

Pennsylvania
academy of fine arts
art critique



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Begin by introducing the work: list the artist, title, date, medium and approximate size. "The Wave" by Alexander Harrison, 1185, oil on canvas, approximately 3.5' x 9' FORMAL ANALYSIS: Remember, the formal elements are: line, shape, color, volume, space, light and texture. 2. Discuss the lines in the painting. Where are they located? What direction do they go? Are they straight or curved, thick or thin? How they direct your eye around the canvas?

When you first look at the painting your eye is drawn to a distinct horizontal line that depicts the horizon over the water. There are also curved lines throughout the piece where the waves are located, many of which make up either the ripples over the sand or waves breaking on the shore. These curved lines are what move your eye from the horizon towards the water moving forward as the wave breaks and moves along the sand. 3. What shapes are present? Are they geometric or organic? Do they appear flat or voluminous?

The shapes in this painting are all organic because all of the objects in the piece have no true form. For instance, the clouds in the sky are ever changing and the water is constantly moving. The shapes appear to be voluminous because you can see the movement in them and therefore you know they have depth. 4. Discuss the space in the painting (the area between or around formal elements placed on the canvas) Is the painting crowded with many formal elements or sparse with just a few. Remember, this is about formal elements placed on a canvas, not subject matter.

The painting is a very open space containing few of the formal elements. Balance is one of the elements that are present though. It is balanced

vertically because the wave is at an even height to itself creating balance from left to right. It also contains harmony because the colors work well together allowing your eyes to move freely over the scene. 5. Discuss the colors the artist selected. What specific colors are used and where are they located on the canvas? Are they warm or cool? Saturated? Complementary?

How do the colors make you feel? Alexander Harrison's choice of light pastels throughout the sky helps to create a peaceful day with good weather. There are darker shades of pastels towards the upper right-hand of the painting to show represent clouds. For the majority of the wave, he uses a shade of sea foam green lighter in sections towards the horizon and darker as they are about to break on land. Also where the waves are crashing you can see lighter shades of blues and white indicating sea foam and mist over the breaks.

In the forefront, there are light pastel peach colors placed sparsely over the top of water, possibly reflecting the sun. Even though you can make out what the painter has created, the strokes are saturated and painterly throughout the sky, clouds, and parts of the waves. 6. Discuss the texture of the paint. Is it thin with undetectable brushstrokes or thick and painterly. The painterly lines enables the wave to look more natural and lifelike, as if the wave is actually rolling towards you creating the sea foam and mist as it comes towards us.

Despite the thick brushstrokes the painting still looks soft and makes you want to run your hand over the water. 7. Discuss the light (or lack of) in the work of art. What is its source? Does it create shadows? Does it affect mood? Although it does not look like there is a distinct light source coming from

anywhere in the painting, you can make out a tiny sun if you get up close to the painting towards the top left. Even if you couldn't see the sun in the painting you are aware the light is coming from the sky since the scene takes place outside.

The clouds in the sky moving in from the right of the painting help create the shadows over the waves. This makes the mood more mellow like it's the end of the day and it's time to sit back and relax, since the colors are muted and not as vivid. SUBJECT MATTER 8. Discuss subject matter. This should be few sentences just listing the recognizable objects in the painting. The recognizable objects in this painting are obviously the wave, the beach, and the clouds in the sky.

The objects don't necessarily overlay one another but instead sit next to each other creating an overall scene where you can distinguish each individual part. CONTENT : Use your eyes to tell me what you see. 9. What is happening in the work of art? In this work of art there is a wave coming towards the foreground and part of it has already begun to funnel and break along the beach. The wave then rolls further towards the front of the piece as it moves over the sand. You can also see clouds moving in from one side of the scene. 10. How does the painting make you feel?

This painting makes me feel peaceful and very calm because its large scale makes me feel as if I'm actually standing in the art work with the water rushing over my feet. The beach is my most favorite place and it brings a lot of good memories to mind and this work makes that happen. 11. Do you recognize any objects in the work that might have symbolic meaning or are perhaps referenced to art, literature, mythology or history? There are no

recognizable objects in the work that I think may reference a particular person, place, other art, or more. 12.

What do you think the artist trying to tell us by making this work of art? I think Alexander was trying to tell us we need to recognize the beauty of the simple sceneries around us every day. We need to just take the time to stand there and look around us at all the good nature has to offer. 13. What do you think the artist's intention was for this work (who or where was it for)? I think his intention was a personal one. I think he made this painting to remember a time when he have visited here and so he painted it to remind himself of how wonderful he thought it was.

CONCLUSION 14. Do you feel that the form, subject matter and content have been combined to create successful work of art? Why or why not? I do think the elements, subject matter and content all work well together to create a successful painting. The choice of pastels makes you feel warm and peaceful when you move along while the painterly brushstrokes make the waves look real and fluid. The simplicity of the piece creates an almost surreal feeling like nothing could go wrong as you stand in this spot looking out over the water.