

MYP5

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Teacher:

Visual Arts E-Portfolio

Storytelling Presentation

Throughout the history, thousands of stories have been carried out by the humankind as people have always wanted to express themselves in a way that they would reveal their personal and cultural identities, hence define the aesthetics of individuals and societies. Since there are a lot of cultures around the world, these aesthetics show huge variations. Furthermore, people have told their stories in also various ways. Some have written compositions, some have performed plays, and some have expressed themselves via visual arts: drawings, paintings, sculptures, photographs and so forth. But the real question is, do artworks still have similarities despite the difference in cultures and stories told within? In order to find out, is a comparison-and-contrast essay on the painting, *Birth of Venus*; and the sculpture, *Apollo and Daphne*.

Let's start off with the origins and appearances of the two artworks. First is *Birth of Venus* (See Appendix 1), a painting by the Italian artist, Sandro Botticelli, made between the years 1484 and 1486. *Birth of Venus* has been portrayed on a 172,5cm x 278,5cm canvas, with 'a combination of wood panel paintings, size and chalk' (Encyclopedia of Art Education, 1) called tempera. The painting consists of the naked Greek goddess of love Venus as well as her handmaid, Ora, to the right. Today, it is exhibited in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, Italy. On the other hand, *Apollo and Daphne* (See Appendix 2) is a sculpture by another Italian artist, Gian Lorenzo Bernini, made between the years 1622 and 1625. The sculpture was made of marble and is 2.43 metres tall. The sculpture consists of the semi-naked figures of Apollo, the one who falls in love with Daphne, 'the daughter of a river god Peneus' (Totally History, 1). Today, *Apollo and Daphne* is exhibited in Borghese Gallery in Rome. Along with the type and used materials, these two artworks also differ in eras; *Birth of Venus* is a part of the Early Renaissance movement whereas *Apollo and Daphne* belongs to the Baroque era. In sum, the interpretation between the aesthetic and the personal identities of the two artists is clear, as they were able to relate to these stories at that time, which would eventually expand to form cultural identities up until now. However, in order to have sensible interpretations, the context (actual stories behind the artworks) is necessary.

Now, we shall move onto the contexts of the artworks. Despite the fact that both artworks embrace the idea of Neo-Platonism; meaning both artworks consists of elements from both Roman and Greek culture; *Birth of Venus* and *Apollo and Daphne* definitely have different backgrounds. Botticelli had taken the concept for *Birth of Venus* from 'the writings of the ancient poet, Homer, which tells the story of the Roman goddess of love, Venus, riding on a seashell and sea foam to the island of Cythera' (ItalianRenaissance.org, 1). On the other hand, *Apollo and Daphne* portrays a love story that is destined to not ever happen; Apollo falls in love with Daphne, the daughter of the Greek river god Peneus, as has been hit with one of Cupid's arrows. Unfortunately, Daphne rejects Apollo and immediately asks Peneus to transform her into something unpleasant to look at. Daphne eventually turns into a tree that Apollo never gets the chance to convince her to be with himself. As it can be clearly seen, Botticelli's artwork focuses on the birth of a Roman figure whereas Bernini's focuses on a seemingly forbidden love story between two Greek figures.

Now that the contexts have been covered as well, the interpretation between the artworks and the eras they were made in can be easily revealed. *Birth of Venus* was, in fact, requested by the well-known Italian Medici family, as their fifteenth century perspectives were mainly focused on mythology that is given 'within the context of a humanistic Renaissance art' (Encyclopedia of Art Education, 1). Dissimilarly, according to Michael Cole, '*Apollo and Daphne* belongs aims to isolate and erase what sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century writers presented as the limits of sculpture: the representation of fire, for example, or of lightness, or of transparency, or of transformation' (4). That is to say, the two artworks definitely have separate purposes as the goals behind them and the eras the artworks were made show a major difference.

To conclude, *Birth of Venus* and *Apollo and Daphne* have both similarities and differences. First of all, the artworks are similar in the ways that both of them portray realistic human figures, carry out mythological events, consist of elements from both Greek and Roman culture, and are made by Italian artists. Anyhow, *Birth of Venus* is a painting that tells the story of the birth of a Roman goddess whereas *Apollo and Daphne* is a sculpture that is based on an unfortunate love story between two Greek characters and makes references to myth-related occurrences, such as transformation.

Appendix

Appendix 1

Birth of Venus by Sandro Botticelli.



Botticelli, Sandro. *Birth of Venus*. c. 1484-86. Uffizi Gallery. *Italian Renaissance*. Web. 28 Jan 2016.

Appendix 2

Apollo and Daphne by Gian Lorenzo Bernini.



Bernini, Gian Lorenzo. *Apollo and Daphne*. c. 1622-25. Borghese Gallery. *TotallyHistory*. Web. 28 Jan 2016.

Appendix 3

An example of the tempera painting method. Holy Trinity Icon by Andrei Rublev.



Rublev, Andrei. *Holy Trinity Icon*, c. 1411. Tretyakov Gallery. *Encyclopedia of Fine Art*. Web. 28 Jan 2016.

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