

Exemplar Informational Texts: History/Social Studies – A Short Walk through the Pyramids and through the World of Art

Isaacson, Phillip. *A Short Walk through the Pyramids and through the World of Art*. New York: Knopf, 1993. (1993)

From Chapter 1

At Giza, a few miles north of Saqqara, sit three great pyramids, each named for the king – or Pharaoh – during whose reign it was built. No other buildings are so well known, yet the first sight of them sitting in their field is breathtaking. When you walk among them, you walk in a place made for giants. They seem too large to have been made by human beings, too perfect to have been formed by nature, and when the sun is overhead, not solid enough to be attached to the sand. In the minutes before sunrise, they are the color of faded roses, and when the last rays of the desert sun touch them, they turn to amber. But whatever the light, their broad proportions, the beauty of the limestone, and the care with which it is fitted into place create three unforgettable works of art.

What do we learn about art when we look at the pyramids?

First, when all of the things that go into a work – its components – complement one another, they create an object that has a certain spirit, and we can call that spirit harmony. The pyramids are harmonious because limestone, a warm, quiet material, is a cordial companion for a simple, logical, pleasing shape. In fact, the stone and the shape are so comfortable with each other that the pyramids seem inevitable – as though they were bound to have the form, color, and texture that they do have.

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Media Text

National Geographic mini-site on the pyramids, which includes diagrams, pictures, and a time line: <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/pyramids/pyramids.html>