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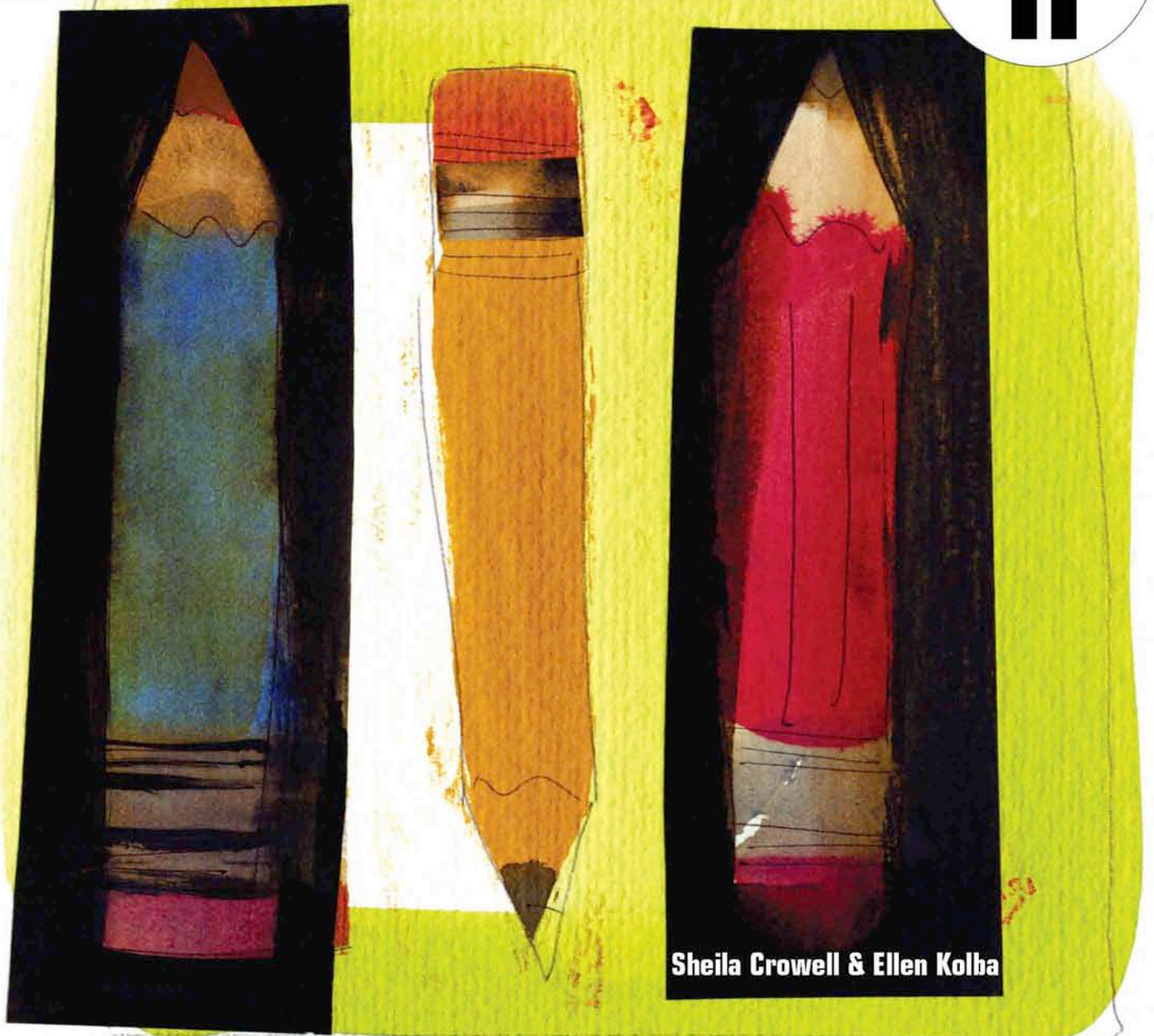


Write It Out

*Mastering Short and Extended Responses
to Open-Ended Questions*

LEVEL

H



Sheila Crowell & Ellen Kolba

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Lesson 1

What Makes a Good Answer?

After you read the following selection, you will be asked to draw a conclusion.

Faces on the Mountainside

A prehistoric figure made from an animal's bone. A wooden mask from Africa. A gargoyle carved into the stone of a European cathedral. A Native American totem pole depicting a tribal legend. A piece of modeling clay carefully rolled and pinched and patted by the chubby fingers of a young child.

What do all of these objects have in common? Each one is a piece of sculpture. Sculpture is one of humanity's oldest forms of art. The term *sculpture* is very general. An artist who creates a piece of sculpture is called a *sculptor*. As the examples above illustrate, sculpture encompasses a wide range of styles and materials. Some sculptors carve wood. Some chip away at a chunk of marble to release the figure hidden inside. Others begin with clay models and then cast them in bronze.

Sculpture comes in a great variety of sizes, too. A sculpture may be a small, elegant piece of art designed to be viewed and admired at close range. A marble bust displayed in a museum is a sculpture. So is the larger-than-life statue you may come across in a park or in front of a government building.

Some sculptors' imaginations work on an even grander scale. One of these large-scale thinkers was John Gutzon de la Mothe Borglum. Gutzon Borglum, as he preferred to be known, was an American sculptor who lived from 1867 until 1941. Early in his career, he studied with Auguste Rodin, the French sculptor. Back home in the United States, Borglum put his training to good use. The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City purchased one of his pieces, *The Mares of Diomedes*. This was the first piece of American art in the museum's collection. Several of his sculptures, including a bust of Abraham Lincoln, were displayed in the United States' Capitol.

Gutzon Borglum was an ambitious man. He did not see himself as a traditional sculptor, content to work in marble or bronze. He needed a more spectacular way to express his artistic vision. In the mid-1920s, Gutzon Borglum found the challenge he had been seeking. He was commissioned to create a memorial to the American West in the Black Hills of South Dakota. This was to be no ordinary monument. He was going to carve it into the side of a mountain.

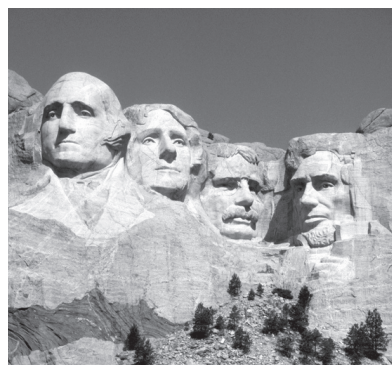
This paragraph draws a conclusion about the items listed above it.

What conclusion can you draw about Borglum's art?

Borglum soon began to believe that the original Western focus for the grand sculpture was too limiting. He thought that the sculpture should represent a more universal theme. Saying that a “monument’s dimensions should be determined by the importance to civilization of the events commemorated,” Borglum decided to create a monument to America and American ideals. He would carve the likenesses of four American presidents into the side of Mount Rushmore. George Washington represented America’s fight for independence. Thomas Jefferson represented government by the people. Abraham Lincoln represented equality and the union of all the states. Theodore Roosevelt represented modern America and its role in world affairs.

Borglum designed Mount Rushmore, but it took a team of 400 miners to bring his vision to life. For a massive project like this, the engineering was at least as important as the art that inspired it. About 90 percent of the “carving” was done with dynamite. Drills, hammers, and chisels were used to add details to the giant heads—each one over five stories high.

Mount Rushmore National Memorial took 14 years to complete, but Borglum knew that his carvings would endure “until the wind and the rain alone shall wear them away.” Today, more than 60 years after his death, Mount Rushmore is more than a monument to American history. It is a monument to the larger-than-life vision and determination of Gutzon Borglum and the miners who created art from a mountain.



What conclusion can you draw about the creation of Mount Rushmore?

Does the Mount Rushmore National Memorial fit the definition of sculpture? Use facts from the selection and your own knowledge to support your answer.

Jasper's Answer:

Jasper wrote a good answer to this question. Read what he wrote, then answer the questions that follow. They will help you understand what made his answer so successful.

Sculpture is one of the oldest forms of art. It is more than marble statues in museums. Sculpture can be very small or very large. It can be created from many different materials, using many different techniques. Prehistoric figures carved out of animal bones are sculpture. My parents even treat the bumpy clay shapes I bring home from camp like valuable pieces of sculpture.

The Mount Rushmore National Memorial certainly fits the definition of sculpture. Like a statue of a general on horseback in a park, it is a stone carving. In fact, it is one of the largest stone carvings ever created. Each head of the four presidents—Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt—is over five stories high. The sculptor, Gutzon Borglum, chose these presidents to represent American ideals, such as independence and equality. The gigantic size of the sculpture emphasizes the importance of those ideals.

The heads on Mount Rushmore were not carved in a traditional way, though. Carving a sculpture into a mountain required techniques that had never been used before.

HINT!

Test scorers look for the following elements in the answer:

- * A clear statement of the main idea.
- * A reasonable conclusion.
- * Facts from the selection to develop and support the answer.
- * Complete, correct, and interesting sentences.

A team of 400 miners used dynamite and drills to carve the faces into the mountain. It took them 14 years to complete the Mount Rushmore National Memorial, but their work will last for many, many years. The giant sculpture is a tribute to America, artistic vision, and a lot of hard work.

What Makes Jasper’s Answer Work?

To see what makes a successful response, let’s take a closer look at Jasper’s answer.

- 1. Jasper begins his response by providing information from the selection. He starts with a general definition: “Sculpture is one of the oldest forms of art.” Then he uses facts from the selection to develop his definition.

Find two facts that Jasper uses to develop his definition of *sculpture*. Write the sentences here.

- 2. Jasper uses a humorous example from his personal experience to further develop his definition of a sculpture. This example shows that he can relate what he has read to his own life. It also adds interest to his answer.

What personal experience does Jasper include in his first paragraph? Write the sentence here.



3. Jasper lays the groundwork for his answer in his introductory paragraph. In his second paragraph, he repeats the language of the question to state his conclusion and focus his response.

How does Jasper answer the question in the second paragraph? Write the sentence here.

4. The remainder of Jasper’s response describes Mount Rushmore and how it was created. Additional facts from the selection support his conclusion that Mount Rushmore fits the definition of a sculpture.

Which facts and details might convince the reader that Jasper’s conclusion is reasonable? Write one or two of them here.

5. Jasper interprets facts to reach conclusions. His second conclusion concerns the size of the memorial.

What conclusion does Jasper draw about the size of the memorial? Write Jasper’s conclusion here.

Tools & Tips

You can begin a response to a reading selection in several ways.

- 1. Begin the answer by using words from the question to help make your response as straightforward as possible. This is not usually the most interesting way to begin, but it is a safe way.
- 2. Begin the answer by defining a concept that is important to your response. A definition can help you focus your response. It gives you and your reader a common reference point. It also helps the reader to better understand how you arrived at your answer.
- 3. Begin the answer with a quote from the selection or from your own knowledge. A short quote, followed by your interpretation of its meaning, is the most effective way to use this technique. Don't overuse quotations, though. Remember, it is your answer, in your own words, that counts.
- 4. Begin the answer with examples, using details from the selection or from your own knowledge. This technique shows the reader that you can make connections between the reading selection and your life.
- 5. Begin the answer with a brief story from your experience. A personal anecdote shows that you understand the message of the reading selection, and you can relate it to your own life.

Read this question:

How have computers changed the way people stay in contact with each other?

Think about e-mail, instant messaging, letter writing, and telephone calls. On the lines below, write two or three sentences that would begin your answer.
