



Understanding Standards

Support pack for National course assessment

C805 77

**Art and Design (Advanced Higher):
Expressive Portfolio evidence**

Identifier: Glacial Landscapes

**This pack contains candidate evidence.
It must be kept securely.**

This edition: October 2019

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Contents

Overview	1
Candidate evidence – contextual analysis	2

Please note:

The materials in this pack were used as part of the (subject) Understanding Standards event in (September 2019).

Overview

Purpose

Understanding Standards packs are intended to provide teachers, lecturers and assessors with a clear understanding of the marks that have been awarded to specific examples of candidate evidence and the reasons why these have been awarded. They may be used in centres:

- ◆ to prepare for the assessment of the relevant course component
- ◆ as benchmarks to help assessors judge the evidence produced by their own candidates
- ◆ for training purposes

The commentary and candidate evidence should be read in conjunction with the relevant coursework assessment task and the marking instructions.

Candidate evidence – contextual analysis

Further expressive portfolio evidence for this candidate can be found here:

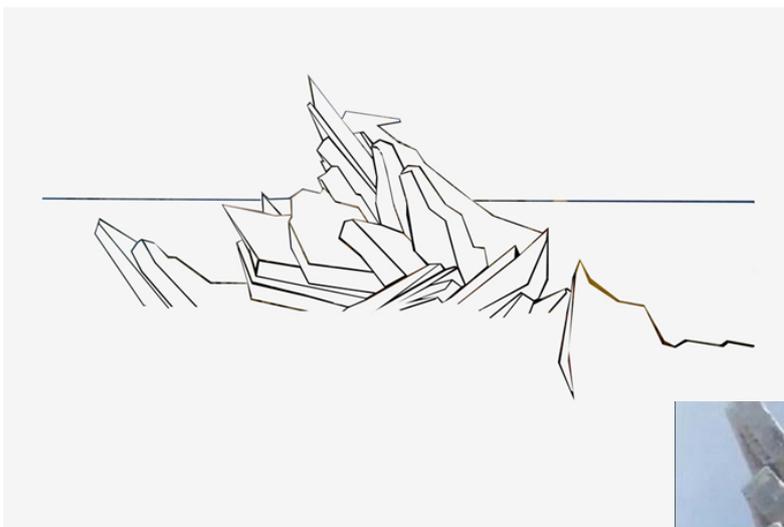
<https://www.understandingstandards.org.uk/Subjects/ArtandDesign/AdvancedHigher/ExpressivePortfolio>

The Wreck of Hope

When I first saw “The Wreck of Hope” by Caspar David Friedrich, it looked to me like a ruined building, the ice in the foreground was like big bits of concrete that had collapsed over each other in some disaster movie. However, I soon understood it was an icy landscape painting and when I looked at the ice and snow in the main composition, it is a picture of sea ice in the Arctic.



The composition shows a great jagged stack of ice that is leaning over to one side as if it has been blasted by a storm. It also looks as though it is falling through a massive hole in the ice. The diagonal angle of the ice is repeated three or four times in the composition: in a yellowish shard in the foreground and in two other repeated sheets of ice. It is also repeated in the background in a small version of the whole stack of ice that is leaning at the same angle and this diagonal is even seen in some clouds. The effect of this repetition is to give the feeling of movement, like some dramatic act of nature like a blizzard blowing across scene. As well as the diagonal lines falling from right to left, there are also shards that fall in the opposite direction, this might seem to stop the feeling of movement, but it is more like they are leaning into the wind, so they make the movement even greater.



The ice in the foreground gives the feeling that you can't balance properly, the ground looks unstable because it is cracking in jagged layers piled up on each other. The foreground is also quite dark, the steps of ice look dirty like the brown snow and ice you get when it thaws. This makes the picture look all the harsher and more dismal. The sky adds to this, though it is light, it seems to be darkening, it is the last bit of light in the day. The darkness is like a shadow that gradually lightens and gets misty as you look further into the distance until, in the very far distance all you can see is like a haze of fog or where things disappear.

On the very far horizon, just at the point where you can hardly see anything, there are some further details, you don't see them at first, but when you look closely you see things that look like ice mountains, their shape is not unlike the central ice stack, but they look bigger. The effect of this movement from close up to far distance is the sense of a vast space that reaches far beyond the scope of the picture. Though we see a scene of ice and snow, it is only one small part of a huge landscape.



The size of this landscape is made even bigger by comparison to another detail. At first you don't see it, but, as you look across the pile of ice, you can make out what seems to be part of an old sailing ship, the rail along the edge of the hull of the boat can be seen in detail and there seems to be a bit of the mast. The boat has completely collapsed on its side, a large sheet of ice is lying over it as if it has been crushed by the weight and size of the freezing ice flow. This impression is even greater when we pick out tiny details of masts in other bits of the painting. They are very small in comparison to the vast icy stack and if anyone survived the crush, they would be a tiny speck in the composition, but there is no sign of any human life. It is the bare, empty quality of the picture that is striking, not a tree or a stream, just the remnants of a boat, where are the people? Imagining the Arctic



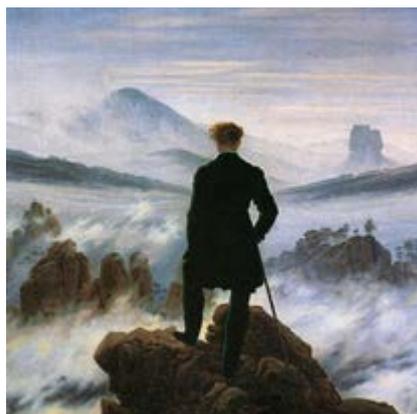
When Caspar David Friedrich took on the challenge of painting ice flows, he had an emotional reaction to the subject, but for the details of the scene he was going to paint, he had no first-hand knowledge. He had no idea what the Arctic looked like and had only the written accounts of icebergs, sea ice and blizzards to go on. He had to find something that was even slightly like the scenes described. He had already painted snow scenes, but nothing like the Arctic. He went to the river Elbe in midwinter and made studies of ice flows. They are detailed notes on the way ice and snow crush together and pile up, he had also made drawings of rocks that layer, split and fall in much the same way.

The studies had a direct influence on how he painted the foreground and for the central stack of ice he might have taken ideas from a painting of the layers of rock on a small island he had painted earlier. This does not seem enough, but for a Romantic artist, imagination was important. He said, "The artist should not only paint what he sees before him, but also what he sees within him."



What he meant was that it is not good enough just to copy what you see; you must also express what is in your mind's eye. What you feel and what you imagine. Romantic art is very personal so often Friedrich preferred to paint scenes that were slightly unclear.

"when a landscape is covered in fog, it appears larger more sublime, and heightens the strength of the imagination and excites expectation. The eye and fantasy feel themselves more attracted to the hazy distance than to that which lies near and distinct before us". Friedrich's art was inspired by his love of nature and his believe that the keys to symbolising human moods and conditions. The beauty and awesome grandeur of nature seen through mist was inspiring to Friedrich and in "Wanderer in the Mists" we see the artist from behind so that we see what he is seeing.



Friedrich finished the “Wreck of Hope” in 1822, when the painting was first shown it was called “An Idealized Scene of an Arctic Sea, with a Wrecked Ship on the Heaped Masses of Ice”, a long title that then became, “Ice Picture”. The reason is possibly because the picture was not well received. The scene had too many things that were not easily recognised, like it was semi-abstract. Although there was a liking for disaster paintings, the public preferred to have some figures that would help them to identify with the action. One critic wrote, “If only the ice painting of the North Pole would melt once and for all.” He seems to want to get rid of the cold harshness of the work.

The Arctic in literature

To almost everyone in the early 19th Century, the Arctic seemed as remote and unknown as the moon is today, but, as a barren wasteland of emptiness, it had a place in the imagination of Romantic poets, writers and artists. “this was not a geographical Arctic, it was an Arctic of the mind.” People were fascinated by explorers’ accounts of the endless expanses of ice and snow, of the freezing temperatures of 50 below, of “ice blink” and “frost smoke” and the treks towards an endless misty horizon.

“To the Romantic mind the Arctic was a soulless, Godless, blank space, an empty page that was open to creative ideas.”

The most famous Romantic book to feature the Arctic appeared at exactly the time of Friedrich’s painting. It was Mary Shelly’s Frankenstein. In the book, “the creature” created by Dr Frankenstein escapes to the Arctic. He wanders around this bleak place as Victor looks for him. “We are still surrounded by mountains of ice, still in imminent danger of being crushed in their conflict. The cold is excessive, and many of my unfortunate comrades have already found a grave amidst this scene of desolation” it turns out that the blank expanse of the Arctic is a place for “the creature” to die, he is crushed by the ice.



After Friedrich's death, the picture of "Sea Ice" became more popular and it got the title "The Wreck of Hope" by now a route round the North had been found and most people had forgotten the details of Parry's voyage. The picture took on a new meaning, it stood for, "the hopelessness of man's struggle with the elements"

Today's Artists

In 2014 the artist Guy Laramée made his tribute to the painting, it consists of a petrol drum with a port hole we look through the hole and see the painting of the ice. Laramée wants us to see the picture through the lenses of our own time. The ice is now melting fast through the effects of carbon on global warming and oil tankers stream through the North West Passage. We can only look through the porthole at our own "Wreck of Hope".



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