

If you only have 30 minutes ...

Usually when we think about history, we picture big heavy textbooks or ancient manuscripts displayed in glass cases. But Adel Abidin says that art can also be used to express history. He believes, in fact, that art may be uniquely suited to telling a story about the past. Read “Adel Abidin Preserves Historical Memory.” In it, Abidin suggests that

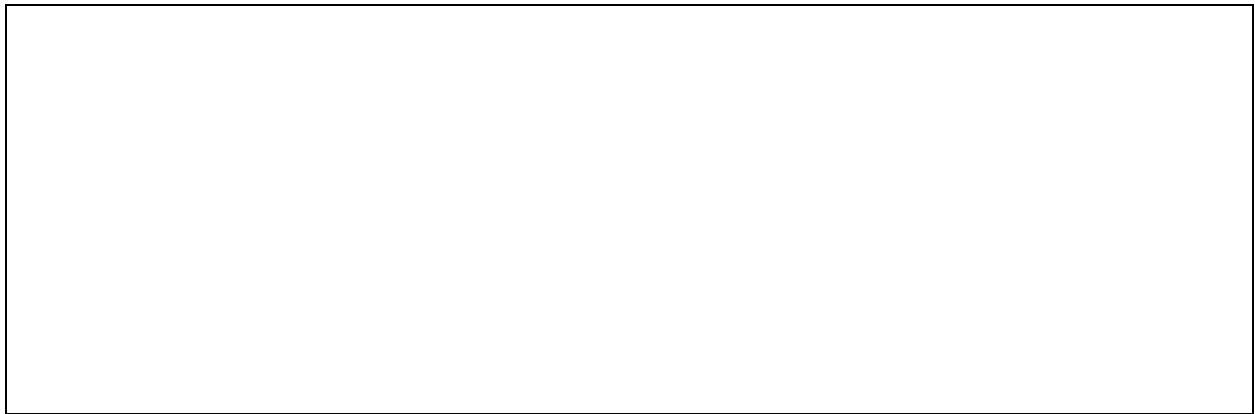
“If history is ambiguous and often shrouded in mystery, then perhaps a work of art holds the key to understanding [history] with a subjective form of truth, one that is as much based on the facts we know as the facts we have yet to prove and the voices we often have never heard.”

Write an essay in response to the quotation above, either agreeing or disagreeing with Abidin. Use the following questions to help you think about art as a means of telling history.

Why would Abidin say that history can be “ambiguous” and “shrouded in mystery.” Based on what you read in the article, what is it that might cause a student of history to be unsure what to believe?¹

Abidin says that “History remains alive and constant, but we often don’t know what is

true or fiction.” Why does he believe we can’t always discern truth from fiction?² Do you agree? Why or why not?



What truths about the past can a work of art express that a book of history can’t? Explain. Include examples from your knowledge of history and/or art to support your answer.³

Common Core Standard(s) Met:

CCRA.R.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

W.11-12.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

1 History is told by the victors, often omitting the experiences of the victims. Therefore, it is, at best, incomplete.

2 As noted above, history is partial at best.

3 Answers will vary.