

Class 8 History The Changing World of Visual Arts

Question 1

Fill in the blanks:

1. The art form which observed carefully and tried to capture exactly what the eye saw is called _____.
2. The style of painting which showed Indian landscape as a quaint, unexplored land is called _____.
3. Paintings which showed the social lives of Europeans in India are called _____.
4. Paintings which depicted scenes from British imperial history and their victories are called _____.

Solution:

1. The art form which observed carefully and tried to capture exactly what the eye saw is called the idea of realism.
2. The style of painting which showed the Indian landscape as a quaint, unexplored land is called picturesque landscape painting.
3. Paintings which showed the social lives of Europeans in India are called portrait painting.
4. Paintings which depicted scenes from British imperial history and their victories are called history paintings.

Question 2

Point out which of the following were brought in with British art:

- (a) oil painting
- (b) miniatures
- (c) life-size portrait painting
- (d) use of perspective
- (e) mural art

Solution:

The following were brought in with British art:

- (a) Oil painting
- (c) Life-size portrait painting
- (d) Use of perspective

Question 3

Describe in your own words one painting from this chapter which suggests that the British were more powerful than Indians. How does the artist depict this?

Solution:

In the painting 'The Auriel and Dashwood Families of Calcutta', painted by Johann Zoffany, you see Thomas Dashwood and Charlotte Lousia Auriel entertaining guests. There are various Indian servants serving tea. The British are seen seated or standing regally in a sprawling lawn. The Indians are shown as submissive and inferior to the British. They are placed in the background. Thus the picture suggests that the British were more powerful than Indians.

Question 4

Why did the scroll painters and potters come to Kalighat? Why did they begin to paint new themes?

Solution:

1. In Bengal, in the vicinity of pilgrimage center of the temple of Kalighat, local village scroll

painters (called patuas) and potters (called kumors in eastern India and kumhars in north India) began developing a new style of art.

- They moved from the surrounding villages into Calcutta in the early 19th century as at this time the city was expanding as “a commercial and administrative center.
- The city appeared as a place of opportunity where people could come to make a new living and get new patrons and new buyers of their art.

2. Before the 19th century, the village patuas and kumors had worked on mythological themes and produced images of gods and goddesses.

- With the rapid changes coming in social values, tastes, norms and customs, Kalighat artists responded by painting social and political themes.

Question 5

Why can we think of Raja Ravi Varma’s paintings as national?

Solution:

Raja Ravi Varma mastered the Western art of oil painting and realistic life study, but painted themes from Indian mythology. He dramatised on canvas, scene after scene from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. From the 1880s, Ravi Varma’s mythological paintings became the rage among Indian princes and art collectors.

Question 6

In what way did the British history paintings in India reflect the attitudes of imperial conquerors?

Solution:

The British history paintings sought to dramatise and recreate various episodes of British imperial history. These paintings celebrated the British power, their victories, and their supremacy. The imperial history paintings attempted to create a public memory of imperial triumphs. Victories had to be remembered, implanted in the memory of people, both in India and Britain. Only then could the British appear invincible and all-powerful.

Question 7

Why do you think some artists wanted to develop a national style of art?

Solution:

1. In Bengal, a new group of nationalist artists gathered around Abanindranath Tagore (1871-1951), rejected the art of Ravi Varma as imitative and westernised.

- They felt that a genuine Indian style of painting had to draw inspiration from non-Western art traditions and try to capture the spiritual essence of the East.
- They turned for inspiration to medieval Indian traditions of miniature painting and the ancient art of mural painting in the Ajanta caves.
- They were influenced by Rajput miniatures.
- They were also influenced by the art of Japanese artists who visited India at that time to develop an Asian art movement.

2. After the 1920s, a new generation of artists began to break away from the style of Abanindranath Tagore.

- Some thought that spiritualism
- Some thought that spiritualism could not be seen as the central feature of Indian culture.
- They felt that artists had to explore real-life instead of illustrating ancient books.

- Look for inspiration from living folk art and tribal designs.

3. As the debates continued, new movements of art grew and styles of art changed.

Question 8

Why did some artists produce cheap popular prints? What influence would such prints have had on the minds of people who looked at them?

Solution:

Raja Ravi Varma painted scenes from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. During the 1880s, Ravi Varma's mythological paintings became the rage among Indian princes and art collectors, who filled their palace galleries with his works.

As his paintings became very popular, Ravi Varma set up a picture production team and Printing press on the outskirts of Bombay. Here colour prints of his religious paintings were mass-produced. Even the poor could now buy these cheap prints.