

Sample Essay #1 – Body

About this essay

Title: "Naked and Unafraid: An Exploration of Westernization in 1900s Japanese Art through the Nude"

Grade received: A.

*This is a selected excerpt from a paragraph on social context in early 20th-century paintings by Japanese artists Kuroda Seiki and Tsuguharu Foujita.

Important Information

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KEY*

Yellow = long sentence

Pink = medium-length sentence

Green = short sentence

**See pages 2-3 for the body paragraph; see pages 4-5 for basic notes and analysis.*

On the other hand, Foujita's *Nude*, drawing inspiration from Manet's *Olympia*, questions the demarcation of Western and Japanese through not elevated grace and elegance but through the reduction of both to their alienated, essentialized caricatures in the 'other' art world. // In *Reclining Nude*, Kiki displays the blasé attitude of Western modernity used as a weapon of confrontation and criticism as in *Olympia*, but with key alterations that direct the painting's confrontation against the awkward exclusiveness of Western and Japanese art mediums, elements, and conventions. // *Olympia* and *Kiki* both stare unflinchingly at the viewer and almost through them, yet in comparison *Kiki*'s gaze is much more indifferent and thus daring. // Arguably this is bolstered by her pose. // Unlike *Olympia*, who lounges on her chaise comfortably with a hand resting over her genitals, *Kiki*'s pushed-open elbow puts her body and body hair to face the viewer fully; // her hand is placed on her hip in an unnatural position to display her pubic hair. // Her pose emanates intention and discomfort yet simultaneously utter nonchalance, suggesting her position in between the contemporary binary of leisure (or perhaps 'luxury') versus labor that was applied to women in Japanese art at the time (Croissant, 2003). // Combined with the fact that it is a woman with Japanese features appearing so unabashedly in such a revealing image, especially from a respected artist like Foujita, *Nude* disturbs the viewer and daringly threatens the conventions of both Western and Japanese tradition. // Thus,

Foujita introduces crucial Japanese elements into a type of art previously reserved for idealized Western standards of beauty as allegory, questioning the role of 'Japaneseness' in Western art beyond the exoticization and essentialization that was prescribed to Japanese works within the Western world, including Foujita's own body of work. // At the same time, he models his version of nude Japanese femininity on *Olympia*, a challenge to conventional views of prostitution, as well as Kiki de Montparnasse, a Parisian symbol of feminine sexual liberty (Martinique, 2018), accosting *ukiyo-e* traditions of the nude purely as male-serving pornography. // As such, Kuroda and Foujita both reflect on the interrelationship between Western and Japanese social contexts and concepts. // With *Nude*, Foujita destroys the dichotomy between the Western and the Japanese and takes Kuroda's 'merger' of East and West one step further to synthesize and redefine both in the modern, new context of the other.

See pages for notes and analysis.

NOTES (1/2)

When writing, it's important to keep sentence length varied to keep the reading experience fluid and lively. There are three basic sentence lengths—long, medium-length, and short—and alternating lengths can make your writing come to life!

Length doesn't always mean number of words or lines on a page. We also have to consider factors like punctuation and phrasing, syllable length, and complexity.

For example:

(1) As such, Kuroda and Foujita both reflect on the interrelationship between Western and Japanese social contexts and concepts.

(2) Olympia and Kiki both stare unflinchingly at the viewer and almost through them, yet in comparison Kiki's gaze is much more indifferent and thus daring.

Sentences (1) and (2) are almost equal in length, but (1) is a short sentence and (2) is a medium-length one. We can understand this by breaking down the sentences.

(1) can be broken down into "As such" / "Kuroda and Foujita both reflect on the interrelationship" / "between Western and Japanese social contexts and concepts."

(2) can be broken down into "Olympia and Kiki both stare unflinchingly at the viewer and almost through them" / "yet in comparison Kiki's gaze is much more indifferent and thus daring."

NOTES (2/2)

The way we break down sentences is a complex science, taking into consideration sentence fragmenting, meaning, and pauses. Unfortunately these notes are too brief to go into any depth, but we can still analyze the lengths of (1) and (2).

- (1) breaks down into three parts: one short and two of similar length. Each of the parts conveys a single, simple idea.
- (2) breaks down into two equally long parts. Not only is each of the parts longer, they convey more complex ideas that depend on previously established knowledge. Since there are fewer parts, there is also less opportunity for pause, making the sentence more difficult to read out loud.

All these factors together mean that in a reader's mind, (2) takes longer to process—and that's why (2) is 'longer' than (1). This doesn't mean that shorter sentences are better, though! Long sentences attach importance to the ideas they communicate, allowing your descriptions to flow. On the other hand, short sentences grab attention! Varying sentence length when writing keeps readers engaged and active, making it a powerful tool for writing better essays, creative pieces, and even poetry.