

Student Essay on "Daniel in the Lion's Den" by Peter Paul Rubens

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Essay

The subject of Peter Paul Rubens painting is a man surrounded by angry lions. It was painted in 1615 and hangs in the National Gallery of Art in Washington. Peter was the most well known European artist of his day. He is now widely recognised as one of the top artists in Western Art History. This painting is part of the Baroque period as it displays texture and is rather dramatic. I first notice Daniel sitting looking up, seeming quite worried. The nine lions are all in different positions. Some are sleeping, some roaring and some just sitting there.

This painting has been painted using oil on canvas. The painting is quite full, as there is not much space left. This is because the majority of the space is occupied by the lions. Dark colours have been used beside the white cloth that Daniel is sitting on. The technique chiaroscuro has been used as dark and light contrast together. This technique was a major technique in the baroque period. The painting blends well together. It shows the tense energy through the facial expression of Daniel and the lions. In this painting the elements that have been used is tone. We can see the light, medium and dark shades of colours on the lion's bodies and faces. This technique of tone is also present on Daniel's body. We see the dark colours in the background, making the golden colour and the pink flesh of Daniel stand out much more. The principle of art that have been used is emphasis, as Daniel is the attention or focal point of the painting. He is toned a lot lighter compared to the lions, which is the cause of this emphasis.

I believe that Daniel is praying. He is doing this as he is trapped in this scary situation. We see that he is looking for an answer, may be from God. This is shown as he is focusing up, not at his current position; near nine lions. I believe that the artist is trying to say that we all get trapped in situations that we don't particularly want to be in.