Zara’s Portrait Patterns: Expressing Character

Learning objective: To understand how artists use facial features, expression, and patterns to convey personality in portraiture.

Zara the Zebra loves patterns! In portrait art, artists use different techniques to show what a person is like. Look at the list of artistic terms below. Match each term to the correct definition to help Zara plan her next portrait masterpiece. Then, use the questions to think about how you will create your own self-portrait.

Word bank: Proportions · Expression · Medium · Shading · Composition

1. 1. Match the word 'Proportions' to its meaning: The arrangement of elements on the page, or the use of light and dark to create a 3D effect, or the relative size of facial features compared to the whole head? (2 marks)

2. 2. Why is 'Expression' important when drawing a portrait of a friend or family member? (2 marks)

3. 3. If you wanted your portrait to look realistic, would you use 'Shading' or just simple 'Outlines'? Explain why. (2 marks)

4. 4. Zara wants to show that her subject is a very happy person. What features would you draw to show this? (2 marks)

5. 5. Think about 'Composition'. Should the person be looking directly at the viewer, or turned to the side? How does this change the 'story' of the portrait? (2 marks)

Draw: Using a mirror, draw a self-portrait. Before you start, look closely at your features. Try to use shading to show the curve of your nose and the depth of your eyes. Add a patterned background that represents your favourite hobby, inspired by Zara's love for design.

Extension challenge: Research a famous portrait from history. Describe how the artist used colour and line to tell the viewer about the person's status or personality.