

Zara's Landscape Layers: Creating Depth and Perspective

Learning objective: To understand and apply the techniques of foreground, middle ground, and background to create a sense of depth in landscape art.

Zara the zebra has been exploring the countryside and wants to capture the scenery on her canvas. To make a landscape look realistic, artists divide the scene into three layers. Read the definitions below and complete the tasks to help Zara organise her composition.

Word bank: Foreground · Middle ground · Background · Horizon line · Atmospheric perspective · Scale

1. Zara is painting a large oak tree that is very close to the viewer. Which layer should this tree occupy, and why must it be painted with more detail and brighter colours than the distant hills? Justify your answer. (3 marks)

2. If you were painting a mountain range in the far distance, explain why you would use lighter, cooler colours and less detail. How does this technique trick the human eye? (2 marks)

3. Compare and contrast the appearance of an object in the foreground versus an object of the same size in the background. How does the 'horizon line' influence where you place these objects? (3 marks)

4. What might happen to the sense of depth in your painting if you painted all objects the same size, regardless of where they are positioned? Explain the visual effect. (2 marks)

5. Zara wants to add a small stream to her landscape. Suggest how she could use the stream to lead the viewer's eye from the foreground into the middle ground. Describe the path it would take. (2 marks)

6. Justify why overlapping shapes (placing one object partially in front of another) is an essential technique for artists wanting to create a three-dimensional effect on a flat surface. (2 marks)

Draw: Using a pencil, divide your sketchbook page into three horizontal sections. In the bottom section (foreground), draw a large, detailed bush or flower. In the middle section (middle ground), draw a fence or a small cottage. In the top section (background), draw distant mountains or a sunset. Ensure your objects overlap to create a sense of distance.



Extension challenge: Research a famous landscape painting from a public gallery. Write a short paragraph identifying where the artist placed the foreground, middle ground, and background. Do they use 'atmospheric perspective' to make the furthest objects look hazy or blue? Present your findings to the class.