

Royal Fireworks Language Arts by Michael Clay Thompson

Advanced Academic Writing III

An Illustrated Program

Third Edition

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Matticle 1

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English Honors
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The Noble Character of Alexander

The literature about Alexander the Great is extensive. Writers of modern times have probed the available facts of his life in search of the reasons that enabled Alexander to accomplish seemingly impossible feats of conquest. One potential cause of his extraordinary success might be the magnanimity of his character. Stories abound about Alexander's generosity toward conquered cultures and for the bravery of his enemies. He often absorbed the blame for the deaths of his enemies, appointing them to high and responsible ranks in his army.

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Matticle 6

Introduction

The weary English teacher, Mr. Eeus, had been sitting before his computer for five hours, carefully grading the stack of papers he had received on Friday. He was determined to return them on Monday. Most of the papers had been good, had been what he had assigned: five-page MLA papers with long and short quotations supporting an intellectual thesis. The hands of the clock on the wall kept circling, and soon he would have to stop for the night. He would grade a few more. Even though he was getting tired, he would think positively; he had trained himself to look forward to every paper, no matter how many papers there were. He picked up the next paper from the stack.

Ah, the paper was by Joseph Moore. Joseph was a good student who participated in class discussions and always did his work on time. Mr. Eeus began to examine Joseph's paper. Even at first glance, he saw problems. The title of the paper, JACK LONDEN, was all capitalized, it misspelled *London* as *Londen*, and it did not express the thesis of the paper. The teacher saw that he would have to find out the hard way what the paper was about. He noticed with disappointment that the margin of the paper was wrong; there was an inch between the header, Moore 1, and the top of the page, instead of the half inch that was required. Each of these details was a small matter, but taken together, they made three errors before the paper even began. He started reading Joseph's paper, which apparently had *something* to do with Jack London. Perhaps Joseph would explain the thesis of the paper in the introduction.

Unfortunately, Joseph did not. The first paragraph did not introduce the thesis at all; it was only a list of biographical facts, beginning with London's birth—exactly what the teacher had told the class *not* to do. The first paragraph seemed to have no topic; it certainly had no topic sentence. Would Joseph ever get to his thesis? Did Joseph even have a thesis? To make matters worse, Joseph had used a contraction, *didn't*, even though the class had been instructed not to use contractions, and the last sentence of the paragraph was a run-on sentence—after all that work on clause punctuation. Mr. Eeus looked again at the paper, holding out hope for the second paragraph. Thesis...thesis....

What? The second paragraph was simply a crude summary of London's novel *The Call of the Wild*. It too had no topic sentence, and it had no bridge of any kind to the first paragraph. There was still no sign of a thesis. This was confusing, and the teacher's brain began to hurt as he searched for the point of the paper. He wanted Joseph to do well, but this paper seemed unplanned, random, pointless, and careless. He was having to stop reading to correct elementary errors in every paragraph. It was exhausting.

From this painful glimpse into one moment in the life of a teacher, we see one of the central principles of advanced academic writing: *You are not writing to yourself*. Academic writing is for someone else, and to be advanced, you have to view what you write from a reader's perspective. The decisions you make, the process you use, and the care you take with details all have an effect on your readers. Sometimes your reader will be a teacher who knows you well; other times your reader will be a professor who knows you by name only, or it may be someone you have never met. Whoever it is, that person will read the paper *without you*. You will not be there to explain what you meant.

This concern for your readers does not come easily. It comes with writing experience, with discovering the hard way that tiny mistakes in wording cause major disruptions in reading. *Intense awareness of your readers* is one of the most advanced elements in writing. This awareness extends to every detail: you want your readers to have a clear mind, to be utterly undistracted by mistakes of format, grammar, spelling, punctuation, wording, wordiness, organization—you want readers to be captured by your idea.

That brings us to the point of this book. Now that we have our foundations in place from the first two volumes, what are the final elements that make a paper advanced?

Advanced concerns: Volume III of *Advanced Academic Writing* explores the most advanced concerns of writing academic papers. I use the noun *concerns* to describe this exploration because all of this work must be, for you, a personal concern. If you regard the principles of academic writing as a list of someone else's rules that you are forced to obey, then you will never reach the highest levels of academic writing. If, on the other hand, you have internalized academic writing as a valuable method that lets you express truths you care about, then you have the depth it takes to master these advanced details. In other words, you cannot become great if you think that these details only matter to someone else; you only become great if they are important to you.

In this third volume in the *Advanced Academic Writing* series, I do not repeat the introductory discussions of the first two books. I assume that you have previously used one or both of the first two volumes. If you have not, then you must review the first two volumes; this will bring you into alignment with the more advanced elements of Volume III. Here is a brief overview of the elements first of Volume I and then of Volume II.

Volume I: The first book discussed the commitment you must make to academic writing. It introduced standard proofreaders' marks and reviewed the elements of a classic essay structure. It presented the details of a correct MLA (Modern Language Association) paper, including margins, pagination, treatment of quotations, and Works Cited. It also reviewed the rules of academic punctuation, grammar, and usage. It presented forty real research paper comments that I had written on student papers in the past. It introduced the method of grading: four-level assessment. Finally, Volume I presented four MLA writing assignments, to be three pages in length plus a Works Cited page:

First Paper: Single Source Interpretation of Fiction

Second Paper: Multiple Works Cited

Third Paper: A Revolutionary Character

Fourth Paper: An Abstract Concept

Volume II: The second book made stronger intellectual demands. It reviewed the fundamentals from Volume I but increased them; it doubled the proofreaders' marks and the real research paper comments, and it added detailed comments to the punctuation, grammar, and usage elements that had been introduced in Volume I. Then it explored the logic of advanced writing, including the logic of the essay, the logic of the syllogism, and famous logical fallacies. Finally, it assigned four more MLA papers, this time to be four pages in length plus a Works Cited page:

First Paper: A Paper about Poetry or Shakespeare

Second Paper: Comparison or Contrast of Ideas

Third Paper: Evaluating Ideas

Fourth Paper: Creating an Academic Idea

Volume III: In this third book we will write four slightly longer, more scholarly papers, concentrating on advanced refinements of presentation and style. The elementary details of grammar, punctuation, and usage are no longer our emphasis; you now know that you cannot succeed if those beginner's basics are not right. Unlike the first two volumes, this book puts those resources at the end of the book, in an appendix. It is now time to concentrate on the elements that most affect your readers. These are elements we have mentioned before, but now we want to deepen our comprehension. We will begin with the important concept of *unity*. I will describe the problems from a reader's point of view, and your task will be to deepen both your comprehension and your personal concern about the effects that writing problems have on your readers.

Ava,

Thank you for this outstanding paper on the work of Gelsey Kirkland, the American prima ballerina. I knew a little about her; I knew that she danced the role of Clara with Mikhail Baryshnikov in *The Nutcracker* in 1984, but I did not realize the struggle she suffered with eating disorders, and I had never thought about the extreme physical and athletic challenges of dancing at that level. Your paper is beautifully organized around your theme of brilliance masking struggle in art, and I particularly like your conclusion, which ties all of the parts of the body together. In all it is an impressive paper, and I am looking forward to your next paper eagerly. There are always a few problems to eliminate, so let us look at those.

Avoid passive voice verb constructions.

Instead of writing "What has been shown by Homer," write "What Homer has shown." Instead of writing "Dickens was honored by the Society," write "The Society honored Dickens." Instead of "Some examples are given by Durant," write "Durant gives four examples." Use an active voice verb and a direct object, rather than a passive voice verb and a prepositional phrase. Active voice gives your writing energy, vigor, and impact, whereas passive voice is lacking in force.

Passive voice can be a problem in the sentences you use to introduce quotations, where there is a tendency to write something such as, "It is written by William Simon that . . ." Active voice would be better: "William Simon notes that . . ."

Study the difference between semicolons and colons.

Use a semicolon in an I;I compound sentence if there is no coordinating conjunction to separate the two independent clauses; a mere comma in this situation would be a comma splice error. Use a colon instead of a semicolon if the second clause is offered as an illustration or example of what you said in the first clause: this clause is such an example. You should also study the way semicolons can be used in lists, as well as the way colons can be used to introduce lists.

The letter explains many of the errors in the paper. Others may be simply marked.

This letter is printed out and stapled to the top of the student paper.

The reason is not *because*; the reason is *that*. When you are explaining what the reason is for something, use the word *that* instead of the word *because*. The reason Poseidon disliked the Trojans was that (not because) Zeus favored them. This is a standard of usage because when you write *the reason is because*, you are repeating yourself; you already said it was a reason, so you do not need the word *because*; just write, "The reason we eliminate adjectives is that they clog sentences." An alternative is to eliminate the word *reason* instead and write, "We eliminate adjectives because they clog sentences." Use *because* alone or *reason/that*.

Nothing can be very unique.

The adjective *unique* permits no degrees; something either is unique, or it is not. Unique means one-of-a-kind, literally. If something is unique, then there is only one (*uni*) of it in the universe. The Grand Canyon is unique. You are unique. Accordingly, something cannot be very unique, or extremely unique, or the most unique. When you have said that it is unique, you have already said something so extreme as to be absolute.

Use brackets [] to insert within quotes.

Use brackets [like this] for inserting words into quotations. When you insert words into quotations—usually for clarification—use brackets.

ORIGINALITY

Usbrootis 1

Mark Usbrootis

Mrs. Sippie

World History

7 February 2021

Caesar's Double-Circumvallation at Alesia

In 52 B.C.E. Julius Caesar pursued Vercingetorix, a chieftain of the Arverni tribe in Gaul, to Alesia, a fortified town on a hill top in what is now France. Vercingetorix had united the Gallic tribes against the Romans and had been proclaimed King of Gergovia. Now he retreated with his army of 80,000 Gallic warriors to the fort on the hill. He regarded this walled fortification as an invincible stronghold, a safe haven where Caesar and the legions could not reach him. Mandurr explains that:

In any normal circumstance, Vercingetorix would have been correct, but his opponent was no normal commander; it was Julius Caesar, who immediately laid siege to Alesia and ordered his legions to construct a massive circumvallation [surrounding wall] around the entire site. It was an unexpectedly brilliant move. (Mandurr 84)

Caesar's circumvallation of Alesia, built by Roman engineers and soldiers in two weeks, was one of the most massive military projects in the ancient world. The wall was four meters high, with battle towers, and it stretched more than eighteen kilometers in its course around the hill city.

What complicated the strategy for Caesar was that in addition to attacks from inside the fortification, he had to deal with attacks from large outside Gallic armies that came to attempt the rescue of Vercingetorix and his army, along with a large

Find your **own** idea.

Advanced papers are more interesting than beginners' papers. Good papers are more fun to read—and write—than bad ones. There are many reasons why this is so, but in order to understand these reasons, think again about your readers. Do you want them to think that your writing is a boring and unpleasant waste of time, or do you want them to be surprised and drawn in, feeling that they have read something different and exciting? Do you want them to be impressed with you and to regard you as a unique thinker who can write?

There are many factors that make a paper interesting. The first factor is good English (mistakes are boring); we eliminate distractions and irritations by getting the basic details perfect: grammar, punctuation, MLA format, essay structure. Then we get the four advanced elements that we discussed in the previous section perfect: topic focus without self-reference, a thesis microlanguage, continuous paragraph connection, and tight sentences focusing on the adjacent noun/verb nuclei. All of these factors are important, but they only protect the interesting content; they do not create it. How do you create an interesting idea that you can present using these techniques?

An advanced attitude toward thinking and time: You find an interesting idea by thinking, and this usually happens when you are reading. Beginning writers think of writing a paper primarily as a writing problem. Advanced writers think of writing as a thinking and learning problem. One of the biggest differences between these two views is the attitude toward time. Beginners spend less time thinking and more time writing. Advanced writers take more total time, spending much more time thinking (including reading and research) and more time writing and proofreading. Beginners unhappily endure the time spent; advanced writers enjoy the time spent on research and writing.

Beginners are frustrated if they do not have a thesis after one session of research. Advanced writers feel that one session is only a start and look forward to finding more scholarly sources in a patient search for a thesis. Beginners imagine that they will find the thesis already expressed somewhere by an author. Advanced writers expect to read many sources and then to see a thesis idea emerge in their mind as a result of this reading/thinking/research.

This different attitude toward time pervades the entire process. Beginners rush to begin writing with little outline or plan. Advanced writers plan the essay thoroughly before beginning to write. Beginners hurry the writing roughly in order to finish as soon as possible. Advanced writers write each sentence carefully in order to communicate as clearly as possible and so as not to have mistakes to correct.

A writer's attitude toward time is based on the writer's attitude toward knowledge and on the writer's self-identification as a writer. We are willing to spend time on things we care about. If you do not really care what you learn, and you would rather be doing something else, and you are only going through the motions because the assignment forces you to, then you will not have your mind on any of the advanced dimensions of the process. If, on the other hand, you love learning in important, major ways, and you love the personal and individual learning that you can do when you write a research paper, and you are excited about becoming truly educated, and you like seeing your mind become more grown-up and intellectual, then you will make the most of the freedom to research and to express your own thesis, and you will enjoy spending time writing and will feel that it is more fun than most of the academic alternatives.

So if you do want to be an advanced writer, and you look forward to the experience of real research and true academic writing, then how do you go about developing your own original ideas to write about?

Think about it this way: you will not find *your* idea written by someone else. If you did, it would not be your idea. You develop your idea by reading with high interest and concentration, carefully, remembering what you have read and noticing connections and conclusions that are not stated. Perhaps you notice that one author, in different words, agrees with another author you have read. Perhaps you notice that two authors almost agree, but they disagree about a specific detail. Perhaps you notice that two authors contradict each other. Perhaps you see a third idea not mentioned by the authors. In all cases your idea can be inspired by what you have read; you might never have thought of it if you had not been reading the ideas of others, but *you* thought of it—after reading. It is a research-generated original idea.

Let us think more about finding your own idea....

Advanced Writing Assignments

This section of the book contains four writing assignments, each more complex and challenging than the former. Each assignment begins with a reflection on vocabulary and grammar. This is followed by a special focus section of ten actual research paper comments emphasizing details of real student papers. Additional components may follow. The specifications of the writing assignments are presented at the end of each section.

Alomania 1

Meg Alomania

Ms. Fitt

English Honors

22 April 2021

The Origin of the Bayeux Tapestry

Among the copious problems of art history, few are as perplexing as the origin of the Bayeux Tapestry, an embroidered cloth that is one-and-a-half feet wide and 230 feet long, depicting the Norman conquest of England in 1066. The tapestry—which is preserved in a museum in Bayeux, Normandy—features William the Conqueror, and “one popular theory is that the tapestry was ordered by Matilda, William’s wife” (Rhee 91). Modern scholars, however, have argued that the tapestry was made for Bishop Odo, William’s half-brother, and other scholars have suggested that the tapestry was commissioned by Edith of Wessex. Some argue that the tapestry was made at the Abbey of St. Florent in the Loire Valley.

The argument for Bishop Odo as the creator of the tapestry is that no contemporary accounts of the tapestry exist, and the first written record of the tapestry is directly associated with Odo because it is found in a list of objects at the Bayeux Cathedral in France. Harold Saxon explains:

The Bayeux Tapestry is listed in an inventory of objects at Bayeux Cathedral, dated 1476, about four hundred years after it was made. The Bayeux Cathedral was built by Bishop Odo, and several of his friends appear on the tapestry, so it is possible that Bishop Odo intended the tapestry to grace the dedication of his Bayeux Cathedral. (Saxon 87)

These associations of the tapestry with Bishop Odo are ambiguous because workmanship of the tapestry gives credence to its having been made in England by someone who might have employed Anglo-Saxons to make a tapestry was

Meg has chosen an exciting topic; many people have never heard of the Bayeux Tapestry.

Alomania 6

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cap

Assignment One • Art and Thought

If all we know about art is the popular concept—that art should be pretty pictures to make us happy and that the more photorealistic paintings are, the better they are—then we will be surprised by what art means in intellectual history. Every great discipline, whether it is fiction, history, music, architecture, film, poetry, or mathematics, explores the ideas of its time. Every great discipline explores the full range of human experiences, from beauty to horror, from triumph to tragedy, from kindness to cruelty, from love to loneliness, from meaning to emptiness.

Art is no exception. Art is not just shallow decoration that ignores the problems of human history and individuality. Like other disciplines, art goes deep. The point of art is not simply to make us happy or to copy nature; it is to explore the truth. Art, like all disciplines, freely explores whatever problems the artist wants to explore. There are wonderful human paintings by Norman Rockwell, and there is Picasso's *Guernica*, about a bombing of innocent civilians. There are stormy landscapes and seascapes by William Turner, and there is Goya's *Third of May*, about a firing squad. There are bright paintings of friends by Van Gogh, and there is *The Scream* by Edvard Munch. There are brilliantly realistic paintings by Vermeer, and there are revolutionary abstracts by Whistler. There are paintings that are supposed to look like things, and there are paintings that are supposed to capture emotions, or conflicts, or isolation.

There are sculptures, too. There are handsome portraits, and there are frightening ones; there are sculptures of birds and horses, and there are sculptures of abstract forms and spaces. There are sculptures of objects, and there are sculptures of voids. Some sculptures are ornamental, and some are philosophical.

"That's not art; I could paint that!" is a reaction that some people have to the masterpieces of modern abstract painting, but this reaction reveals a lack of knowledge about art, about the artist, and about the purpose and power of painting. Often, as in the case of Picasso, the abstract artist began painting realistically and had the ability to do that brilliantly but over the years developed an interest in more difficult problems than whether a hand on the canvas looks like a hand. There are people who in every other activity reject the very idea of rigid rules of creativity and say that creators can do whatever they want but who still expect all painters to try to copy objects, or landscapes, or faces. Some painters do copy objects, such as still lifes of fruit bowls, but other painters want to paint energy, or depth, or emotion. The project of copying nature has limited depth and soon becomes boring.

What you will find is that great artists are affected by their times, by their wars, by their economic recessions, by their religions, by the revolutions in science, by their governments, by the philosophy written during their lives. Artists are thinkers, and art is their reaction to all of life and thought. Artists reflect civilization.

There are several measures of how important art is to society. One is the sacrifice and expense that societies suffer for art. From the pyramids and sculptures of ancient Egypt to the Forbidden City in China, to the Taj Mahal in India, to Stonehenge in England, to the Eiffel Tower in Paris, to the stone carvings and buildings of Angkor Wat in Cambodia, to the works of art commissioned by the Medici in Renaissance Florence, to the walls of Machu Picchu, to the Parthenon in Athens, civilizations have gone to incredible lengths to create art and architecture that express their central ideas—no matter what the cost, no matter what the time required, no matter what the sacrifice of life and effort.

A second measure of the importance of art is the intensity of public and official reaction that historically has occurred toward works of art. Sometimes artists make people mad. Sometimes they are sued. Sometimes artists are banned by dictators, and their paintings and drawings are collected and burned. Sometimes there are protests against a painting or a sculpture. If art did not matter, then none of this would happen. So what, everyone would think, if a painting was not conventional? But the world does not take a so-what view of art. Art states. It is a statement about reality, or morality, or society, and people react to art as they react to words.

Art does not have to make social statements, but it can. Paintings do not have to challenge conventional thinking, but they might. Artists do not have to avoid traditional subjects and techniques, but they may.

As educated individuals we know the names of presidents and emperors, generals and chiefs, saints and bank robbers. We know the names of Caesar and Marcus Aurelius, of Grant and Lee, of Napoleon and Wellington, of Eisenhower and Patton. We know the names of evil rulers such as Adolf Hitler. We know the names of famous scientists and mathematicians, of Newton and Galileo, of Einstein and Crick and Watson. We know the names of Homer, and Sophocles, and Shakespeare, and Cervantes. We know the pseudonym of George Eliot, whose real name was Mary Ann Evans. We know about Frederick Douglass. We also know the names of great composers: Mozart and Bach, Beethoven and Liszt. A serious education includes art history; our knowledge must extend to the names of the great artists, of Michelangelo and Bernini, of Van Gogh and Monet, of Leonardo and Raphael, of Picasso and Mary Cassatt.

As with every other form of intellectual work, art has its revolutionaries. It has its giants who change things—who change the way everyone thinks. Almost any talented artist can paint some fruit, and still lifes of fruit are in fact beautiful and worthwhile—they were part of the rise of the middle class in Europe and celebrated the time when ordinary people began to emerge from feudalism and servitude and serfdom and to have some comforts—but it is not original to paint fruit, even if you do it well. It has been done. Great artists tend to do things that have not been done. They work at the modern edges; they break those edges. Poetry was never the same after Walt Whitman. Writing was never the same after Cervantes. Novels were never the same after Mark Twain. Physics was never the same after Newton, and again after Einstein. Philosophy was never the same after Plato. Art was never the same after Giotto (pronounced JOTT-oh), or after Leonardo, or after Monet, or after Picasso. These and other revolutionary artists changed the world, made people look at the world with new eyes, and influenced generations of young artists to explore unexplored visions.

Artists do not hide in hermetically sealed bubbles, apart from their societies. French artists in the court of Versailles had little choice but to paint royalty and nobility. It is impossible to imagine Picasso painting his most abstract works in the seventeenth century. It was only barely possible for Whistler to paint his controversial *Nocturne in Black and Gold* in the late-1800s, and yet today the painting looks conservative rather than revolutionary. Nineteenth-century artists who grew up in a reassuring Newtonian, cause-and-effect world were able to paint calmer topics than those who came after the shocking scientific discoveries of relativity and quantum mechanics turned our basic ideas of reality upside-down; after that, artists strove for visual ways to capture the randomness and disorder of modern thought.

Purpose: Thinking and Writing about Art in an Informed Way

The purpose of this paper is to research beyond the stereotype of art as decoration and to explore art as part of the mainstream of intellectual life, connected to historical events and to other intellectual disciplines. In other words, this is not simply an art topic; it is inherently interdisciplinary, connecting art to history, science, mathematics—to everything.

Topic: Art and Thought—Major Art as an Expression of Its Time

For this paper, identify a period of history and a cultural context, such as American history in the 1900s, or European history in the 1700s, or Egyptian history in 3000 B.C.E., and learn about the art of the time. You might wish to use a period

that you are already studying in literature or in a history course, and this will give you more depth in that study. View the art from within a context of history and culture. If you choose twentieth-century Europe from 1900 until 1950, for example, who were the greatest artists in Europe then? In what ways did the major art of the time connect with the other historical, cultural, and intellectual movements?

After reading about the era and the general art scene of the era, identify one artist from the many, and research that artist's work as an expression of an artistic movement that emerged from that particular historical and cultural context. How was that artist influenced by the time period and the events going on at that time?

Length: Five Pages

This paper must be no more than five pages long, with a sixth page for the Works Cited. Page five should contain a half-page or more of text. Five pages—about fifteen paragraphs—is a common length of such assignments in high school and college academic courses.

Due Date: Provided by Instructor

Your instructor will assign the date, providing at least two weeks for both research and writing. Late papers will lose one letter grade per day.

Format: MLA

This will be an MLA essay with long and short quotations. A paper done in any other format will be returned to you to be redone. The instructor may assign a letter-grade-per-day penalty for lateness in such a case. The paper should be printed on one side of the page only in a legible 12-point font that is double-spaced and has a ragged right margin. There must be a minimum of two long quotations and four short quotations in the paper. There is no separate title page. Do not hole-punch your paper or put it in a plastic or cardboard folder; keep it professional-looking.

Structure: Essay

This paper should be a three-part thesis essay, with an introduction, body, and conclusion. The paragraphs should be organized and clearly connected. Use a key word from your thesis to connect the paper.

Sources: Ten Sources

For this paper you must have a minimum of ten sources in your Works Cited page.

Honor: Your Plagiarism Pledge

Before you turn your paper in, you should write on the back of the paper, “I know that plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of someone else’s words or ideas, and I pledge that this paper is not plagiarized,” and sign it. A plagiarized paper will receive a zero.

Instructor: Your Instructor Is the Authority

For all of these guidelines, your instructor has the final say. If your instructor wants to amend any detail, that is final.

The painting on the facing page, by James Abbot McNeill Whistler, is one of the most famous in art history. Called *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket*, the painting was displayed in London’s Grosvenor Gallery in 1877 and depicts fireworks in the night sky just after they have exploded and are falling back to Earth. The clouds and the river glow from the luminous fragments of the rocket. The painting uses an abstract technique, rather than precise renderings of realistic details, to capture the moody, atmospheric feeling of the moment. The art critic John Ruskin attacked the painting, saying that Whistler had “thrown a pot of paint in the public’s face.” In an event of great public intensity, Whistler sued Ruskin and won damages, but the award was so small as to be meaningless.