

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 encounter artistic materials—paintings, music lyrics, poems, short passages of chapters in novels, graphic designs, and so on. Given some students’ inclination toward hermeneutic and artistic studies, it is beneficial that they are 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 may lead students through artistic pieces within the scope of the same contextual message provided in previous texts as explored through RAVEN. Provided materials include 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—a relativist—explains his belief in the approach ‘we’ should take to modern living and work. Huxley 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 provides something of an answer in his final novel, *Island* (1963), explored in this passage from the utopian society of Pala’s philosophical treatise, *The Notes on What’s What*. The analysis of these texts may start with an introduction to the context of the writer, an introduction to the historical context and intended readership, and the additional layers of literary analysis necessary for compelling 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 will explore audio and visual media. Teachers may 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.