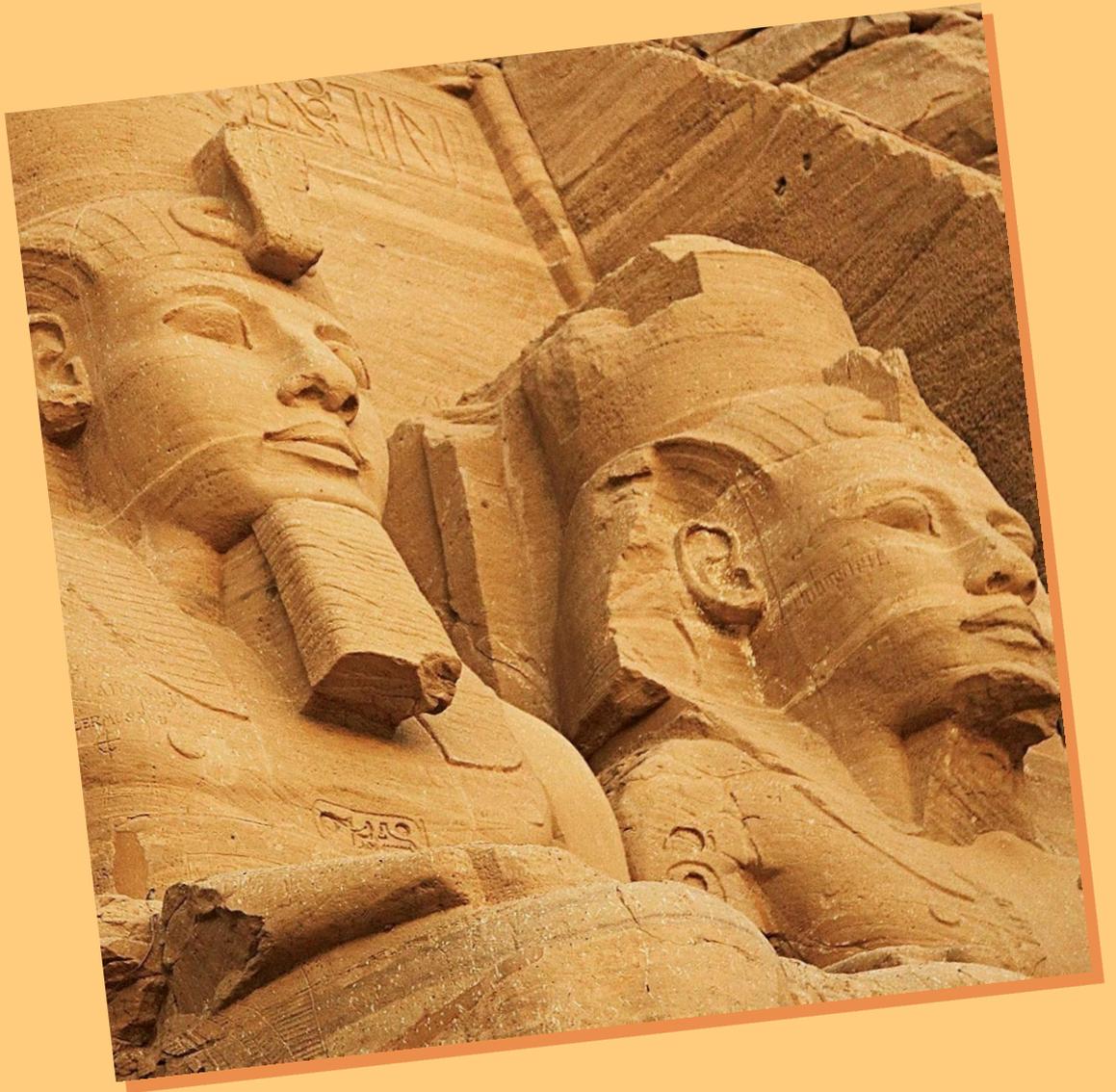


SCULPTURE IN ANCIENT EGYPT

READING PRACTICE SETS

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TOEFL iBT READING PRACTICE SET

Directions: Read the passage and answer the questions. Give yourself 18 minutes to complete this practice set.

SCULPTURE IN ANCIENT EGYPT

1 In order to understand ancient Egyptian art, it is vital to know as much as possible of the elite Egyptians' view of the world and the functions and contexts of the formal art produced for them. Without this knowledge, we can appreciate only the formal content of Egyptian art, and we will fail to understand the reasons why it was produced or the concepts that shaped it and caused it to adopt its distinctive forms. In fact, a lack of understanding concerning the purposes of Egyptian art has often led it to be compared unfavorably with the art of other cultures. Why did the Egyptians not develop sculpture in which the body turned and twisted through space similar to classical Greek statuary? Why do the artists seem to get left and right confused? Why did they not discover the rules of geometric perspective as European artists did in the Renaissance, a fervent period of European cultural, artistic, political, and economic rebirth following the Middle Ages? The answers to such questions have nothing to do with a lack of skill or imagination on the part of Egyptian artists and everything to do with the purposes for which they were producing their art.

2 The majority of three-dimensional representations, whether standing, seated, or kneeling, exhibit what is called frontality: they face straight ahead, neither twisting nor turning. When such statues are viewed in isolation, out of their original context and without knowledge of their function, it is easy to criticize them for their rigid attitudes that remained unchanged for 3,000 years. Frontality is, however, directly related to the functions that Egyptian statuary served and the contexts in which the statues were set up. Statues were created not to please the eye or to captivate the popular imagination but to play a primary role in the cults of the gods, the king, and the dead. They were designed to be put in places where these beings could manifest themselves in order to be the recipients of ritual actions. Thus, it made sense to show the statue looking ahead at what was happening in front of it, so that the living performer of the ritual could interact with the divine or deceased recipient. Such statues were very often enclosed in rectangular shrines or wall niches whose only opening was at the front, making it natural for the statue to display frontality. Other statues were designed to be placed within an architectural setting, for instance, in front of the monumental entrance gateways to temples known as pylons, or in pillared courts, where they would be placed against or between pillars: their frontality worked perfectly within the architectural context.

3 Statues were usually made of stone, wood, or metal. Stone statues were worked from single rectangular blocks of material, such as granite, basalt, sandstone, or limestone, and retained the compactness of the original shape. The stone between the arms and the body and between the legs in standing figures or the legs and the seat in seated ones was not typically cut away. From a practical aspect, this protected the figures against breakage. Psychologically, it gives the images a sense of strength and power, usually enhanced by a supporting back pillar. By contrast, wooden statues were carved from several pieces of wood, such as acacia, tamarisk, or sycamore fig, that were pegged together to form the finished work. Statues were also executed in various metals, including copper, copper alloys, gold, and silver. Metal statues were either made by wrapping sheet metal around a wooden core or cast by the lost wax process, an ancient method of casting using a wax model and clay mold. The arms could be held away from the body and carry separate items in their hands; there is no back pillar. The effect is altogether lighter and freer than that achieved in stone, but because they perform the same function, formal wooden and metal statues still display frontality.

4 In addition to statues representing deities, kings, and members of the elite that can be called formal, there is another group of three-dimensional representations that depicts generic figures, frequently servants, from the non-elite population. [A] The function of these is quite different. [B] Many are made to be put in the tombs of the elite in order to serve the tomb owners in the afterlife. [C] Unlike formal statues that are limited to static poses of standing, sitting, and kneeling, these figures depict a wide range of activities, such as grinding grain, baking bread, brewing beer, producing pots, and making music, and they are shown in appropriate poses, bending and squatting as they carry out their tasks. [D]

1. Paragraph 1 suggests that one reason ancient Egyptian art has been viewed less favorably than other art is that ancient Egyptian art lacks
 - (A) a realistic sense of human body proportion
 - (B) a focus on distinctive forms of varying sizes
 - (C) the originality of European art
 - (D) examples of formal art that show the human body in motion

2. In paragraph 1, the author mentions all of the following as necessary in appreciating Egyptian art EXCEPT an understanding of
 - (A) the reasons why the art was made
 - (B) the nature of aristocratic Egyptian beliefs
 - (C) the influences of Egyptian art on later art such as classical Greek art
 - (D) how the art was used

3. According to paragraph 2, why are Egyptian statues portrayed frontally?
 - (A) To create a psychological effect of distance and isolation
 - (B) To allow them to fulfill their important role in ceremonies of Egyptian life
 - (C) To provide a contrast to statues with a decorative function
 - (D) To suggest the rigid, unchanging Egyptian philosophical attitudes

4. The author mentions **an architectural setting** in the passage in order to
 - (A) suggest that architecture was as important as sculpture to Egyptian artists
 - (B) offer a further explanation for the frontal pose of Egyptian statues
 - (C) explain how the display of statues replaced other forms of architectural decoration
 - (D) illustrate the religious function of Egyptian statues

5. According to paragraph 3, why were certain areas of a stone statue left uncarved?
 - (A) To prevent damage by providing physical stability
 - (B) To emphasize that the material was as important as the figure itself
 - (C) To emphasize that the figure was not meant to be a real human being
 - (D) To provide another artist with the chance to finish the carving

6. The word **core** in the passage is closest in meaning to
 - (A) material
 - (B) layer
 - (C) center
 - (D) frame

7. According to paragraph 3, which of the following statements about wooden statues is true?
- (A) Wooden statues were usually larger than stone statues.
 - (B) Wooden statues were made from a single piece of wood.
 - (C) Wooden statues contained pieces of metal or stone attached to the front.
 - (D) Wooden statues had a different effect on the viewer than stone statues.
8. According to paragraph 4, what is the difference between statues that represent the Egyptian elite and statues that represent the non-elite classes?
- (A) Statues of the elite are included in tombs, but statues of the non-elite are not.
 - (B) Statues of the elite are in motionless poses, while statues of the non-elite are in active poses.
 - (C) Statues of the elite are shown standing, while statues of the non-elite are shown sitting or kneeling.
 - (D) Statues of the elite serve an important function, while statues of the non-elite are decorative.
9. Look at the four squares [A-D] that indicate where the following sentence could be added to the passage.

In fact, it is the action and not the figure itself that is important.

Where would the sentence best fit?

10. **Directions:** An introductory sentence for a brief summary of the passage is provided below. Complete the summary by selecting the **THREE** answer choices that express the most important ideas in the passage. Some sentences do not belong in the summary because they express ideas that are not presented in the passage or are minor ideas in the passage. **This question is worth 2 points.**

The distinctive look of ancient Egyptian sculpture was determined largely by its function.

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Answer Choices

- (A) The twisted forms of Egyptian statues indicate their importance in ritual actions.
- (B) The reason why Egyptian statues are motionless is linked to their central role in cultural rituals.
- (C) Formal stone, wooden, and metal statues all display the feature of frontality since they perform the same function.
- (D) Statues were more often designed to be viewed in isolation rather than placed within buildings.
- (E) Statues representing Egyptian deities, kings, or members of the elite are very different from those of the non-elite population.
- (F) Although the appearances of formal and generic statues differ, they share the same function.