The Simple AP® Art History Unit 1 Cheat Sheet

Unit 1 Big Picture: Art Before Writing

Stone Age Periods

Period	Life	Art
Paleolithic	Hunt-gather	Caves, small
Mesolithic	Ice Age ends	Rock art
Neolithic	Farm, village	Pots, stones

Neolithic Revolution: farming → villages → surplus, status, pottery, monuments.
Prehistory = before writing, so no texts explain the art. Its purpose is a best guess.

Big Ideas

Global: early art on every inhabited continent, not just Europe. Common focus: animals, nature.
Africa first: humans + the earliest art start there, then spread w/ human migration worldwide.
Science helps: archaeologists dig + date the works; art historians interpret them.

How Scholars Know

Radiocarbon (C-14): dates charcoal, bone.
Stratigraphy: deeper layer = older.
Ethnographic analogy: compare w/ living cultures to guess meaning. Useful, but a guess.
Zoomorphic = animal-shaped (#3, #9).
Anthropomorphic = human-shaped (#6, #10).
Naturalism: looks lifelike (#2). **Stylization**: nature simplified into shapes (#5, #11).

⚠ "Neolithic" is a stage, not one date. Regions reached it at different times, millennia apart.

Parietal art = on cave/rock walls (#2, #4).
Portable art = small, movable objects.

#1 Apollo 11 Stones · #3 Camelid Sacrum

#1 Apollo 11 Stones (Namibia, c. 25,500 BCE)

Medium: charcoal on small stone slabs (portable). The oldest work in the whole image set.
Name: the cave was dug in 1969 and named for the moon mission then in the news.
Content: animals in profile; one mixes cat body + human-like legs (**therianthrope**).
Form: simple black outlines; no ground line or scene drawn around the animals at all.
Dating: C-14 on charcoal in the same layer → art in Africa as early as Europe's cave art.
Theory: the hybrid may link to later San shaman art (trance, transformation). Unproven.

✓ Use #1 to show art did not begin in Europe.

#3 Camelid Sacrum (Mexico, 14,000–7000 BCE)

Medium: bone. Hip bone of an extinct llama relative, shaped like a dog/coyote head.
Process: the artist saw an animal in the bone's shape, then carved nostrils to finish it. Found 1870 in Tequixquiac, Mexico, ~12 m deep in a quarry.
Meaning: *os sacrum* = "sacred bone" (later Latin). Theories: fertility, rebirth, ritual use.
Context: people reached the Americas from Asia. Bone carving came before clay here.
Transformation: in #1 and #3 one creature becomes another, a key Unit 1 theme.

⚠ #3 is bone, not stone. The animal shape is the bone itself, reshaped by hand.

Compare #1 & #3: drawn on a slab vs carved from bone; both blend 2 creatures into 1.

#2 Great Hall of the Bulls, Lascaux

Identify It (France, 15,000–13,000 BCE)

Medium: rock painting on cave walls (**parietal art**), Paleolithic France. Found in 1940 by teens.
Content: huge bulls (aurochs, some 17 ft long), horses, deer and a mystery "unicorn." Almost no humans appear anywhere on the walls.

Form & Technique

Feature	What it means
Twisted view	Body side, horns front
Pigments	Red/yellow ochre, black
Rock bulges	Add 3D volume
Overlap	No ground, no scene

Application: blown through tubes, pads, brushes, fingers; lit by animal-fat lamps.
Naturalism: lifelike outlines, horns, coats; the animals seem to move across the rock.

Why Was It Made?

Hunting magic: paint it → catch it. Weak b/c people mostly ate reindeer, rarely painted.
Ritual / shamanism: a dark, deep space likely used for initiation rites or trance states.
Preservation: closed 1963 b/c visitors' breath caused mold. Replicas let people visit.
Structuralism: animals placed in patterns or pairs (horse vs bison) as symbols, not at random.

✓ Visual analysis: link the rock bulges + blown paint to the feeling of mass and motion.

⚠ These are theories. Write "scholars suggest," never one single proven purpose.

#4 Horned Woman · #5 Ibex Beaker

#4 Running Horned Woman (Algeria, 6000–4000 BCE)

Medium: pigment on rock, at Tassili n'Ajjer, a rock shelter in the Sahara, Algeria (N. Africa).
Content: woman running; horned headdress; dots (body paint); fringe on arms, waist.
Style: dynamic pose; mixes profile + frontal views.
Composition: legs spread wide, body leans forward → a strong sense of speed.
Context: Sahara was green then. Later art shows cattle, then camels → **climate change**.
Theories: goddess, fertility figure, ritual dancer.

✓ #4 shows Africa's rock art tradition lasting for thousands of years after #1's stones.

#5 Beaker w/ Ibex Motifs (Susa, Iran, 4200–3500 BCE)

Medium: painted terra cotta, very thin walls. Found in a cemetery w/ ~2,000 other pots.
Process: buff clay, dark paint; possibly shaped on a slow wheel (a turntable), very thin.
Registers (bands): **ibex** w/ huge round horns; running **dogs**; long-necked **birds**.
Stylization: animals simplified into triangles, arcs and lines to fit the curve of the pot's shape.
Function: a burial object found w/ the dead; it may show the owner's wealth and status.
Compare: #5's stylized ibex vs #2's lifelike bulls: same subject, opposite approach.

⚠ An ibex is a mountain goat, not a deer.

#6 Anthropomorphic Stele · #7 Jade Cong

#6 Anthropomorphic Stele (Arabia, 4th mill. BCE)

Medium: sandstone, low relief. **Stele** = upright stone slab, often used as a grave marker.
Anthropomorphic = human-shaped. Head + face carved; the body stays a flat slab.
Style: frontal, symmetrical, flat → it shows a role or type, not a portrait of one person's face.
Details: simple face; belt w/ double-bladed dagger; cloak over shoulders → status.
Function: likely a grave marker or a memorial for an important leader or ancestor.

✓ Pair #6 w/ #8: both use stone to make a memory or a belief last for ages.

#7 Jade Cong (Liangzhu, China, 3300–2200 BCE)

Medium: carved jade (nephrite). **Form**: a tube, round inside and square outside.
Decoration: stylized faces (eyes, mouth band) carved on each of the corners.
Liangzhu: Neolithic culture near Lake Tai, China; rice farming, a walled city, canals.

Fact	Why it matters
Jade is very hard	Ground w/ sand
Took months	Shows wealth
Found in tombs	Elite burials

Jade's value: durable, glowing → permanence.
Compare #6: public marker vs private burial good.

⚠ Square = earth, round = heaven comes from much later texts. Call it a theory.

#8 Stonehenge (Wiltshire, UK)

Identify It (Neolithic, c. 2500–1600 BCE)

Medium: sandstone (sarsen) + bluestones. Built in phases over many centuries (~1,500 yrs).
Megalith = huge stone. **Henge** = circle of bank + ditch. **Cromlech** = circle of megaliths.
Phases: ditch ~3000 BCE → stones ~2500 BCE → rearranged until about 1600 BCE.

Construction

Part	Detail
Sarsens	~20 mi away
Bluestones	Wales, ~150 mi
Trilithon	2 posts + 1 lintel
Joints	Copied from wood

Post-and-lintel: stones locked w/ carpentry joints (mortise-and-tenon), copied from wood.
Moving stones: sledges, rollers, ramps → huge organized labor + strong leadership.

Why Was It Built?

Astronomy: lines up w/ summer solstice sunrise + winter solstice sunset; Heel Stone marks it.
Ritual / burial: cremation burials found; ceremonies tied to the ancestors.
Living vs dead: wood circle nearby for the living, stone circle for ancestors (theory).

✓ FRQ: use the labor + sun alignment as evidence of an organized, ritual society.

⚠ Druids did NOT build Stonehenge. They lived ~2,000 years later. Classic trap.

#9 Ambum Stone · #10 Tlatilco · #11 Lapita

#9 Ambum Stone (Papua New Guinea, c. 1500 BCE)

Medium: greywacke (a hard stone), ground + polished. Small, only ~20 cm tall.
Process: pecked + ground w/ harder stone and sand; long, skilled labor by hand, no metal.
Content: **zoomorphic**; likely an echidna (spiny anteater). Use unknown: tool or ritual.
Later use: Enga people used it in rituals for their ancestors + for fertility of the land.

#10 Tlatilco Female Figurine (Mexico, 1200–900 BCE)

Medium: ceramic, hand-modeled. Found in graves; most of the figurines found are female.
Name: Tlatilco = "place where things are hidden" (Nahuatl), a site near Mexico City.
Form: two faces sharing three eyes; wide hips, tiny waist. Theories: duality, fertility.

⚠ #9 = stone animal (PNG). #10 = clay woman (Mexico). Don't mix them up on the exam.

#11 Lapita Fragment (Solomon Is., 1000 BCE)

Medium: terra cotta, **incised** + stamped w/ a toothed tool; white lime fills the lines.
Design: dense geometric bands, some read as faces; echoed later in Pacific tattoos.
Context: Lapita sailors spread this pottery east to Fiji, Tonga, Samoa → **migration**.

✓ Pacific migration question? Cite #11.

Unit 1 on the Exam (~4% of MC)

FRQ Types

Q	Type	Unit 1 tip
1	Comparison	Pair by theme
2	Visual/context	No image given
3	Visual	Unknown work
4	Contextual	Setting → art
5	Attribution	Medium = clue
6	Continuity	Rock art, stone

Good Comparison Pairs

#2 vs #4: both rock painting; animals vs a human figure; Ice Age vs green Sahara.
#7 vs #8: huge labor → status; a small object vs a giant monument in the landscape.
#5 vs #11: decorated pottery; burial vs migration.
#9 vs #10: small ritual figures; a stone animal vs a clay human; Pacific vs the Americas.

Write It Right

Identifiers: name, place, date, medium. Memorize all 11 (Q2 has no image to look at).
Evidence words: "suggests," "likely." Tie each claim to something you can see.
Cover all 4: form, function, content, context. Purpose is least known, so argue from context.
Continuity (Q6): rock art #1 → #2 → #4 over about 20,000 years of painting on stone.

✓ Q1: pick a pair w/ one clear shared theme + one clear, specific difference between them.

⚠ Don't treat European caves as the start of art, or state a theory as a proven fact.