

Mastering the Still Life with Zara

Learning objective: To explore the techniques of still life composition, including the use of shape, light, shadow, and texture to create a sense of realism.

Read each question carefully and apply your knowledge of art principles. Think like Zara the Zebra, who looks for patterns and light in every object she sees.

Word bank: composition · highlight · shadow · texture · perspective · proportion · contrast · form

1. Zara is arranging a bowl of fruit for a still life painting. Explain why it is important to include a light source, such as a window or a lamp, when deciding where to place the shadows. (2 marks)

2. Compare and contrast the appearance of a shiny glass bottle versus a rough, woolly jumper. Which art elements would you focus on to make them look different on paper? (2 marks)

3. When drawing a group of objects, some items might overlap. Explain how overlapping helps the viewer understand the 'composition' and the distance between objects. (2 marks)

4. If you were drawing a teapot that is closer to you than a mug, how would you adjust the 'proportion' of the two items to show depth? (2 marks)

5. Justify your answer: Does a still life artist need to draw every single tiny detail to make a piece of art look realistic? Why or why not? (2 marks)

6. What might happen if you used only one shade of grey for a whole drawing of a fruit bowl? How does 'contrast' change the final look of the piece? (2 marks)

Draw: Set up a small collection of three items on your desk (e.g., a piece of fruit, a pencil case, and a mug). Draw your composition, paying close attention to where the light hits the objects (highlights) and where the darkest shadows fall. Use shading to make your objects look three-dimensional.



Extension challenge: Challenge: Find an object at home that has a complex pattern (like a patterned mug or a striped scarf). Sketch it, ensuring that you follow the contours of the object with your pattern lines to show its 'form'. Explain in two sentences why this technique makes the object look more solid.