

Zara's Pattern-Making Workshop: Introduction to Printmaking

Learning objective: To explore the techniques of printmaking by creating and repeating patterns using relief methods.

Zara the Zebra has been observing the natural patterns in the savannah. Use the techniques of 'relief printing'—where you carve or build up a shape to create a raised surface—to design your own repeating block print. Follow the steps below to plan your masterpiece, then complete the design questions to justify your artistic choices.

Word bank: Relief · Repeat pattern · Brayer · Ink · Matrix · Impression · Negative space · Registration

1. Zara wants to create a print using a potato cut in half. If she carves a triangle into the potato, will the triangle be a 'raised' part of the stamp or a 'negative space' part? Explain why. (2 marks)

2. Explain why a printmaker must carve their design in reverse (mirror image) if the design contains letters or words. (2 marks)

3. Compare and contrast a 'single impression' print with a 'repeating pattern' print. Which do you think takes more precision to create? (2 marks)

4. If you were using a brayer to apply ink to your block, what might happen if you used too much ink compared to too little ink? (2 marks)

5. Justify your answer: Why is 'registration' (lining up the block in the exact same spot) essential when creating a multi-layered print? (2 marks)

6. Imagine you are designing a print for a bespoke wallpaper. How would you ensure your pattern flows seamlessly from one block to the next? (2 marks)

Draw: In the box below, sketch a simple, bold geometric shape that you would use as a printing block. Then, draw a 2x2 grid showing how this shape would look as a repeating pattern.



Extension challenge: Design a 'limited edition' series of 4 prints based on a natural theme. Calculate the cost to produce these if the ink costs £1.50 per print and the paper costs £0.75 per sheet. If you sold each print for £5.00, how much total profit would you make for the charity fund?