

Watercolour Wonders with Zara the Zebra

Learning objective: To explore the properties of watercolour paints and apply techniques such as 'wet-on-wet' and 'wet-on-dry' to create atmospheric effects.

Zara the Zebra loves to find patterns and textures in the natural world. Use your knowledge of colour theory and watercolour techniques to answer the following questions. Remember to keep your brush strokes controlled and think about how much water you use.

Watercolour is a unique medium known for its transparency. By adjusting the ratio of paint (pigment) to water, you can create a wide range of tones, from soft, pale tints to rich, dark hues. Zara uses a 'wash' to cover large areas of paper, while 'wet-on-wet' allows colours to bleed together beautifully. In contrast, 'wet-on-dry' provides sharp, defined lines for intricate details.

Word bank: pigment · transparency · wash · wet-on-wet · wet-on-dry · dilute · gradient · texture

1. Explain the difference between a 'wet-on-wet' technique and a 'wet-on-dry' technique. When might an artist choose one over the other? (2 marks)

2. If you want to make a colour appear lighter on your paper without adding white paint, what must you change? Justify your reasoning. (2 marks)

3. Describe the effect of adding more water to your brush after you have already placed a concentrated blob of paint on the paper. What is this technique called? (2 marks)

4. Compare and contrast the appearance of a watercolour painting on rough-textured paper versus smooth, hot-pressed paper. What might happen to the flow of the paint? (2 marks)

5. Zara is painting a sunset. She wants the colours to blend seamlessly from orange to purple. Which technique should she use and why? (2 marks)

6. What might happen to your painting if you do not allow a layer to dry fully before adding a new colour on top? Explain the result. (2 marks)

Draw: Using a pencil, lightly sketch a landscape featuring a mountain range. Using watercolours, demonstrate a 'gradient wash' for the sky (from dark blue to pale yellow) and 'wet-on-dry' for the mountain ridges to show jagged texture.



Extension challenge: Design a colour wheel using only the three primary colours (red, yellow, blue). Use the 'wet-on-wet' technique to mix your secondary colours (green, orange, purple) directly on the page, rather than on a palette. Write a short explanation of how the transparency of the paint helps you see the layers underneath.