Analyzing Art Through the Ages

Comparing Classical, Medieval and Renaissance Art
This sculpture’s title is *Discobolus* (because it shows a man throwing a discus).

It was probably made to celebrate the achievement of a famous athlete, perhaps an Olympic victory.

Notice how the figure appears to be in the middle of a powerful action.

The figure is in perfect balance.

The calm face makes a difficult task look easy.

The figure is neither an ordinary man, nor is it a god. Rather, it represents the ideal in Greek society.

The original statue was created by the famous sculptor Myron in 450 B.C.E.

The original was of cast bronze.

This version is a copy made in marble by the Romans.

The Romans greatly admired Greek culture.
The Classical Period:

- The Classical period is from 500 B.C.E. to 500 C.E.
- The art is usually sculpture, pottery, murals, and mosaics.
- The art also shows the importance of people and gods.

Elements of Classical Sculpture:
- Figures are:
  - Doing a real task of daily life
  - Calm, without emotion
  - Idealized and perfect
  - Bodies often nude
  - Body looks active
  - Little sense of background
Narthex Tympanum, 1120 C.E., sculpture, France
• Jesus, the most important figure, is the largest, and is right in the center.
• The artist does not try to make the figures look like real bodies.
• The artist wanted to make a beautiful pattern on the flat stone that would also fit the space of the arch, and he wanted to convey a religious meaning.
Medieval Period:

- The period is from 500 to 1400 C.E..
- The art is usually stained glass windows, sculptures, illuminated manuscripts, paintings and tapestries
- The purpose behind the art is to teach religion to people who could not read or write

Elements:

- The subjects are mostly religious
- The figures are flat and stiff, little real movement
- The important figures are larger
- Figures are fully clothed, with little emotion
- It appears flat, 2-dimensional
- In paintings, backgrounds are a single color, often gold
• This painting was made by Raphael in 1505 to decorate one whole wall of a room in the palace of the pope in Rome.
• The great thinkers of ancient Greece are shown here as if they had gathered to discuss their ideas.
• The building recalls the architecture of classical antiquity (ancient Greece) and uses perspective to create deep space.
• They are talking and interacting with other figures, showing us how important their ideas are to them.
• The two most important philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, stand at the center of the painting.
• Plato began the first university, the “Academy,” in a grove of trees in Athens, 387 B.C.E.
• His most distinguished pupil was the Greek philosopher, Aristotle (384-322 B.C.E.).
Socrates was an ancient Greek philosopher and teacher. He originated the “Socratic Method” of persuasive speaking.
Euclid (330?-270? B.C.E.) Greek mathematician, often called the “Father of Geometry.” (Raphael based the figure of Euclid on the Renaissance architect and painter, Bramante.)

Ptolemy (C.E. 100? – 165?) was one of the greatest astronomers and geographers of ancient times. Ptolemy did not believe that the Earth moves.
Women were not permitted to participate in discussions about philosophy during the Renaissance, so the painting includes only men. However, the idea of wisdom was represented by a woman, the goddess Athena, who stands over this scene as a painted statue in the niche on the right.
Plato and Aristotle are seen in conversation at the center of the picture.

Plato’s upward pointed gesture is symbolic – he is pointing to the source of higher inspiration.

Aristotle, however, is gesturing downwards, toward the started point of all natural sciences.

It is believed that Plato is actually a portrait of Leonardo da Vinci.
The Renaissance:

• The period is from 1400 – 1650 C.E.
• The art consists of sculptures, murals, drawings, paintings
• The purpose was to show the importance of people and nature, not just religion

Elements:
• Subjects were both religious and non-religious
• Bodies may look active, moving
• Bodies can be nude or clothed
• Faces express thoughts
• Colors respond to light that falls on them
• Backgrounds are usually full, deep, with natural elements
Madonna and Child with Two Angels
Filippo Lippi
Venus and Adonis
Titian
Madonna and Child in Majesty
Cimabue
Grave Stele of Hegeso
Unknown artist.
The Last Supper
Leonardo da Vinci
The Presentation of the Virgin
Giotto
Adoration of the Shepherds
Ghirlandaio
On a clean sheet of paper, write your name, then answer 3 of these questions:

Today I learned....
I was surprised by....
The most useful thing I will take from this lesson is...
I was interested in...
What I liked most about this lesson was...
One thing I’m not sure about is...
The main thing I want to find out more about is...
After this lesson, I feel...
I might have gotten more from this lesson if...