Mastering the Art of the Portrait with Zara

Learning objective: To understand the techniques of portraiture, including facial proportions, expression, and the use of tone to convey character and personality.

Use your knowledge of facial anatomy and artistic techniques to complete the following tasks. Zara the zebra wants you to focus on how lines and shading can change the mood of a drawing.

Word bank: proportions · symmetrical · shading · expression · features · profile · composition · texture

1. When drawing a portrait, artists often use a guideline across the middle of the head to place the eyes. Explain why getting the 'proportions' correct is vital for making a portrait look realistic. (2 marks)

2. Compare and contrast a 'full-face' portrait with a 'profile' portrait. What specific features are visible in each that differ? (2 marks)

3. If you wanted to show that a character is feeling joyful through their facial features, which muscles and lines would you exaggerate? Justify your choice. (2 marks)

4. Zara is painting a portrait of a friend. She chooses to use dark, heavy shading under the chin and around the eyes. What might happen to the overall mood of the portrait if she does this? Explain your reasoning. (2 marks)

5. Look at a mirror and identify the distance between your hairline and your eyebrows. Is it the same as the distance between your eyebrows and the bottom of your nose? Why is observing these measurements essential for a successful portrait? (2 marks)

Draw: Choose a friend or family member to be your subject. Draw a portrait that captures not just their physical features, but their unique personality. Use cross-hatching or blending techniques to create depth and shadow on their face.

Extension challenge: Research the style of 'Cubism' or 'Abstract Portraiture'. Create a second portrait of the same person, but this time, distort the proportions and use vibrant, non-realistic colors to represent their emotions instead of their true appearance. Write a short paragraph explaining your artistic choices.