

Talking about art, beauty and taste

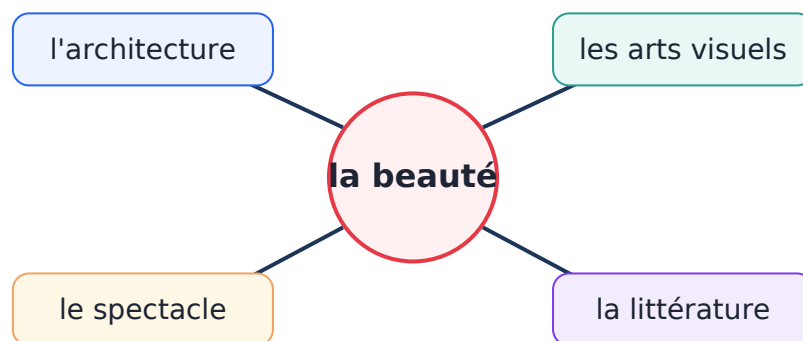
AP French Language and Culture · Lesson

Quick answer: In the AP theme of Beauty and Aesthetics, you discuss how cultures define beauty through art, architecture, performance and literature. Strong answers combine precise vocabulary (une œuvre, un chef-d'œuvre, la façade), an opinion with justification, and concrete francophone examples from Paris, Dakar or Québec.

Level: AP French Language and Culture · **Standards:** AP French Language and Culture (College Board CED), Theme: Beauty and Aesthetics

How do French speakers define beauty?

French uses le beau for beauty as a concept and la beauté for a person's or object's beauty. Taste is personal (le goût), but it is also shaped by history, religion and social class. On the AP exam, expect to compare how two cultures judge what is beautiful.



Four fields where beauty is expressed.

Which francophone examples can you use?

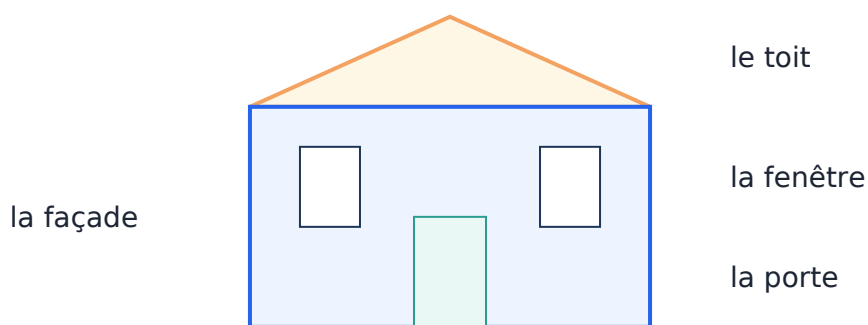
Field	Example
Architecture	La pyramide du Louvre, conçue par I. M. Pei (1989), mêle verre et pierre ancienne. — The Louvre pyramid blends glass and old stone.
Architecture	La Grande Mosquée de Djenné, au Mali, est en terre crue. — It is built of mud brick.
Performing arts	Le Cirque du Soleil est né au Québec en 1984.
Literature	Aimé Césaire, poète martiniquais, a écrit le <i>Cahier d'un retour au pays natal</i> .

Field	Example
Visual arts	Monet a peint la lumière changeante de Rouen et de Giverny.

What vocabulary and structures express taste?

Key words

une œuvre work · un chef-d'œuvre masterpiece · un tableau painting · une façade front of a building · une exposition exhibit · un spectacle show.



Describe what you see.

To justify, pair an opinion with a reason: Selon moi, cette façade est élégante parce qu'elle est symétrique. — In my view, this façade is elegant because it is symmetrical.

How can you challenge a beauty ideal in writing?

Model sentences

- Pendant longtemps, les magazines ont imposé un seul modèle de beauté. — For a long time, magazines imposed a single model of beauty.
- Aujourd'hui, des artistes montrent que l'imperfection a aussi sa poésie. — Today, artists show that imperfection has its own poetry.
- Ce roman nous invite à regarder autrement notre quartier. — This novel invites us to look at our neighborhood differently.

Name the ideal, show who imposed it, then explain who questions it today. That three-step pattern works for fashion, buildings and literature alike.

Common mistake

English *beautiful* has two French equivalents with gender: un **beau** tableau, une **belle** façade,

and un **bel** édifice before a vowel. Do not say un belle tableau.

Culture note

The Djenné mosque is re-plastered every year by townspeople during a community festival, so beauty there is also a shared, living ritual.

Zoé's tip

For each work you cite, remember three things: who made it, where it is, and why it moves you. That is a complete paragraph.

Key points to remember

- Beauty ideals change with time and place, which is the core question of the theme.
- Architecture, visual arts, performing arts and literature are the four main fields.
- Cite francophone examples, not only France: Mali, Martinique, Québec, Sénégal, Haïti.
- Support an opinion with à mon avis, selon moi, ce qui me frappe plus a reason.

Talking About Art, Beauty and Taste: frequently asked questions

What does the AP theme Beauty and Aesthetics cover?

It covers ideals of beauty, architecture, visual and performing arts, and literature. You compare how francophone communities perceive and create beauty.

How do I give an opinion about a work of art?

Use à mon avis, selon moi, ce qui me plaît, je trouve que and add a reason with parce que or car. Name the work and describe one detail.

Should I only talk about France?

No. Graders reward varied francophone examples, such as Mali, Haïti, Martinique or Québec. One or two non-French cases show cultural breadth.

When do I use bel instead of beau?

Use bel before a masculine singular noun that begins with a vowel or mute h: un bel opéra. Otherwise use beau, belle, beaux, belles.

How can I compare two cultures' ideas of beauty?

Use alors que, tandis que, contrairement à and de même. Give one example per culture and conclude with your own view.