PRACTICE SET 4

Passage III: The Professional Artist and the Ruling Class

5 questions (88–92) · suggested time 9 minutes

1. Read the passage and answer all 5 questions on your own. No notes.
2. Check your answers with the key on the last page.
3. Watch the walkthrough video to see how each question is broken down.

Passage III

The relationship of the professional artist to the class that ruled or aspired to rule was complicated, various and should not be simplified. [The artist's] training however – and it was . . . training which made [the artist] a professional – taught [the artist] a set of conventional skills. That is to say, [the artist] became skilled in using a set of conventions . . . of composition, drawing, perspective, chiaroscuro, anatomy, poses, symbolism. And these conventions corresponded so closely to the social experience–or anyway to the social manners – of the class [the artist] was serving, that they were not even seen as conventions but were thought of as the only way of recording and preserving eternal truths. Yet to the other social classes such professional painting appeared to be so remote from their own experience, that they saw it as a mere social convention, a mere accoutrement of the class that ruled over them: which is why in moments of revolt, painting and sculpture were often destroyed.

During the 19th century certain artists, for consciously social or political reasons, tried to extend the professional tradition of painting, so that it might express the experience of other classes. . . . Their personal struggles, their failures, and the opposition they met with, were a measure of the [ambition] of the undertaking. Perhaps one pedestrian example will give some idea of the extent of the difficulties involved. Consider Ford Madox Brown's well known painting of *Work*. . . . It shows a team of [laborers], with passers-by and bystanders, working on a sidewalk. It took the painter ten years to complete, and it is, at one level, extremely accurate. But it looks like a religious scene. . . . Some would argue that this is because the artist's attitude to his subject was ambivalent. I would argue that . . . all the visual means he was using with such care pre-empted the possibility of depicting manual work, as the main subject of a painting, in any but a mythological or symbolic way.

Passage continues on next page

The crisis provoked by those who tried to extend the area of experience to which painting might be open . . . continued into the 20th century. But its terms were reversed. The tradition was indeed dismantled. Yet, except for the introduction of the Unconscious, the area of experience from which most European artists drew remained surprisingly unchanged. Consequently, most of the serious art of the period dealt either with the experience of various kinds of isolation, or with the narrow experience of painting itself. The latter produced painting about painting, abstract art.

One of the reasons . . . the potential freedom gained by the dismantling of the tradition was not used may be . . . the way painters were still trained. In the academies and art schools they first learnt those very conventions which were being dismantled. This was because no other professional body of knowledge existed to be taught. . . .

Thus, the extreme of abstract art demonstrates, as an epilogue, the original [uncertainty] of professional art: an art in reality concerned with a selective, very reduced area of experience, which nevertheless claims to be universal.

Material used in this test passage has been adapted from the following source:
J. Berger, *About Looking*. ©1980 by J. Berger.

88 The main argument of the passage is that:

(A) the relationship between artists and the ruling classes throughout history has been complex and difficult to understand.

(B) artists of the past required strong professional training in order to do work that would appeal to the ruling classes.

(C) the professional training of artists has served to limit the areas of experience from which they draw their subjects.

(D) artists who attempt to abandon conventional methods must confront a great deal of opposition from the ruling classes.

Continued on next page

89 In the context of the passage, the term *tradition* refers primarily to the:

(A) best way to record and preserve eternal artistic truths.

(B) set of artistic conventions that correspond to the social manners of a ruling elite.

(C) system of applying mythological or symbolic elements to realistic subjects.

(D) expansion of the area of artistic experience to include the unconscious.

90 The passage implies that art is at its best when it:

(A) transcends conventions.

(B) records eternal truths.

(C) reflects social manners.

(D) treats religious themes.

91 According to the passage, why did past artistic conventions most likely correspond so closely to the social manners of the ruling classes?

(A) Artists were interested in the narrowness and isolation of the ruling classes as a historical phenomenon.

(B) Artists felt that the experiences of the ruling classes were the only kinds of activity worth recording.

(C) Artists aspired to the wealth and power of the ruling classes.

(D) Artists looked to the members of the ruling classes for financial support.

92 The discussion of Ford Madox Brown's painting *Work* shows primarily that:

(A) the process of expanding the subject matter of professional art is complex and extremely difficult to achieve.

(B) art that deals with realistic subjects is more powerful than abstract art.

(C) the problems inherent in expanding the subject matter of art are still with us today.

(D) the relationship between the professional artist and the ruling classes is complicated and should not be simplified.

Finished all 5 questions?

Only check the key once you've committed to an answer for every question.

YOUR ANSWERS

88	89	90	91	92	Score / 5
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	

Q	ANSWER	
88	C	the professional training of artists has served to limit the areas of experience from which they draw their subjects.
89	B	set of artistic conventions that correspond to the social manners of a ruling elite.
90	A	transcends conventions.
91	D	Artists looked to the members of the ruling classes for financial support.
92	A	the process of expanding the subject matter of professional art is complex and extremely difficult to achieve.

NOW WATCH THE WALKTHROUGH

Solving CARS AAMC MCAT Passage-Based Questions

Every question broken down step by step: what each paragraph is doing, where the evidence is, and why each wrong option is wrong.