

Exploring Landscapes with Zara the Zebra

Learning objective: To identify, define, and evaluate key artistic techniques and terminology used in landscape painting.

Study these flashcards to master the vocabulary of landscapes. Use the definitions to help you analyse how artists represent the natural world.

Foreground

The part of a landscape painting that appears closest to the viewer, usually containing the most detail and largest objects.

Background

The part of the scene furthest away from the viewer, often appearing paler, less detailed, and higher up on the canvas.

Horizon Line

The horizontal line where the sky appears to meet the land or sea. It acts as the anchor for the viewer's eye level.

Atmospheric Perspective

A technique used to create the illusion of depth by making distant objects appear lighter, cooler in colour, and less sharp.

Composition

The intentional arrangement and placement of elements within a frame to create a balanced and visually interesting image.

Texture

The tactile quality of a surface; in painting, this can be achieved through brushwork or the thickness of the paint (impasto) to represent grass, rock, or water.

Scale

The size of an object in relation to other objects in the landscape, used to help the viewer understand distance and proportion.

Vantage Point

The specific position or location from which the artist observes the scene, such as a bird's-eye view or a ground-level perspective.

Explain why artists use atmospheric perspective when painting mountain ranges.

Artists use it to create a sense of vast distance, making the mountains look miles away rather than just a few metres in front of the viewer.

Compare and contrast the level of detail in the foreground versus the background. Why does this difference exist?

The foreground has high detail to draw the viewer in, while the background has low detail to suggest atmospheric distance and focus on the main subject.

Justify your answer: Does a low horizon line make a landscape feel more expansive? Why?

Yes, a low horizon line gives more space to the sky, which can make the landscape feel vast, open, and atmospheric.

What might happen if an artist painted all objects in a landscape with the same size and intensity of colour?

The image would lose its sense of depth and three-dimensionality, resulting in a 'flat' appearance where it is difficult to tell what is near or far.