

Zara's Watercolour Wonders: Exploring Transparency and Texture

Learning objective: To understand the properties of watercolour paint, specifically transparency, colour mixing, and the 'wet-on-wet' technique.

Follow Zara the Zebra's creative steps to experiment with watercolour techniques. Use your brush and paint set to complete the tasks below. Observe how the water changes the intensity of your colours.

Word bank: transparency · pigment · wash · dilute · bleeding · saturation · gradient · absorbent

1. Zara wants to create a 'wash' that goes from dark blue to light blue. Explain the process of creating a gradient using water to dilute your pigment. Why does adding more water make the colour look different? (3 marks)

2. Compare and contrast 'wet-on-wet' painting with 'wet-on-dry' painting. Justify why an artist might choose one technique over the other when painting a stormy sky versus a detailed flower petal. (4 marks)

3. If you mix a primary yellow with a primary blue on your paper while both are still wet, describe the effect you see. What might happen if you let the yellow dry completely before painting the blue on top? (3 marks)

4. Watercolour is known for its transparency. Explain why it is difficult to paint a light colour over a dark colour in this medium compared to using opaque paints like acrylics. (2 marks)

5. Look at the texture of your paper. How does the 'absorbent' nature of the surface affect how quickly your paint dries and how the edges of your shapes appear? (2 marks)

6. Creative Task: Choose two colours that are opposites on the colour wheel. Create a small patch where they bleed into each other. Describe the new colour created at the intersection. (2 marks)

Draw: Using a wet-on-wet technique, paint a landscape of a sunrise. Focus on letting the colours bleed together to create a soft, glowing atmosphere without using harsh lines.



Extension challenge: Research the work of J.M.W. Turner. Write a short paragraph explaining how he used watercolours to capture light and movement, and justify whether his style is more 'representational' or 'abstract' based on your observations.