Case study on art analysis paper

Art & Culture, Painting

The subject of King David has long fascinated artists, particularly with regard to his defeat of the Philistine giant Goliath. There have been many different sculptures and paintings representing this Old Testament figure, done in different artistic styles an with different areas of emphasis.

#1. This sculptor features David as he is about to fling the stone from his slingshot toward Goliath. The ability of the sculptor to provide balance is advanced, as the figure is twisting while standing on two feet. The musculature is realistically represented, as the young shepherd's legs are visibly flexing and his torso is contorting with his windup. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this work, though, is the subject's face. While many representations of David portray him as beatific and calm, here his face is marked with intense concentration, as he prepares himself to confront the giant. The idealized form of the muscular male body, combined with the gritty realism of the situation, combine to make this a compelling representation.

#2. Michelangelo's sculpture of David is much more idealized than the presentation in #1. Here, David appears to be considering Goliath, but his look is much calmer, even dismissive of the foe at hand. His posture is relaxed, with a slight tilt of the hips to make his stance seem even jaunty. Because of the bold faith with which David approached King Saul and volunteered to fight Goliath, this is an accurate portrayal of the condition of David's mind. This is a David who has already been steeled by God for the task at hand. He has not yet entered the throes of confrontation but is instead calmly awaiting the moment.

#3. This painting features a much younger David than the two sculptures.

Here, the youngest son of Jesse is the focus of the painter's attention. This features the aftermath of the conflict, as David has not only slain Goliath with his sling but has also beheaded him. The sword still rests across the boy's shoulders as he holds the severed head up. David's face is not filled with pride or, really, any emotion. Instead, the calm that pervades him in the Biblical narrative remains. The confidence which his faith in God gave him not only appears in his calm face but also in the light that comes in from the left, illuminating the boy and casting occasional light on the head of the fallen Philistine.

#4. This painting shows the moment between David's blow to the head of Goliath, using his sling, and the beheading of the giant. David's face is calm, even as he twists his body to prepare for the blow with the sword. Interestingly, Goliath does not appear to be unconscious or even dazed; he has raised himself up on one hand and has turned his head to see who is astride him. Nonetheless, there is none of the violence that would attend an attempt to turn over, and there is no worry in David at all, in his face or in the posture of his body on his victim. David's body and hand are enough to subdue this monster.

#5. This painting is another representation of the moment just before the beheading of Goliath. Here, the background indicates the intervention of the divine, as gray clouds have begun to cover a blue sky. The Philistines are fleeing in the background at right; here, a grimly focused David has his sword upraised, with his right foot holding Goliath's head in place. Realism is slightly threatened here, as it would be extremely difficult for David to complete his swing without severing his leg or falling over. The idealized

musculature on David and Goliath, along with these other fantastic elements, indicate that the point of the story is the miracle of David's victory.

#6. This painting also features David holding the severed head of Goliath. The light is on David's arm, which through the agency of God was able to kill and behead the terrifying Philistine. Goliath's facial expression is one of shock; David's appears to be one of sadness, not at the death of the giant but at the fact that death was necessary at all. Given the fact that David would accrue quite a collection of victims of violence during his lifetime, this may not be authentic, but it also may have been this first experience with murder, at the behest of God, that drove him to be what St. Paul would call " a man after God's own heart."

#7. This bronze sculpture takes David back to one of his very youngest representations. The pose is confident, almost boastful, in the sway of the hips and the smirk on the face. David's left foot rests on the now removed head of the Philistine; the placement of his hand on his hip suggests that he is quite proud of himself. This is one of the few representations that shows any emotion more positive than calm in reaction to the death of Goliath. The balance and curvature of this sculpture show the advanced techniques at work in its composition.#8. This painting shows David as he begins to pick up Goliath's head, having just severed it from his body. The light is on David's arm and leg, and on Goliath's shoulder, showing the strength and musculature of the two combatants. The fact that Goliath's head sits at such an impossible angle with the rest of the body is the only sign of violence in the painting. The calm on David's shadowed face as he begins to pick up the

head is evidence of the faith that has carried him through this encounter.

#9. This painting of David is one of the more difficult to interpret. Standing with the head of the Philistine between his feet, it is difficult to figure out what David is pointing his hand at. The swirling sky and clouds in the background indicate the divine source of his power in this conflict; the anguished face of Goliath shows his surprise at losing to this young boy.

#10. This bronze sculpture may be the most casual of all of the representations in this comparison. David almost appears apathetic with his rakish placement of his hand on his hip, with his foot behind the head of Goliath rather than atop it; Goliath's expression is one of slumber rather than tortuous, shocking death.

Works Cited