

Tamiah Assevero

History of Art

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The Prompt object is “The Ambassadors” Painting by Hans Holbein the Younger, which was painted in 1533. This painting is a famous portrait of Jean de Dinteville, who was a French ambassador, and Georges de Selve, who was a bishop. This portrait is famous for a lot of reasons but their main thing is how detailed the painting is. This painting highlighted the achievements of the country during this time period. This painting was telling a story on what was going on in that country and how it was being done. The Ambassadors painting relates to this class because it has a lot of objects and references that relate to different achievements or exchanges of that time period. This one painting has so many historical artifacts that it is considered the most famous portrait for that reason.

The prompt object and the resources associated with object fit perfectly together because it brings a new perspective to the painting and what each object in the painting may mean. For example, in the painting, there is a carpet on a table in the background that has historical context. According to Smart History, Holbein has taken a liking to painting the Anatolian Carpet in most of his paintings. This carpet was considered a luxury item because of the designs and craftsmanship which led to people trying to copy it because of the demand it was. This type of carpet wasn't placed on the floor because of how expensive and luxurious it is; it was mostly used to be on display. On the other hand, the Met Museum further explained how the Anatolian Carpet is used and where it came from. This carpet was made in Bursa, which was a mountainside city known for their velvets. The specific designs on this carpet were mostly used by the Ottoman Empire for

furnishings while Europe started using this textile for ceremony wear. The Anatolian carpet was an example of the two men's status and whoever was looking at the painting knew these men were important due to this one object. These two resources provide a better understanding and what this carpet is and why it was significant to use in the painting.

Another example of this is the globe and the astrolabe, which explain why these things were important during this time period. According to the Smart History, the globe in Holbein's painting is a replica of a 16th century globe. This globe represents the treaty between the Americans and Europe. The way the globe was painted, it provided emphasis on both Europe and Africa so that the people looking the painting knows what side of the world this painting is depicting. According to the Met Museum, the astrolabe was used hand in hand with the globe because they both told different aspects of direction. They were both associated with navigation and both websites explain what they were being used for and why it was so important during that time period to people with status.

The resources used to further explain the prompt object was a mix between primary and secondary documents. The Anatolian Carpet, The Astrolabe, and the Skull were all primary artifacts because they were directly from that time period and country. These gave a better and clearer understanding about why certain things were in the painting and what it meant to the painter and the people that were being painted. It showed status and power just in one painting and makes you realize that the people who are being painted are people of high importance during their time. The other resources such as Understanding Visuality, Mimesis and Iconoclasm, and The Carpet and The Globe were secondary sources. These sources mostly gave an overview on the specific use of art styles and textures while also explaining different use of objects. One source also talked about Holbein and his other works which also gave a better

understanding on why he chooses a particular art style and his pattern in these paintings. It went in depth on who Hans Holbein is as a painter and what he usually paints during his time. From what was gathered, he mostly painted portraits of other people and focused more so on capturing the essences of the people he was painting. He focused on what you can see and put emphasis on the people rather than anything else. According to Mimesis and Iconoclasm, it states “The coherence of the two-dimensional pattern on the surface of the image conceals the spatial distortions it depends on. As Pacht puts it, ‘the contours of the silhouettes must be fitted firmly against each other’, with the result that the image is endowed with a peculiar formal tension as the artist’s principles of representation struggle to create a substitute for the sitters who confront him. The perceptual consequences of this tension serve to enhance, rather than diminish, the illusion of reality...” This explains that Holbein was making sure that the objects were complimenting each other in the painting so that it can tell a story to the person viewing the portrait at the time.

Now that there were resources provided to further explain what the portrait was about and what the significance of each object represents, the answers to previous questions can be answered more thoroughly. This painting is very well detailed and tells a story about two ambassadors and the achievements of their country. Each object in the painting has its own story being told as well as what is going on during that time period. Holbein did a very good job putting in detail for each object and letting the painting tell its story on its own.