

Mastering Still Life with Zara

Learning objective: To analyse the composition and lighting of still life arrangements and apply observational drawing techniques to capture texture and form.

Zara the zebra has set up a beautiful collection of objects for you to observe. Use your artistic eye to examine the way light interacts with surfaces and how the arrangement creates a balanced composition. Read each question carefully and use your knowledge of tone, perspective, and texture to provide your answers.

Word bank: composition · highlight · shadow · texture · perspective · tonal range · negative space · focal point

1. Zara has arranged an apple, a glass vase, and a folded silk scarf. Explain why the texture of the scarf requires a different drawing technique compared to the smooth, shiny surface of the apple. (2 marks)

2. Define the term 'negative space' in the context of a still life arrangement. How does observing this space help an artist improve the proportions of their drawing? (2 marks)

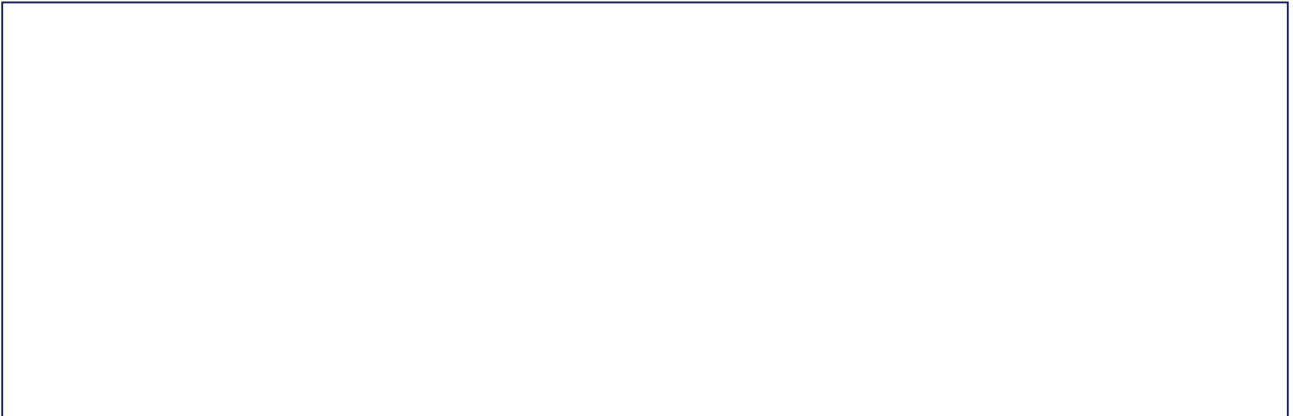
3. Compare and contrast how light behaves when it hits a matte object versus a reflective object like a polished silver spoon. How would you represent these differences using only a graphite pencil? (3 marks)

4. Justify your answer: Why is it important to establish a clear focal point when arranging items for a still life composition? (2 marks)

5. If you were to add an object that costs £4.50 to this arrangement, how might the lighting change if that object were made of transparent, coloured glass? (2 marks)

6. What might happen to the overall mood of a still life drawing if the artist decided to use only high-contrast shadows and no mid-tones? Explain your reasoning. (2 marks)

Draw: Select three objects from your classroom or home that have contrasting textures (e.g., a bumpy orange, a smooth metal tin, and a piece of soft fabric). Arrange them so they overlap slightly. Create a detailed observational drawing focusing on where the light source is coming from and how it creates shadows and highlights.



Extension challenge: Imagine you are an art critic. Write a short paragraph describing Zara's still life arrangement as if it were hanging in a gallery. Use at least five words from the word bank to justify why this piece of art is successful in its arrangement and use of light.