

Kandinsky's Symphony of Shapes: An Exploration of Synaesthesia

Learning objective: To analyse the abstract work of Wassily Kandinsky, understanding how he used colour and geometric shapes to represent musical sounds and emotions.

Zara the zebra is visiting an art gallery and needs your help to interpret Kandinsky's famous 'Composition VIII'. Use your knowledge of colour theory and geometric patterns to complete the activity. You must link specific visual elements to emotional responses, just as Kandinsky did, and then justify your artistic choices in the questions below.

Word bank: Abstract · Composition · Synaesthesia · Geometric · Chromatic · Vibrancy · Form · Contrast

1. Kandinsky believed that certain colours had sounds. If you were to paint a 'fast' and 'loud' sound, which colours and shapes would you choose? Explain why. (2 marks)

2. Compare and contrast the effect of using a sharp, jagged triangle versus a smooth, perfect circle in an abstract painting. How does this alter the viewer's mood? (3 marks)

3. Explain why Kandinsky chose to move away from painting realistic objects (like houses or trees) towards non-representational, abstract art. (2 marks)

4. Justify your answer: Does a painting need to look like something real to be considered 'good' art? Support your opinion with an artistic argument. (3 marks)

5. What might happen if an artist used only cool colours (blues and purples) in a painting intended to represent the feeling of extreme heat? How would the 'vibrancy' change? (2 marks)

6. Zara has a budget of £15.00 to buy art supplies. She needs three packs of paints at £3.50 each and one fine-liner pen for £2.50. Does she have enough money? Show your calculation. (2 marks)

Draw: Create your own abstract 'Composition'. Divide your page into sections using intersecting lines. Fill each section with a different geometric shape and a colour scheme that represents a specific piece of music. Label your work with the emotion you intended to portray.



Extension challenge: Research the term 'Synaesthesia'. Write a short poem, in the style of Leo the lion, describing what colour the sound of a thunderstorm or a bubbling brook might be.