Appendix B: How to Analyze a Piece of Art

In the Title
List the basic information of the piece: artist’s name, title, date, medium, size, and location.
Examples:
   Edvard Grieg, “In the Hall of the Mountain King,” 1876. Theatre score, 2:41.

In the Introductory Paragraph
   ● What immediately catches your eye?
   ● What is the subject matter (what’s happening in the artwork)?
   ● Is there a message? How is that message communicated to the viewer (briefly)?

Analysis of Technique
   ● Is the style and technique helping accomplish the artist's intent? Why or why not?
   ● *Specific to paintings/drawings*:
     ○ Where is the light coming from in the painting/drawing and how is it used?
     ○ What is the perspective of the painting/drawing and how is that significant?
   ● *Specific to sculptures*:
     ○ Setting: Was it mounted on a pedestal? Set on top a building? In a public square?
     ○ Space: How big is it? Was it meant to be seen from one perspective only?
   ● *Specific to architecture*:
     ○ What holds up the building? What is the roof like (flat, domed, etc.)?
     ○ How is the building lit? How is it decorated?
   ● *Specific to music*:
     ○ Instrumentation: What instruments are used and how are they used?
     ○ If lyrics: How do the lyrics and the tune fit together to send the message?
     ○ If no lyrics: How does the artist use melody, tempo, or harmony?

Historical Context
   ● What was happening in the artist’s life during the time the composition was made? or
     What was happening during this time period? and How does that relate to the artwork?
   ● Who was the intended audience for this artwork (be as specific as possible)?
   ● Compare this artwork with one other piece composed within 50 years of its creation.
   ● What does this painting tell us about the time and place where it was made? Can we
deduce anything about the values of this civilization? What was important to them?

Interpretation:
   ● What was the artist’s intention with creating this work? Did he or she succeed?
   ● How does the artwork make you feel? What is your reaction to it? Why do you react so?
   ● Critical Judgment: Is it good; is it true; is it beautiful? Why or why not?