

**Question: Is it important to our society, its history and culture, to preserve musical and dance performances, remnants or records of human ingenuity or craftsmanship, photographs and works of art or literature?**

### The Window of Art

Over the years, the United States has changed constantly and drastically, each time being influenced by some new found cultural phenomenon. Whether it be the rise of impressionism, rock music, or even hip-hop, each individual work provides an outsider a small window through which to see and understand our culture and society. It is for these reasons that art is so critical to our society. If it wasn't for art, no one would be able to research us years from now after we have passed on and understand how we might have thought. The largest argument in support of this is that our society is doing the same with ancient civilizations. If it wasn't for the fact that we study the art of the Ancient Greeks and Romans, we would have no idea about what life was like at that time.

Our own scientists study examples of ancient art from cultures that have long since gone extinct and yet we still use their ideas and many of their rudimentary lifestyles as examples of how to live now. Geraldine Fabrikant, in August 2005, wrote an article in the *New York Times* about a restoration project taking place on an old Roman mosaic. Through this project, scientists have discovered many things about why it was made. It also showed that the owner had a high social status due to the picture of a fish tank, as fish were considered an "expensive delicacy" (Fabrikant). This is just one example of how art from a time long past has brought society a great deal of knowledge of a powerful civilization long before the Americas were even discovered.

A similar circumstance is the idea that human beings have a desire to know their roots, and there is no better way to discover this than with the arts. In New York, back in 2005, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority discovered a stone wall that turned out to be the remnant of an old battery fortification from the time of the Revolution. There were many discoveries within the wall including an old 1744 half penny and shards of pottery and smoking pipes (McGeehan). This discovery immediately sparks the interests of millions of people, as this is one of the greatest clues about what life was like in New York when our Revolutionary ancestors walked the streets. It is for this reason that we should always support the arts, if not for entertainment, then for the idea that in several centuries, our descendents will come along and discover an old military base or something, or even an old theatre, and be able to understand how life is lived.

All in all, art and architecture have always been important to society, and always will be. As long as the human race has a story to tell, some sort of lesson to learn, or just historical documentation, people after us will find it fascinating. This will lead to constant discoveries and endless study and because of this, we will never disappear in time.

### Observations

**Strengths:** *The essay is clearly focused, the main idea being that art should be preserved because it reflects society, current and past, and thus allows us to know our roots. Each point is discussed in a separate paragraph, the first one about the discoveries of Geraldine Fabrikant, the second about the (New York) Metropolitan Transportation Authority's uncovering of artifacts from the period of the American Revolution. In both supporting paragraphs, the writer develops in some detail (more specific detail than was provided by the writer of the essay that received a "4"). The style is clear, with effective transitions. As the writer moves from the first point to the second, she emphasizes their connection: "A similar circumstance is the idea that human beings have a desire to know their roots. . . ." And she begins the concluding paragraph with an effective signal phrase: "All in all. . . ." She effectively incorporates references to the source material. She employs both in-text and parenthetical citations, including the date and the name of publication in addition to the author of the first source she cites. That is, she does more than rely entirely on parenthetical documentation. She both quotes and paraphrases. The essay has few technical errors.*

**Weaknesses:** *In presenting the first point, the writer states that "we still use [ancient cultures'] ideas and many of their rudimentary lifestyles as examples of how to live now." But this idea is not developed in the discussion of the*

*Roman mosaic that follows. The connection between the paragraph's main idea and the material developing it is weak also in the second section of the essay, where the writer explains that human beings desire to know their roots. The discoveries beneath Manhattan help us understand "how life [was] lived," but whether this information means the same as "knowing our roots" is not clear. In most readers' minds, the word "roots" suggests knowledge of genealogy rather than of lifestyles. Thus, the wording might have been clearer, the thinking more precise. The writer bases her response almost entirely on information from the readings, neglecting to consider her previous knowledge and/or personal experience. Writers will do well to try to make the topic their own, that is, by bringing their own knowledge and experience to the question rather than depending entirely on information from the reading*