

Module 3.2 OPTIC: Art as Argument

For Teachers: *As will be demonstrated in official course documents per The College Board’s Task 2 stimulus materials, not all arguments are expository in form. Students may be confronted with materials that are artistic in nature—paintings, music lyrics, poems, short passages of chapters in novels, graphic designs, and so on. Given some students’ proclivities toward Hermeneutic and Artistic studies, it behooves them to be comfortable analyzing the argument of more abstract resources. In this unit, students will learn the basis for OPTIC—a technique for analyzing the argument of artistic media while also evaluating the effectiveness of its message given its different form and presentation to the audience. Teachers should lead students through artistic pieces within the scope of the same contextual message provided in previous texts as explored through RAVEN. Materials are provided for a couple of selections from Aldous Huxley’s corpus, which criticize the nature of work and individualism and offer some exploration of remedy as well. The first selection is from his 1928 novel, *Point Counter Point*, in which one of the main characters, relativist Mark Rampion, explains his belief in the approach ‘we’ should take to modern living and work. He then provides an extreme view of work in his critical dystopia, *Brave New World* (1932), the selection of which comes from explanations of the ‘utopian’ society’s structure under Mustafa Mond. Finally, Huxley provided something of an answer in his final novel, *Island*, published posthumously in 1963, explored in this passage from the utopian society of Pala’s philosophical treatise *The Notes on What’s What*. Again, an introduction to the context of the writer should be explored, along with a meta-analysis of the messages in terms of historical context and intended readership, with a discussion of the additional layers of literary analysis necessary for discussions of effective artistic argument and representation.*

Once students are comfortable analyzing the context of written artistic works and applying OPTIC as a strategy for analysis and evaluation, students should then move on to audio and visual media. Teachers may choose to select art pieces, songs, and visual media as walk-through samples before students move on to the assessment. A work of art by Diego Rivera in 1928—his mural “The Arsenal”— is provided for assessment. Students will respond to the basic argument analysis questions of the AP Seminar End-of-course Exam Part A and answer all three questions applying OPTIC to the analysis and evaluation. Per usual procedure, students will be provided a small introduction to the artist and the basic context of the piece to use in their evaluations.