

SUMMARY NOTES: MODERN GHANAIAN ART (1920s – 1985)

Key Points That Commonly Appear in Exams

1. Meaning of Modern Ghanaian Art

- Refers to artworks created from **1920s to 1985**.
 - Artists combine **traditional Ghanaian elements** with **modern/Western techniques**.
 - This period was influenced by **colonial rule, independence (1957)**, and **social changes**.
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2. Importance of Studying Modern Artists

- Helps preserve **Ghana's cultural identity**.
 - Shows how art reflects **history, politics, tradition, and social life**.
 - Inspires students to produce **original artworks**.
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3. Key Features of Modern Ghanaian Art

- Use of **different media and techniques**:
 - painting
 - carving
 - assemblage
 - weaving
 - pottery
 - Use of both **traditional materials** (clay, wood, dyes) and **non-traditional materials** (oil paint, canvas, textiles, metal).
 - Artworks served **ceremonial, decorative, cultural, and political** purposes.
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4. Art Education and Training

- **Achimota School** — first major centre for formal art training.
- Later moved to **KNUST (1950s)**.

- Teacher-artists training moved to **University of Education, Winneba**.
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5. Categories of Modern Ghanaian Artists

- a. Artists who used **fresh, original, and local ideas**.
 - b. **Copyist artists**—borrowed mainly from European art styles.
 - c. Artists who **adapted foreign ideas** and fused them with **Ghanaian culture** (most famous artists belong here).
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6. Selected Modern Ghanaian Artists (1920–1985)

Common names examiners often ask:

Artist	Known for
Kofi Antubam	State Mace, Presidential Seat, murals, Adinkra symbols, national identity themes
Theodosia Okoh	Designed the Ghana National Flag
Amon Kotei	Designed Ghana Coat of Arms , paintings
Ablade Glover	Textured “Market” and “Rooftops” series
Saka Acquaye	Sculptures (Kwame Nkrumah, Royal Couple), cultural themes
Oku Ampofo	Sculptures; themes on Ghanaian womanhood and tradition
Vincent Akwete Kofi	Sculptures, Sankofa symbol
Kobina Bucknor	Cultural scenes (Libation, Homowo), “Last Supper in Blue”

(Use the table provided in the question as a full reference list.)

★ 7. Detailed Exam-Focus Notes on Key Artists

Kofi Antubam (1922–1964)

Characteristics:

- Used **oil paint on canvas**.

- Combined **realism + stylised/cubist shapes**.
- Used **Adinkra symbols** to express Ghanaian ideas.
- Themes: **leadership, culture, education, nationalism**.

Famous Works:

- *Chief with Umbrella*
- State ceremonial artworks: **Presidential Seat, Parliamentary Mace, State Sword**
- Polyptych Wooden Mural (Children's Library, Accra)

Importance:

- Promoted **national pride, post-independence identity, and education for girls**.
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Theodosia Okoh (1922–2015)

Known for:

- Designed the **Ghana National Flag (1957)**.

Symbolic Meaning of the Flag:

- **Red** – struggle for independence
- **Gold** – mineral wealth
- **Green** – rich forests and natural resources
- **Black Star** – freedom of African people

Importance:

- Major contributor to **national identity**.
 - Prominent female artist in Ghanaian history.
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★ 8. Why Modern Ghanaian Art is Important

- Preserves **history, culture, and traditions**.
- Builds **national identity**.
- Encourages **creativity, storytelling, unity, and pride**.

- Shows how art responds to **political and social change**.
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🎯 EXAM TIP: Areas Examiners Love to Ask

1. Definitions and meaning of **Modern Ghanaian Art**.
2. **Importance** of studying modern Ghanaian artists.
3. Categories of artists (fresh source, copyists, adapters).
4. Contributions of **Achimota School, KNUST, UEW**.
5. **Identify and describe 2 or 3 modern artists**.
6. Symbolic meaning of **Ghana National Flag**.
7. Techniques and materials of specific artists (e.g., Antubam).
8. Cultural and political roles of art from 1920–1985.

EXAM-FOCUSED SUMMARY NOTES (KEY POINTS)

SECTION 1 – MODERN GHANAIAN ART (CONTINUATION)

(*Important facts, definitions, techniques, artworks & contributions*)

1. NII AMON KOTEI (1915–2011)

Key Points

- A Ghanaian artist known for creating national symbols.
- Used **pencil, ink, and watercolour** for detailed symbolic drawings.
- Known for his **graphic design and illustration skills**.

Major Contribution

- **Designed Ghana's Coat of Arms in 1957.**
 - Symbols include:
 - **Black Star → Freedom**
 - **Golden Eagle → Strength & power**
- His artwork helped **unify the nation** and build **national identity**.

Why He Is Important

- His Coat of Arms remains one of Ghana's strongest national symbols.

- Shows how art can communicate **history, culture, unity, and identity**.
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2. PROF. ABLADE GLOVER (Born 1934)

Key Points

- Famous for **vibrant oil paintings** using the **impasto technique** (thick layers of paint).
- Uses **palette knife**, not just brushes.
- Paintings show **energy, movement**, and bold colours.

Common Themes

- **Everyday Ghanaian life**, especially:
 - **Market scenes**
 - **Urban life**, crowds, and social activity

Major Works

- **Market Scene series** (very popular internationally)

Why He Is Important

- His works are shown in museums worldwide.
 - Celebrates Ghana's **livelihood, culture, and humanity**.
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3. EL ANATSUI (Born 1944)

Key Points

- World-famous sculptor.
- Known for using **recycled materials**, especially **bottle caps, scrap metal, and copper wires**.
- His works call attention to **waste, recycling, transformation, and global consumption**.

Major Artworks

- **Earth's Skin (2007)** – installation made from bottle caps.
- **Waste Paper Bags (2004–2010)** – explores global consumption.

Techniques

- Assemblage (joining many small pieces to create large artworks)
- Uses discarded materials to show **beauty in waste**.

Why He Is Important

- One of Africa's most influential contemporary artists.
 - Encourages environmental awareness and creativity.
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4. DR. OKU AMPOFO (1908–1998)

Key Points

- Renowned **wood sculptor**.
- Combined **Akan traditional art** with **modern ideas**.
- Known for spiritual, ancestral, and cultural themes.

Materials & Techniques

- Main medium: **Wood**
- Sculptures show **human figures, ancestral spirits, folklore, and cultural symbols**.

Why He Is Important

- Preserved traditional Akan carving techniques.
 - His works act as **bridges between historical culture and modern art**.
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5. ELEMENTS OF MODERN GHANAIAN ART (VERY LIKELY IN EXAMS!)

A. Indigenous Materials

- Artists (1920s–1980s) used local Ghanaian materials:
 - **Clay** → pottery, sculptures
 - **Wood** → carvings
 - **Kente cloth** → textile art
- These materials helped connect artworks to **culture, identity, and tradition**.

Importance

- Preserved Ghana's artistic heritage.
 - Reflected social status, history, and spiritual life.
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B. Indigenous Techniques With a Modern Twist

Artists blended old and new techniques:

Examples

1. **Adinkra symbols** used in:
 - Paintings
 - Prints
 - Mixed media
2. **Kente weaving patterns** used in:
 - Modern textiles
 - Tapestries
 - Abstract works
3. **Pottery techniques combined with modern glazing**
 - Bright colours
 - New textures

Importance

- Created a **unique Ghanaian identity** in modern art.
 - Preserved culture while embracing innovation.
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✓ WHAT EXAM QUESTIONS ARE LIKELY TO COME?

Short Notes / Definitions

- Explain the contributions of:
 - Nii Amon Kotei
 - El Anatsui
 - Prof. Ablade Glover
 - Dr. Oku Ampofo

Identify artworks

e.g.

- The national Coat of Arms – *Nii Amon Kotei*
- Market Scenes – *Ablade Glover*
- Earth's Skin – *El Anatsui*

Materials and techniques

- Indigenous materials used in modern Ghanaian art
- The impasto technique (Ablade Glover)
- Recycled materials (El Anatsui)

Explain how traditional culture influenced modern artists

Describe elements of modern Ghanaian art (ESSAY)

- Indigenous materials
- Indigenous methods with modern twist

THEMATIC RICHNESS (Simple & Expanded Version)

Between the **1920s and 1980s**, modern Ghanaian art was full of deep themes that reflected the life, struggles, dreams, and culture of the people. Artists used their works to talk about **social issues, culture, politics, independence, identity, and African unity**. Below are the main ideas that shaped their artworks:

1. Independence Struggle & National Identity

Many artworks during this period showed the strong desire of Ghanaians to be free from colonial rule.

Artists drew scenes of:

- Ghanaians marching for freedom
- The joy and pride of becoming independent
- Leaders like **Dr. Kwame Nkrumah** (PICTURE OF NKRUMAH CAN GO HERE)
They used their art to remind Ghanaians where they came from and what they were fighting for.

Short Summary

Modern artworks from 1920–1980 often focused on Ghana's fight for independence and building a strong national identity.

Likely Exam Points

- Themes of independence in art
 - How Nkrumah appears in modern artworks
 - How art expressed national identity
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2. Protest & Social Commentary

Even after independence, not everything was perfect. Ghana still faced:

- social inequalities
- economic challenges
- political instability

Many artists used their artworks to **criticize bad leadership**, speak against unfair treatment, and push for change. Their art became a way of saying, “*We can do better.*”

Picture can be placed here: An artist painting a protest or social issue.

Short Summary

Art became a tool to speak against colonialism and later against social and political problems in Ghana.

Likely Exam Points

- How art served as protest
 - Examples of social issues reflected in modern Ghanaian art
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3. Urbanisation & Changing Society

As cities like Accra and Kumasi grew fast, artists saw many changes:

- Movement from rural to urban areas
- New buildings and roads
- Mixed cultures
- Changing lifestyles

These changes became strong themes in modern art, showing the reality of a society moving from traditional to modern life.

PICTURE: A busy city scene compared with a village scene

Short Summary

Urbanisation influenced modern art by showing how Ghanaian society was changing.

Likely Exam Points

- How urbanisation affected Ghanaian art themes
 - Differences between rural and urban depictions
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4. Cultural Traditions & Rituals

Artists also produced works that celebrated:

- festivals
- rituals
- traditional costumes
- local stories and folklore

These artworks helped preserve Ghana's heritage and reminded people of their roots.

Picture can be placed here: Traditional drumming or festival dance

Short Summary

Modern artists honoured and protected Ghanaian culture through paintings and sculptures of traditional practices.

Likely Exam Points

- Importance of cultural traditions in Ghanaian art
 - Examples of traditional themes used by artists
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5. Pan-Africanism

Another strong theme in the period was **Pan-Africanism**—the idea that all African nations are connected and should stand together.

Artists used:

- symbols of unity
- images of African leaders
- shared cultural patterns
to promote African togetherness.

Picture: African continent symbol or united African hands

Short Summary

Pan-Africanism encouraged artists to create art that united Africans and celebrated shared identity.

Likely Exam Points

- Meaning of Pan-Africanism
 - How Pan-Africanism influenced modern Ghanaian art
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SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT (Simple & Expanded Version)

The social and political events in Ghana from the 1920s–1980s greatly shaped modern art. The art did not develop on its own—**politics, colonial rule, independence, and global experiences all influenced it.**

1. Effects of Colonial Rule

During colonial times:

- Ghanaian traditional arts were discouraged
- European styles were promoted instead
- Artists had little freedom

But as independence movements grew, art became a tool to:

- resist colonial rule
- rebuild cultural pride
- tell the Ghanaian story

Short Summary

Colonial rule restricted local art, but the independence movement revived cultural expression.

Exam Points

- How colonialism affected Ghanaian art
 - Why art became a resistance tool
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2. Independence (1957) and National Pride

When Ghana gained independence:

- Artists celebrated freedom
- National colours and symbols were used
- Artworks showed hope for the future

This period marked the beginning of modern Ghanaian identity in art.

Short Summary

Independence inspired artworks that celebrated Ghana's culture and future.

Exam Points

- Describe how independence influenced artists
 - Artworks that express national pride
-

3. Influence of Foreign Education

Many Ghanaian artists studied in:

- Europe
- America
- Other African countries

They learned new:

- styles
- techniques
- modern art theories

When they returned home, they mixed these ideas with Ghanaian traditions, creating a **unique hybrid style**.

Short Summary

Foreign education helped Ghanaian artists blend Western modernism with local culture.

Exam Points

- Importance of foreign training in shaping modern art
- Features of the hybrid Ghanaian art style

4. Political Challenges After Independence

After independence, Ghana experienced:

- coups
- leadership conflicts
- economic problems

Artists responded by producing works that:

- condemned corruption
- highlighted suffering
- called for better leadership

Their artworks became powerful social messages.

Short Summary

Post-independence political problems influenced artists to produce critical and reform-focused works.

Exam Points

- Political issues shown in modern art
 - How art pushed for social change
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5. Formation of a Unique Ghanaian Modern Style

Modern Ghanaian art became special because it:

- combined local traditions with global art styles
- reflected political history
- expressed cultural identity
- told the Ghanaian story in new ways

This gave Ghanaian art a strong voice in the world of Modernism.

Short Summary

Ghanaian art developed a distinct modern identity by blending culture with global ideas.

Exam Points

- Characteristics of the modern Ghanaian art style
 - How global and local influences mixed
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ACTIVITY 1.1 (Simplified Instructions for Students)

(Keeping the original steps but in simple English for students)

TASK: Explore Modern Ghanaian Artists and Their Works (1920–1985)

Work with 1–3 friends and do the following:

1. **Research** what Modern Ghanaian Art is (use the internet, books, or notes).
2. Find **names and pictures** of artists who worked from 1920–1985.
Use guiding questions:
 - Who are the artists?
 - What artworks did they create?
 - What materials or techniques did they use?
 - What is the purpose or message of each artwork?
3. Make a **list** of the artists and their artworks.
4. Identify the **main elements** of modern Ghanaian art from your research.
5. Fill **Table 1.2** with your findings.
6. Create a **spidergram** showing:
 - elements
 - artists
 - techniques
 - materials
 - themes (PICTURE: Spider diagram sample)
7. Present your work in class.
8. Use feedback to improve your presentation.
9. File the final work in your portfolio.

OVERVIEW OF THE ART HISTORY OF GHANA (Rewritten & Improved Version)

The history of Ghanaian art is broad, vibrant, and deeply connected to the country's culture, society, and political journey. From ancient times to today, art has been used to

tell stories, preserve memories, beautify the environment, and express community values. Ghana's artistic journey moves from **pre-colonial traditions**, through the **colonial period**, into the **post-independence era**, and finally into the **21st-century modern movement**.

Throughout these stages, Ghanaian art has shown **progress, resilience, creativity, and cultural pride**. Whether on shrine walls, festival decorations, pottery, textiles, carvings, paintings, or modern installations, art has always been central to Ghanaian life.

★ 1. COLONISATION PERIOD (15th Century – Mid 20th Century)

When European traders—especially the Portuguese—arrived on the Gold Coast in the 15th century, they brought new materials, ideas, and artistic influences. This period created a major shift in Ghana's art culture.

Key Characteristics of this Era

- **European influence increased**, especially through textiles, metals, and decorative objects.
- Traditional Ghanaian art began to lose dominance as European art was considered “superior” by colonial powers.
- Some traditional practices were discouraged or labelled as “pagan” or “barbaric.”
- Ghanaian artists, however, adapted by **blending indigenous techniques with European styles**.
- Artists used this period to explore new identities, showing resistance through their art.

❖ Why This Era Matters

Despite the pressure of colonial rule, Ghanaian artists **did not lose their creativity**. They continued carving, weaving, painting, and sculpting, forming a unique mix of traditional and European styles that later influenced modern art.

★ 2. POST-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD (1957 onwards)

Ghana became the first African country south of the Sahara to gain independence from British rule. This moment inspired a new artistic awakening.

Key Features

- Art became a **tool of national pride, unity, and identity**.
- Artists expressed the **hopes, dreams, and values** of the new nation.
- Works celebrated Ghana's culture, heritage, and everyday life.

Important Contributors

- **Kofi Antubam** – Created state murals, national symbols, and sculptures featuring ordinary Ghanaians and traditional motifs.
- **Nii Amon Kotei** – Designed the Ghana Coat of Arms.
- **Theodocia Okoh** – Designed the Ghana national flag.

Institutional Support

- The **Arts Council of Ghana** was formed to support local artists, crafts, and cultural development.

⭐ Impact of This Period

Artists blended **traditional forms and modern techniques**, creating a fresh Ghanaian style. Their works helped build **national identity** and encouraged a renewed appreciation of Ghanaian heritage.

⭐ 3. GHANAIAN ART IN THE 21st CENTURY

Contemporary Ghanaian art shows boldness, innovation, and global appeal. Artists today combine traditional ideas with global influences, digital media, and modern installations.

Key Characteristics

- Use of new technologies such as digital art, photography, video installations, and mixed media.
- Strong focus on social issues such as environment, identity, politics, migration, and urban life.
- More art centres, such as the **Nubuke Foundation**, provide platforms for young artists.

Iconic Contributor

- **El Anatsui** – Internationally recognised for his large installations made from recycled materials like bottle caps. His works highlight environmental concerns and the beauty of transformation.

Impact of the 21st Century

Ghanaian art today is known for its:

- Global visibility
 - Creative confidence
 - Cultural pride
 - Strong connection to both African and international art movements
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ACTIVITY 1.2 – Summarising Ghanaian Art History (Rewritten for Clarity)

Your school is celebrating **ART WEEK** next month, and you have been selected to deliver a **five-minute speech** on Ghanaian Art History. The steps below will help you prepare effectively:

Steps to Prepare Your Speech

- 1. Research Ghanaian Art History**
 - Read this section
 - Review Year One notes on Indigenous Art
 - Check reliable internet sources
- 2. Identify Key Timelines**
 - Pre-colonial art
 - Colonial era
 - Post-independence
 - Modern / contemporary period
- 3. Highlight Major Artworks and Characteristics**
 - Purpose
 - Forms
 - Materials
 - Techniques
 - Cultural relevance
 - Influential artists
- 4. Write a Brief Description**
 - Summarise each era clearly
 - Mention artworks and their historical meaning
- 5. Create a Presentation Outline**
 - Introduction

- Key historical periods
- Main artworks
- Conclusion

6. Choose Your Presentation Style

- PowerPoint
- Flipcharts
- Simple speech

7. Select Images

- Pictures of artworks, artists, symbols, etc.

8. Design Your Presentation

- Use a storyboard (see Figure 1.8)
- Arrange ideas in logical flow

9. Rehearse with Peers

- Get feedback
- Improve clarity

10. Time Yourself

- Adjust content to fit five minutes

11. Record Your Final Rehearsal

- Save it in your portfolio

12. Present in Class

- Receive feedback
- Refine your speech

Following these steps will help you deliver a confident, clear and effective speech.

★ CONTRIBUTIONS OF MODERN GHANAIAN ARTISTS (Simplified & Strong)

Modern Ghanaian artists have greatly shaped the country's cultural identity. Their contributions fall under four major areas:

1. Promoting Cultural Identity and Nationalism

Artists like:

- **Theodocia Okoh** (Ghana flag)
- **Kofi Antubam** (state murals, Ghanaian themes)

- **Amon Kotei** (Coat of Arms)

used their work to promote unity, pride, and national identity. Their creations became national symbols of hope, freedom, and cultural heritage.

2. Education and Mentorship

Teachers and mentors such as:

- **Ablade Glover** (Artist Alliance Gallery)
- **Kofi Antubam**

trained upcoming artists, supported exhibitions, and created spaces for artistic growth. Their work ensures that Ghana's artistic tradition continues across generations.

3. International Recognition

Artists like **El Anatsui** showcased Ghanaian art on global platforms. His recycled installations gained international awards, proving that African art can be **modern, innovative, and globally relevant**.

4. Preserving Ghanaian Traditions

Many artists blend:

- folklore
- symbols
- myths
- daily life
- rituals

into their work. This keeps Ghana's cultural identity alive and relevant to new generations.

5. Reflecting Social Issues

Ghanaian artists often comment on:

- inequality

- urbanisation
- politics
- cultural change
- poverty

Their works help society reflect, question, and respond to challenges through art.

SECTION A: MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

(Choose the correct answer for each question.)

1. Which of the following best explains the term indigenous art?

- A. Art made with imported materials
- B. Art created using traditional Ghanaian skills and knowledge
- C. Art copied from other countries
- D. Art made only for museums

2. Ghanaian indigenous artworks are considered socioculturally relevant mainly because they...

- A. entertain visitors only
- B. help pass exams
- C. preserve traditions and reflect cultural identity
- D. are more expensive than foreign art

3. A stool used during a ceremony is an example of...

- A. purely decorative art
- B. functional and symbolic art
- C. foreign craft
- D. temporary art form

4. Adinkra symbols communicate messages because they...

- A. are colourful
- B. are difficult to draw
- C. carry philosophical meanings
- D. are used only by chiefs

5. Which factor shows the social value of indigenous art?

- A. It is sold only in shops
- B. It is used for naming, marriage, and festivals
- C. It is made with machines
- D. It lasts forever

6. Cultural identity is shown in indigenous artworks through...

- A. random designs
- B. patterns and symbols that represent beliefs
- C. foreign logos
- D. plastic colours

7. Which of these is a religious function of indigenous art?

- A. Making toys
- B. Symbolizing ancestral spirits
- C. Decorating hotels
- D. Advertising brands

8. Kente cloth is important socioculturally because it...

- A. fades easily
- B. shows social status and group identity
- C. is worn only by tourists
- D. is cheap to produce

9. Which institution mainly preserves Ghana's traditional artworks?

- A. Hospitals
- B. Banks
- C. Museums and cultural centres
- D. Factories

10. Indigenous art promotes unity because...

- A. people ignore it
- B. it brings communities together during festivals
- C. it is mostly online
- D. only children use it

11. The carving of stools and masks is mainly associated with...

- A. farming activities
- B. sculpture traditions
- C. textile production
- D. pottery work

12. The main economic benefit of indigenous art is...

- A. increasing food prices
- B. creating jobs and tourism income
- C. making people lazy
- D. reducing population

13. Which artwork mostly shows royal authority?

- A. Calabash bowl
- B. Chief's regalia
- C. Drumsticks
- D. Fan

14. The use of colour in Krobo beads often represents...

- A. random choices
- B. cultural messages and stages of life
- C. mistakes in production
- D. foreign fashion

15. Indigenous artworks help moral education by...

- A. confusing children
 - B. teaching proverbs, values, and history
 - C. replacing teachers
 - D. removing traditions
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 SECTION B: THEORY QUESTIONS (EXTENDED ANSWER)

(Answer any four (4). Each question tests deep understanding.)

1. Explain five (5) sociocultural roles of Ghanaian indigenous artworks.

(Hint: focus on social, cultural, moral, economic, spiritual, historical roles.)

2. Using clear examples, describe how Ghanaian indigenous artworks preserve cultural identity.

(Mention kente, stools, adinkra, beads, pottery, woodcarving, etc.)

3. Discuss four (4) ways indigenous artworks are used in Ghanaian ceremonies.

(Examples: naming, marriage, festivals, funerals, initiation rites.)

4. Describe the economic importance of indigenous art to individuals, communities, and the nation.

(Include tourism, employment, trade, branding, etc.)

5. With examples, explain how indigenous art communicates messages.

(Focus on symbols, colours, patterns, shapes.)

6. Identify and explain any four (4) threats to the survival of Ghanaian indigenous artworks.

(Examples: modernization, lack of documentation, imported goods, loss of interest among youth.)

7. Explain how indigenous artworks promote unity and social cohesion in Ghana.
Provide examples.

8. Describe the relationship between traditional religion and indigenous artworks.
Use at least three examples.

9. Explain five reasons why schools should teach indigenous art to students.

(Think: identity, creativity, discipline, economic skills, cultural appreciation.)

10. Compare indigenous artworks and modern artworks in terms of purpose, materials, and cultural meaning.