ART

Art communicates to us primarily through our eyes. We look at art, and we try to find some meaning in the experience. If we are to begin to think about art more seriously, we might do well to become more aware of the process of seeing itself.

Science tells us that seeing is a mode of perception, or the recognition and interpretation of sensory data - in other words, how information comes in our senses, and what we make of it. In visual perception our eyes take in information in the form of light patterns; the brain processes these patterns to give them meaning. The mechanics of perception work much the same way for everyone, yet in a given situation we do not all see the same things.

We can take great pleasure in merely looking at art, just as we take pleasure in the view of a distant mountain range or watching the sun set over the ocean. But art, unlike nature, is a human creation.

It is one of the many ways we express ourselves and attempt to communicate. A work of art is the product of human intelligence, and we can meet it with our own intelligence on equal footing. This is where study comes in.

The understanding of process - the how - often contributes quite a lot to our appreciation of art. If you understand why painting in watercolor may be different from painting in oil, why clay responds differently to the artist's hands than does wood or glass - you will have a richer appreciation of the artist's expression.

Knowing the place of a work of art in history - what went before and came after - can also deepen your understanding. Artists learn to make art by studying the achievements of the past and observing the efforts of their contemporaries. They adapt ideas to serve their own needs and then **bequeath** those ideas to future generations of artists. For example, Matisse assumed that his audience would know that Venus was the ancient Roman goddess of love. But he also hoped that they would be familiar with one Venus in particular, a famous Greek statue known as the Venus de Milo.

An artist may create a specific work for any of a thousand reasons. An awareness of the why may give some insight as well. Looking at Van Gogh's The Starry Night, it might help you know that Van Gogh was **intrigued** by the belief that people journeyed to a star after their death, and that there they continued their lives. "Just as we take the train to get to Tarascon or Rouen," he wrote in a letter, "we take death to reach a star." This knowledge might help you understand why Van Gogh felt so strongly about the night sky, and what his painting might have meant to him.

But no matter how much you study, Van Gogh's painting will never mean for you exactly what it meant for him, nor should it. Great works of art hold many meanings. The greatest of **them** seem to speak anew to each generation and to each attentive observer. The most important thing is that they mean something for you, that your own experiences, thoughts, and emotions find a place in them.

Question 21 According to paragraph 2, the process of visual perception _____.

A. is not the same for all people

B. begins with patterns of light

C. is not very scientific

D. requires other senses to function

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Question 22 Which of the sentences below best expresses the information in the highlighted statement in the passage?

A. We see images differently because of the mode of perception.

B. Although we see images differently, the mode of perception is similar.

C. Since the mode of perception is similar, we see images in the same way.

D. When the mode of perception is the same, we see the same images

Question 23 What did Matisse reinterpret?

A. A goddess from mythology

B. A painting by another artist

C. An ancient sculpture

D. A man in history

Question 24 The word "**bequeath**" in the passage is closest in meaning to

A. make out

B. pass on

C. look over

D. take in

Question 25 Why might Van Gogh have painted The Starry Night?

A. To symbolize the journey of life after death

B. To create a dramatic contrast with the sky

C. To place a strong image in the foreground

D. To include nature from his early experience

Question 26 The word "**intrigued**" in the passage is closest in meaning to _____.

A. very pleased

B. very confused

C. very interested

D. very surprised

Question 27 The author mentions all of the following ways to enhance the appreciation of art EXCEPT:

A. understanding the artistic process

B. becoming familiar with the history

C. experiencing the art by copying

D. knowing about the life of the artist

Question 28 What can be inferred from the last paragraph?

A. Greatest artworks are impossible to understand.

B. The author shows negative feelings toward contemporary art.

C. People need knowledge to understand art.

D. What we see in art is determined by our emotions, experiences, and thoughts.

Question 29 The word "**them**" in this paragraph refers to _____.

A. each attentive observer

B. thoughts and emotions

C. a lifetime of experiences

D. great works of art

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Question 30 What is the main topic of this passage?
A. Visual perception of sensory material
B. The historical context for artistic expression
C. Studying the Gogh's The Starry Night
D. The appreciation of works of art

LIVEWORKSHEETS