

GLOSSARY

researched: studiati.
labelled: contrassegnati.
boldly: audacemente.
concerns: interessi.
lobby: atrio.
RCA: acronimo di Radio Corporation of America (ente radiofonico americano).
fee: onorario.
overalls: tuta da lavoro.
outer space: spazio astrale.
debauch themselves: si lasciano andare a stravizi.

vengefully: vendicativamente.
bespectacled: occhialuto.
labour unrest: agitazioni operate.
statements: affermazioni.
ancestry: genealogia.
split: divisa.
stormy: tempestosa.
lap: grembo.
stem: arrestare.
gain acclaim: ottenere consensi.
segregated: razzista.

9. Frida Kahlo, *The Two Fridas*, 1939, oil on canvas, 5' 8½" x 5' 8½" (1.74 x 1.74 m), Museo de Arte Moderno, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Mexico City (Mexico).



COMPREHENSION 4

Are these statements true or false?

1. Rivera's style was influenced by European art. T F
2. His mural for the RCA Building in New York was transferred to Mexico City. T F
3. The figure at the centre of the mural is a victim of technology. T F
4. In this mural the artist has depicted strongly contrasting ways of life. T F
5. Kahlo's painting career was influenced by Breton's judgment. T F
6. Her double portrait is meant to represent her European and Mexican origins. T F

Social and Existential Elements in Mexican Art

Artists in Mexico also focussed on local scenes and **2** concerns as they fulfilled government commissions to decorate public buildings with murals celebrating the history, life, and work of the Mexican people. Prominent in the new Mexican mural movement of the 1930s initiated by this public patronage, was Diego Rivera (1886-1957). Rivera had lived in Paris, painting in the Synthetic Cubist style (see p. 98), and between 1920 and 1921 he travelled to Italy to study the great frescos of the Renaissance. On his return to Mexico, he fulfilled government commissions for a series of monumental murals, inspired by both Italian Renaissance art and the indigenous art of Mexico. In 1932, the Rockefeller family commissioned Rivera to paint a mural for the **3** lobby of the **4** RCA Building in Rockefeller Center in New York City on the theme "Man at the Crossroads Looking with Hope and High Vision to the Choosing of a New and Better Future." When Rivera, a Communist, provocatively included a portrait of Lenin in the mural, the Rockefellers cancelled his commission, paid him his **5** fee, and had the unfinished mural destroyed. In response to what he called an "act of cultural vandalism," Rivera re-created the mural in the Palacio de Bellas Artes in Mexico City, under the new title *Man, Controller of the Universe* **8**.

At the centre of the mural, a figure in **6** overalls represents Man, who symbolically controls the universe through his manipulation of technology. Crossing behind him are two great ellipses that represent, respectively, the microcosm of living organisms as seen through the microscope at Man's right hand, and the macrocosm of **7** outer space as viewed through the giant telescope above his head. Below, fruits and vegetables rise from the earth as a result of his agricultural efforts. To the viewer's right, Lenin joins the hands of several workers of different races; at the left, decadent capitalists **8** debauch themselves in a nightclub. Rivera **9** vengefully included in this section a portrait of the **10** bespectacled John D. Rockefeller, Jr. At the sides of the mural, Rivera contrasts the peaceful socialist workers at right with the militarism and **11** labour unrest of the capitalist world to the left.

While the muralists painted public messages, other Mexican artists made more private, introspective **12** statements in **13** easel paintings. André Breton claimed Frida Kahlo (1910-1954) to be a natural Surrealist, although she herself said: "I never painted dreams. I painted my own reality." That reality included her mixed German and Mexican **14** ancestry. In *The Two Fridas* **9**, Kahlo presented an identity **15** split into two ethnic selves: the European one, in a Victorian dress; and the Mexican one, wearing traditional Mexican clothing. The painting also reflects her **16** stormy relationship with Diego Rivera, whom she married in 1929 but was divorcing in 1939 when she was painting this picture. She told an art historian at the time that the Mexican image was the Frida whom Diego loved, and the European image was the Frida he did not. The two Fridas join hands and the artery running between them begins at a miniature portrait of Rivera as a boy held by the Mexican Frida, travels through the exposed hearts of both Fridas, and ends in the **17** lap of the Europeanized Frida, who attempts without success to **18** stem the flow of blood.

COMPREHENSION 2

Answer the questions.

1. Who organized the rebuilding of the Parthenon?
2. What material was used in its construction?
3. What was Phidias' contribution to the project?
4. Did the architects observe strict regularity in the construction?

GLOSSARY

claimed: rivendicò.
rising triumphantly: ergendosi trionfante.
customary: consuete.
tiles: tegole.
renowned: famoso.

ART GLOSSARY

designed: progettato.

The Acropolis and the Parthenon

The Athenian Acropolis **1**, the hill that formed the city's ceremonial centre, visually expressed the city's values and its civic pride. The Persians had destroyed the site's earlier buildings and statues in 480 BCE, and Perikles promoted and organized the rebuilding of its monuments, beginning with the Parthenon in 447 BCE. According to Greek mythology, Athena, goddess of wisdom and civilization, **1** claimed Athens as her city, and this new temple, dedicated to the Virgin Athena (*Athena Parthenos* in Greek), would proclaim this association, **1** rising triumphantly over the city. The Parthenon, **1** designed and built by the architects Kallikrates and Iktinos, was meant to dominate the other structures on the hilltop site. The builders used the finest white marble throughout – even on the roof, replacing the **1** customary terracotta **1** tiles. The **1** renowned sculptor Phidias designed its sculptural decorations and supervised the entire Acropolis project. The building itself was completed in 438 BCE, and its sculpture, executed by Phidias and other sculptors in his workshop, was finished in 432 BCE.



1. Reconstruction of the Acropolis, Athens (Greece), 5th century BCE.

- a. Propylaea
- b. Picture gallery
- c. Temple of Athena Nike
- d. Statue of Athena Promachos
- e. Erechtheion
- f. Parthenon

ART AND ITS CONTEXTS

Classic and Classical

Our words "classic" and "classical" come from the Latin word *classis*, referring to the division of the people in a society into "classes" based on **1** wealth. Consequently, "classic" has come to mean "first class," "the highest **1** rank," and "the standard of excellence." Greek artists in the fifth century BCE **1** sought to create ideal images based on perfect mathematical proportions. Since Roman artists

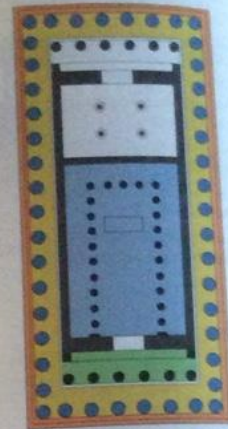
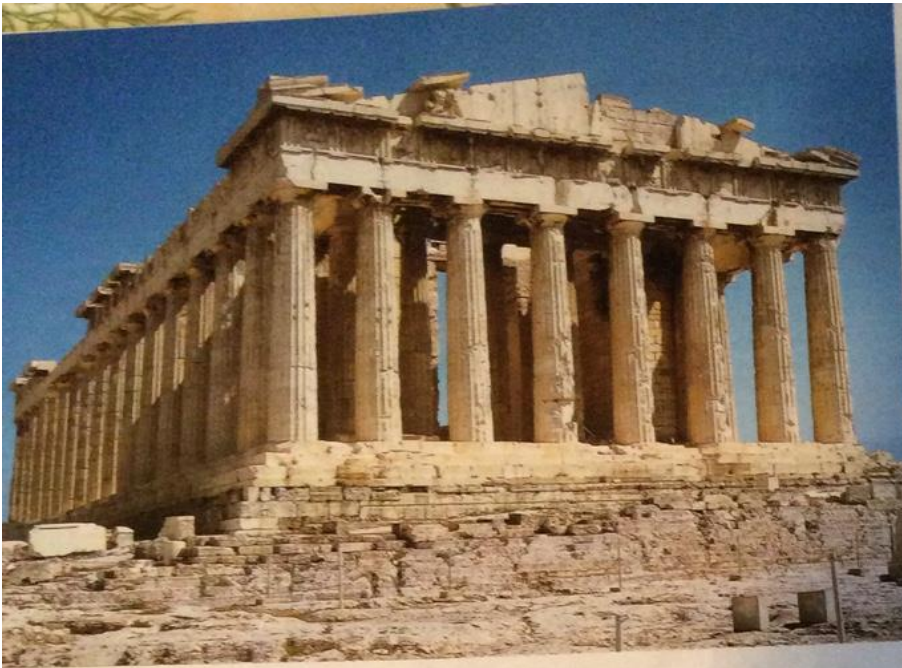
were also inspired by these ideals, the term "classical" in this context refers to the cultures of ancient Greece and Rome. By extension, the word may also mean "in the style of ancient Greece and Rome," whenever or wherever that style is used. In the most general usage, a classic is something – whether a literary work, automobile, or film – of **1** lasting quality and universal esteem.

Complete the sentences.

1. The words "classic" and "classical" come from
2. The words refer to
3. In the fifth century BCE Greek artists tried to
4. In an artistic context, the term "classical" refers to

GLOSSARY

wealth: ricchezza.
first class: prima classe.
sought to create: cercavano di creare.
lasting quality: qualità duratura.



■ pronaos ■ stylobate
■ cella ■ stereobate
■ peristyle colonnade

2. Kallikrates and Iktinos, Exterior view from the northwest and plan of the Parthenon, Acropolis, Athens (Greece), c. 447-432 BCE.

In its structure and design, the Parthenon **2** illustrates the refinement of ancient Greek architecture. It follows the traditional **■** cella and peristyle plan, and to **■** counteract the optical illusions that would distort its appearance when seen from a distance, the architects made many subtle adjustments to strict regularity. Since long horizontal lines appear to **■** sag in the centre, the architects designed both the base of the temple and the **■** entablature to curve slightly upward to correct this optical distortion. The columns have a subtle **■** swelling (*entasis*) and **■** tilt inward slightly toward the centre of the building. In addition, the corners are strengthened visually by reducing the space between columns at the ends of the **■** colonnades. These subtle refinements in the arrangement of seemingly regular elements give the Parthenon a **■** buoyant organic appearance and prevent it from looking like a heavy, lifeless stone box.

The Sculptural Decoration of the Parthenon

As in most temples, **■** sculpture in the round filled both **■** pediments of the Parthenon, set on the **■** projecting shelf of the **■** cornice and secured to the wall with metal **■** pins. The sculptors expertly rendered the human form beneath the **■** clinging draperies that create curvilinear patterns **■** rippling over torsos, **■** breasts, and **■** knees. Most of the works of sculpture from the Parthenon have been damaged or lost over the centuries, but using the locations of existing **■** pinholes, **■** scholars have determined the placement of the surviving statues and can speculate on the poses of the missing ones.

The statues of the east pediment **3** above the entrance to the cella are the best preserved of the two groups. Originally over 90 feet long (about 27.50 m), the pediment **■** lacks its central part, amounting to about 40 feet (more than 12 m), probably destroyed in the fifth century when Christians turned the Parthenon into a church and built an **■** apse at the east end. The ensemble illustrated the birth of Athena. The missing statues in the centre probably showed Zeus seated on a throne, and standing next to him, Athena, who according to mythology had emerged fully grown from his head. The male nude, who **■** fits so easily into the **■** sloping pediment toward the left, has been identified as the hero Herakles with his lion's mane, and the god Dionysos lying on a panther skin. The two seated women next to him may be the earth and grain goddesses, Demeter and Persephone. The running female figure just left of centre is Iris, messenger of the gods, already **■** spreading the news of Athena's birth. The three female figures on the right side are probably Hestia (a sister of Zeus and goddess of the **■** hearth), Dione (one of Zeus's many consorts), and her daughter Aphrodite (goddess of love), who **■** reclines like a male **■** counterpart on the other side of the pediment to conform to its **■** tapering triangular **■** shape. The horses' heads represent (at far left) the ascending **■** chariot of the sun god, Helios (Apollo), and (at far right) the descending moon goddess, Selene.

ART GLOSSARY

- cella and peristyle plan:** pianta con cella e peristilio.
- entablature:** trabeazione.
- colonnades:** colonnati.
- sculpture in the round:** statuarìa a tutto tondo.
- pediments:** frontoni.
- projecting shelf:** sporgenza.
- cornice:** cornice, cornicione.
- apse:** abside.

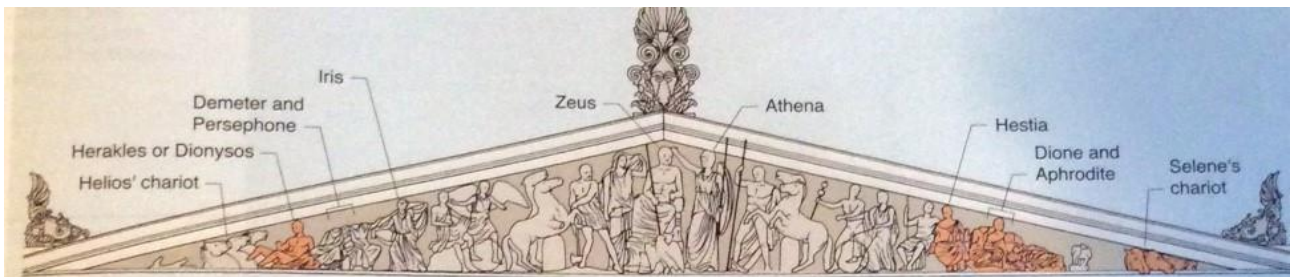
COMPREHENSION 3

Tick the correct statements.

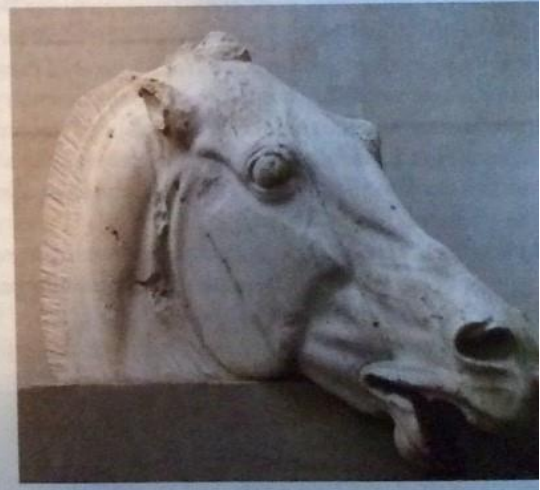
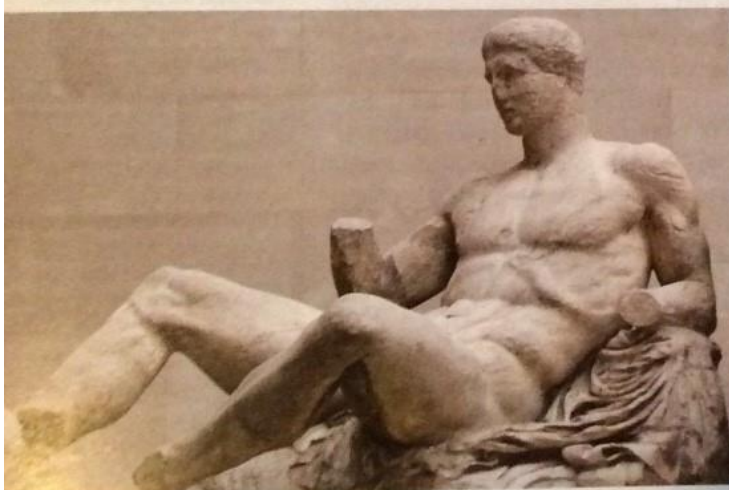
1. Only part of the east pediment of the Parthenon is still standing.
2. You can see all the statues in the ensemble illustrating the birth of Athena.
3. An apse was built by the Christians on the east end of the Parthenon.

GLOSSARY

- counteract:** contrastare.
- sag:** infossarsi, incurvarsi.
- swelling:** rigonfiamento.
- tilt inward:** sono inclinate verso l'interno.
- buoyant:** vivace, allegro.
- pins:** perni.
- clinging draperies:** panneggi aderenti.
- rippling:** che si increspano.
- breasts:** petti.
- knees:** ginocchia.



3. Reconstruction of the east pediment of the Parthenon and details of the extant marble sculpture, c. 447-432 BCE, The British Museum, London (England)



During the beginning of the nineteenth century, Thomas Bruce, the 7th Earl of Elgin, a British ambassador in Constantinople, acquired much ancient Greek sculpture from the Acropolis, which was being dismantled by the Turks for military purposes at the time. He shipped the sculptures back to London in 1801

to decorate his lavish mansion, but after a financial dispute and other difficulties, he sold them to the British government in 1816. Referred to as the Elgin Marbles, most of the sculpture is now in London's British Museum, including the elements seen here. In recent times, the Greek

government has tried unsuccessfully to have the Elgin Marbles returned.

Answer the questions.

1. Who was Thomas Bruce?
2. What did he do?
3. Where are the Elgin Marbles now?
4. What has the Greek government tried to do in recent times?

GLOSSARY

earl: conte.
shipped: spediti per mare.
lavish mansion: sontuosa dimora

foei lasciati dai perni.

fits: si adatta.
sloping: inclinato.

hearth: focolare.
reclines: è sdraiata.

tapering: che si assottiglia.
shape: forma.
chariot: carrozina