

Alyssa – A – 90%

Critical Analysis of *Shearing the Rams* by Tom Roberts

Tom Roberts painted “Shearing the Rams” in 1890, using oil on canvas measuring 119 x 180 cm.

The painting allows the viewer to see in side a shearing shed, looking past a line of working shearers, to the back of the shed where other workers are congregated. A young barefoot boy in the left foreground is carrying a large amount of wool while another young boy in the middle of the shed appears to be sweeping or mopping the floor. On the right side of the shed is an old man with white hair and beard, wearing a white safari style hat, sitting on his heels watching the shearers.

In the midst of the clamor and action of the painting are 5 or 6 rams.

The internal structure of the shearing shed is described by different lines; the wooden floor boards, posts, ceiling rafters and the pattern on the men’s shirts. The colour of the painting is light in the foreground with a lot of white and high key colour and darker in the background, with more low key browns.

Textures appear in the soft sheep’s wool, the grain of the wood and the beards and hair of the men.

Depth is created in this composition by the line of shearers receding in size and clarity to the back of the shed. The use of one point perspective can be seen in the picture below, with the lines converging to the vanishing point.



Roberts uses white and high key colours to attract the eye of the viewer to the shearer in the foreground and then leads the eye past the line of shearers to the light open doorway to the

Comment [B1]: Clear inventory of subject matter describing literal elements

Comment [B2]: Clear description of the elements; line, colour, texture, referring closely to the painting.

Comment [B3]: The student moves into analysis and shows a discerning understanding of functional qualities e.g. one point perspective.

Comment [B4]: Use of example enhances explanation.

back of the shed, forward again along the light diagonal half wall to the front of the painting again.

The contrast between the light colours in the lower two thirds of the painting and darker background gives a greater sense of depth and allows us to focus on the workers.

The front shearer is emphasized by being painted in greater detail; noted in the red stripes of his shirt, his lighter colour, his size in relation to others and the surrounding empty space.

There is a kind of rhythm in the painting, demonstrated by the row of shearers, the cylindrical pillars and linear rafters and floor boards. All add interest to the composition.

I think that Tom Roberts was trying to show the viewer what Australia looked like and what was important to the nation; that is to work hard, no matter the conditions and to work together to improve the lives of family and country.

I get the feeling of a very tight community of people who supported each other in their work and a feeling of pride that the shearers would have felt in their work in support of the growing Australian economy.

I think that the boy on the left walking past the shearers represented a new generation of workers in the country, whereas the squatting old man on the right symbolized the older generation's tiredness after all their efforts in the settling of Australia. The central row of shearers, in my mind, represented the current generation who had taken ownership of the country and were prepared to work hard for it.

The high key colours and short brush strokes broke with the European tradition of painting in Australia and Roberts was showing his independence as an artist.

I value this painting because it represents such an important turning point in our history (the defining of Australian values and lifestyles). It shows the new use of high key colour to depict the Australian light. I admire Tom Roberts for his courage in taking up a new style of painting.

I would say that this is an excellent art work because it shows mastery of composition and paint technique and a true representation of Australian colour.

I would be proud to display this painting in my home or office because as it would help more people understand Australia's history and what it was really like.

Comment [B5]: Reveals understanding of terminology and functional qualities of composition

Comment [B6]: Insightful explanation of the academic arrangement of the composition

Comment [B7]: Reveals an understanding of the nationalistic motives behind the painting.

Comment [B8]: Refers closely to parts of the painting when developing a hypothesis

Comment [B9]: Comments on the style and technique support the idea of nationalism in terms of a new vision in Australia.

Comment [B10]: Judges the art work as successful as a record of Australian social history.

Comment [B11]: Evaluates the quality of the work

Comment [B12]: Gives a personal affirmation of the success of the work.

Word count: 589

Assessment Critical

CRITERIA	A	B	C3	D	E
1. DESCRIPTION: identifies things about the work that can be seen, named, and described -describing the literal and significant artistic elements.	Makes a complete inventory of the subject matter and/or elements accompanied by a thorough description. 19/20	Makes an inventory of the subject matter and/or elements accompanied by a capable description.	Names and describes the obvious objects and subject matter.	Names and describes some of the obvious objects and subject matter.	Briefly names one or two objects "There is a girl."
2. ANALYSIS : determines how the work of art is organized knowledge and understanding of aesthetic and functional qualities in visual artworks.	Discerning understanding of aesthetic or functional qualities in visual artworks. 19/20	Considerable understanding of aesthetic or functional qualities in visual artworks.	Appropriate recognition of aesthetic or functional qualities in visual artworks.	Some awareness of aesthetic or functional qualities in visual artworks.	Limited awareness of the need to understand aesthetic or functional qualities in visual artwork.
3. INTERPRETATION: identifies the ideas, feelings, or moods communicated by the artwork.	Forms a discerning hypothesis about the symbolic or metaphorical meaning and comprehensively substantiates the interpretation with relevant evidence from the artwork. 19/20	Forms a hypothesis about the symbolic or metaphorical meaning and substantiates the interpretation with evidence from the artwork.	Appropriate understanding of the symbolic and metaphoric meaning with some substantiation of evidence from the art work.	Identifies the literal meaning with little evidence.	Relates a personal response, i.e., ideas, feelings or moods. "It makes me sad."
4. EVALUATION: judges the quality or success of the work based on criteria. evaluation of visual artwork against set criteria.	Focused and coherent evaluation of the work against criteria. 18.5/20	Well-considered evaluation of the work against criteria.	Considered evaluation of work against criteria.	Some consideration of against criteria.	Limited consideration of visual artwork against criteria.
5. VISUAL ARTS LANGUAGE use of visual arts language and terminologies in interpretation and response	Highly proficient use of language and terminologies to interpret and respond to a range of visual artworks, issues, and questions. 19/20	Capable use of language and terminologies to interpret and respond to visual artworks, issues, and questions	Mostly correct use of language and terminologies to interpret and respond to visual artworks, issues, and questions.	Occasional use of visual art language or terminologies.	Emerging use of visual art language or terminology.