



PART 1

Read the text below and answer questions 1–13.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PERSPECTIVE IN RENAISSANCE ART

A

In late medieval Europe, painters could suggest spatial depth without describing it consistently. Figures were often scaled hierarchically—saints or rulers enlarged to signal importance—while architecture was drawn with approximate angles that “felt” receding but did not converge according to a single logic. Depth might be implied by overlap, by raising objects higher on the panel, or by shrinking distant forms, yet these cues were frequently combined in ways that produced plausible scenes rather than measurable space. In the early fifteenth century, Italian artists and architects began to pursue optical realism: the idea that a painted scene could be organised as if it were a coherent visual field governed by geometry. Linear perspective did not merely refine older tricks; it introduced a consistent system in which orthogonals (receding lines) could be constructed to meet at a vanishing point, allowing space to appear rational, continuous, and calculable.

B

Filippo Brunelleschi is usually credited with providing the first persuasive proof that such a system could reproduce vision. Later writers describe an experiment involving the Baptistery of San Giovanni in Florence. Brunelleschi painted a small panel of the building as seen from a fixed spot and drilled a tiny hole through the painted surface at the presumed point of convergence. Standing at the same viewpoint, he held the panel up and looked through the hole from behind while using a mirror in front of the panel to reflect the painted image. By moving the mirror aside, he could alternate between the reflection of the painting and the real scene, comparing them directly. The force of the demonstration lay in its practical test: if the construction was correct, the painted architecture aligned with real sightlines, showing that the illusion was not guesswork but a reproducible method.

C

What Brunelleschi proved by experiment, Leon Battista Alberti attempted to codify. In *De pictura* (1435), Alberti described the picture as a “window” through which the viewer looks onto a constructed world. He proposed a systematic procedure: establish a viewing position, mark a central vanishing point, and draw a network of orthogonals and transversals to regulate recession. His method used a grid-like framework to scale figures and objects as they move backward in space, so that proportions remain consistent with the viewer’s location. Alberti also explained how a centric ray—an imagined line from the



viewer's eye to the centre of the scene—helps stabilise the composition. In this way, painting was presented not as decorative craft but as an intellectual practice grounded in geometry, in which the artist could plan complex spaces with the same rationality that architects applied to buildings.

D

Perspective quickly moved from theory to ambitious narrative staging. Masaccio's fresco *The Holy Trinity* in Santa Maria Novella is repeatedly cited because its painted barrel vault appears to extend the church wall into a convincing chapel-like recess. The power of the illusion comes from mathematical discipline: the coffers of the vault diminish in a controlled sequence, and the architectural members converge toward the vanishing point with a consistency that suggests real construction. Yet the fresco also reveals a constraint of the technique. The spatial scheme assumes a particular spectator position, with lines organised around a specific eye level. When viewed from that intended height and distance, the painted architecture “opens” convincingly; from other positions, the geometry feels less natural, reminding the viewer that the realism is engineered rather than inherent.

E

Alongside linear construction, Renaissance artists refined a second strategy that relied on optical observation rather than rulers and compasses. Atmospheric (or aerial) perspective is based on the behaviour of light in air. Distant hills appear paler, bluer, and less sharply defined because the atmosphere scatters short wavelengths and softens contrasts. Leonardo da Vinci discussed such effects and used techniques like *sfumato* to blur edges and reduce harsh boundaries, allowing space to expand without explicit geometry. This approach was particularly useful for landscapes, clouds, and complex natural forms whose contours do not easily submit to straight-line construction. By making far objects less detailed, and by shifting colour and tonal values, painters could suggest great depth even when linear perspective was impractical or visually intrusive.

F

The rapid adoption of perspective also reflected cultural change. Renaissance humanism encouraged close observation, revived interest in mathematics, and promoted the belief that nature could be studied through proportion and measurement. Urban patronage—churches, guilds, and civic governments—created demand for paintings that could integrate architecture, symbolism, and narrative into coherent public statements. Perspective answered these ambitions by offering a way to unite figures and built space within a single intelligible order. Workshops began to treat spatial design as part of professional expertise, and the ability to handle orthogonals and vanishing points became



a mark of modernity. In this climate, the “new” realism of perspective implied not only visual skill but also intellectual authority, suggesting that the painter understood the world as something that could be mapped.

G

Yet perspective was never a neutral mirror of reality. By fixing a single viewpoint, the artist also fixes the spectator’s position, guiding how the scene is read and where attention settles. Religious paintings could direct devotion by organising sightlines toward an altar or a sacred figure, while civic images could imply political order by arranging space with symmetry and control. Some later thinkers would describe linear perspective as a “symbolic form”: a constructed convention that appears natural because it matches certain habits of looking. In that sense, perspective can function as persuasion, presenting a chosen arrangement of space as if it were simply the way the world must appear. The Renaissance achievement, therefore, was not the discovery of a universal visual truth, but the invention of a powerful system that linked art, science, and perception—and that could be used, adapted, or questioned.

Questions 1–5

Choose the correct heading for each paragraph.

List of Headings

- i Patronage as the main reason perspective spread
- ii A well-known work whose effect depends on the viewer’s position
- iii A practical test showing that a painted space could match real sightlines
- iv Creating distance by reducing clarity and shifting colour
- v A new, consistent method that replaced earlier, mixed depth cues
- vi The belief that linear perspective was the only “correct” way to depict reality
- vii A systematic explanation that linked painting to geometry
- viii A shift from architectural settings to purely natural landscapes

1 Paragraph A

2 Paragraph B

3 Paragraph C

4 Paragraph D



5 Paragraph E

Questions 6–9

Choose **TRUE** if the statement agrees with the information given in the text, choose **FALSE** if the statement contradicts the information, or choose **NOT GIVEN** if there is no information on this.

6 The passage states that Brunelleschi wrote a detailed guide explaining his perspective method.

7 The passage suggests that atmospheric perspective relies more on observation than geometry.

8 The passage states that Renaissance workshops required apprentices to pass a formal examination in perspective.

9 The passage presents linear perspective as a neutral mirror that reproduces reality without guiding the viewer.

Questions 10–13

Complete the notes below. Choose **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS** from the text for each answer.

Key developments

- Alberti's treatise explains how to set a **10** and position a central vanishing point.
- In Masaccio's *The Holy Trinity*, the illusion works best from the intended height and distance because the spatial scheme assumes a particular **11**
- Atmospheric perspective suggests distance by making far objects appear **12** as well as lighter and bluer.
- The passage notes that perspective can function as **13** because the artist fixes the spectator's viewpoint.

Answer Key

1. v
2. iii
3. vii



4. ii
5. iv
6. NOT GIVEN
7. TRUE
8. NOT GIVEN
9. FALSE
10. viewing position
11. spectator position
12. less detailed
13. persuasion