

ART EXPLICATION: *The Birth of Venus* by Botticelli

1. Quick Sketch: Complete a quick sketch of the major elements in this painting.

2. Color and Light: During the Renaissance, a new technique for modeling forms in painting by which lighter parts seemed to emerge from darker areas, producing the illusion of rounded, sculptural relief on a flat surface. Identify and explain how two areas of the painting employ this technique.



3. Composition: During the Renaissance, the rigid profile portraits of the Middle Ages and grouping of figures on a horizontal grid in the picture's foreground gave way to a more three dimensional "pyramid configuration." This symmetrical composition builds to a climax at the center where the focal point is usually the main figure's head. Identify the focal point of this painting and explain the significance of it.

4. Movement: Identify and explain how two areas in the painting help create the illusion of movement.

5. Perspective: Perspective is the method for creating the illusion of depth on a flat surface. Linear perspective creates the optical effect of objects receding in the distance through lines that appear to converge at a single point in the picture known as the vanishing point. Painters also reduce the size of objects and muted colors or blurred detail as objects get farther away. Identify and explain two examples of perspective in this work of art.

6. Symbolism: Identify and explain the figurative meaning of three different elements in the painting. Explain how each symbol relates to a characteristic of Renaissance Humanism.

7. Indirect Characterization: Explain how Venus' personality is revealed through one or more of the following: The way she looks or dresses, her effect on others, her actions.

8. Subject: Identify the subject of this painting and describe its placement in relation to other elements in the painting. What comment is being made about the subject through this placement?

9. Diction: State the denotative and connotative meanings of the words "birth" and "Venus" in the painting's title. Explain how the meanings for each word relate a characteristic of Renaissance Humanism.

10. Tone: State what you believe is Botticelli's tone towards the subject of this painting. Identify and explain how two elements in this painting (color and light, composition, movement, perspective, symbolism, subject, or diction) establish the tone.

11. Main Point or theme: Based on the responses given so far, what is the main point or theme that Botticelli is making about the subject of this work? How does this main point relate to a characteristic of Renaissance Humanism?