could relate to the art pieces. Artwork of common situations and scenes that were simply produced were a common fad of Japan during the modern period.

To understand what woodblock prints were, we can simply think of those pictures in the waiting rooms at doctor's offices that we can never help but to stare at. A couple of visuals include a single country cottage in a huge field or a forest with a single deer or even a picture of a mountain scene with a stream and a single empty canoe on the side of the stream. We all know that the offices usually put the photos up to calm the patients by not putting them in a room with empty walls. The pictures are almost never originals and we can only assume that they are massively produced. They are done so because, this way, artwork can be cheap and available to everyone. The pieces are often simple and

give a sense of peace and serenity. It appears that the woodblock prints were produced to have the same effect. Whenever I look at these pieces, I get distracted and stare at the picture. By looking at all of the elements, I distract myself and often become more calm than when I walked into the doctor's office.

When I was younger, my older sister was in an Advanced Placement Art class. I always remember her bringing her artwork home and working on it. She would start out with some weird shapes and colors and end up with beautiful pieces of artwork and although I always saw different phases of her pieces from start to finish, I never really understood how she did it. I remember that there was this one semester where her theme was hands. Every piece had to focus on hands. All the pieces that she did had the common theme of realism. A few examples included my grandmothers hands making tortillas (which she did every night), my little brother's hands playing with blocks, and one of a male hand placing a wedding ring on a woman's hand. My favorite was the one of my little brother's hands playing with blocks, but I never really thought much about it except that it looked so real and I would probably never be able to do that. The piece was of an image just about everyone could relate to. Of course, my brother has drastically aged since then. He was about three years old then and now he's fourteen. When I look back, I think how my brother's hands playing with the blocks was so common back then and took the image for granted. Now, when I walk into my mom's house and see that picture I appreciate her effort in taking time to beautifully create an image that was common then. I admire artists that create scenes that are common and see the beauty at that time, even though others may take it for granted. At one time or another, every piece of artwork that displays a common scene will be appreciated.