Zara’s Gallery of Expressions

Learning objective: To understand how artists use facial features and composition to show personality and mood in a portrait.

Zara the zebra is organising an art exhibition! She has noticed that the way we draw eyes, eyebrows, and mouths changes the whole feeling of a portrait. Look at the list of emotions below. For each one, describe which facial features you would change to show that feeling on a character's face. Think about the shape of the eyebrows, the curve of the mouth, and how wide the eyes are.

Word bank: arched · frowning · wide · upturned · narrowed · relaxed · heavy · curved

1. How would you draw a portrait to show someone who is feeling surprised? Describe the eyes and the mouth. (2 marks)

2. If you wanted to draw a character feeling grumpy or annoyed, how would you change the shape of their eyebrows? (2 marks)

3. Zara is painting a portrait of a very happy friend. Explain how she should draw the corners of the mouth. (2 marks)

4. Why do you think an artist might choose to draw a portrait with 'narrowed' eyes? What emotion might this represent? (2 marks)

5. If a portrait has very 'heavy' or drooping eyelids, what might that tell the viewer about how the person is feeling? (2 marks)

Draw: Using a mirror or your imagination, draw a self-portrait. Focus on making your facial expression show one specific emotion (like excitement, curiosity, or calm). Use light pencil marks to plan the shapes before adding detail.

Extension challenge: Find a portrait in a book or online. Look closely at the eyes. Do they look directly at you, or are they looking away? Write two sentences explaining how the direction of the eyes changes how you feel when you look at the painting.