

(iv) Trojan Horse - 2014

Photograph J on Paper X shows a wall painting from Pompeii.

(a) What event is shown in this painting?

The event shown in the painting is that of the Trojans pulling the Wooden Horse inside the city gates of Troy, believing the Greeks left it for the Gods and went home. This horse would bring the end of the Trojan War, and the destruction of the city.

(b) Write a full description of this painting.

In the centre of the painting stands four Trojans pulling the horse in the direction of the city of Troy. These figures are the central characters. The gleaming colour of these characters contrasts starkly with the dimmer static figures of the wandering Trojan army behind them in the background. The light focused on them is the functional centre of the painting. The characters appear to be rhythmically using their weight to haul the horse along to the city.

There are also spectators in the background that are linked to the rest of the scene by a lone figure. This figure appears to be running towards the horse and helps to coordinate the scene and concentrate our eyes on it. The crowd in the background is little more than a sketch but is very vivid and clear.

Important images and notable characters are also seen in this painting. Cassandra who can be seen lightly sketched on the left is moving inward towards the centre from the battlement walls. Helen perhaps can also be seen by the lone pillar. Minerva and Juno also appear on the left, floating above the events going on below. Some symbols of death can also be seen such as the isolated column, mourning crowd of women and the dead tree next to the column.

(c) How does the artist convey the drama of the scene?

The artist conveys the drama of the scene in several ways. One of the ways is through the impressionistic style of the painting. The artist does not focus on form but rather on the mood. The use of impressionistic brushstrokes is very vigorous and lively, giving the painting a great sense of motion and energy.

Another way is in the four central figures. The Trojan figures are diagonally leaning in a way that makes them appear to be dragging the horse in a rhythmic fashion. Their entire body weight is being concentrated in rhythm into the effort. The light focused on them draws the viewer to them and could be illuminating to the fact that they are physically dragging in their own doom.

The drama is also amplified by the subtle hint of the Greeks great ploy. On the right, the leg of the horse is sturdily splayed forward as if to emphasise the strain. This splayed leg implies the horse is heavy due to the weight of the Greeks hidden inside. It is a subtle detail that adds to the tension and drama of the painting.

The soldiers in the background stand still and provide stark contrast to the mobile figures in the foreground. The soldiers standing still suggest that they believe the conflict is over. But their complete stillness and the urgency of the running figure (possibly Laocoon) warning of doom creates an uneasy atmosphere like the calm before a storm. It adds to the drama of the painting.

Finally, the Gods hovering over the scene watching the event unfold is an ominous image. There is a suggestion that Minerva and Juno watch on, unable to intervene and are powerless to the impending fate of the city, despite knowing the outcome. Although it is little more than a sketch the painting captures all the main elements and characters in Troy's fall.

(d) Give one other example of Greek subject matter in Roman art.

Wall painting of Achilles being revealed by Diomedes and Odysseus at Scyros