Exploring the World of Abstract Art with Zara

1. Representational Art. (1 mark)

Working: The portrait depicts a real person and a real setting (a park).

Award 1 mark for the correct classification.

2. Abstract Art. (1 mark)

Working: The painting uses shapes and colours to represent an idea (a storm) rather than a realistic image.

Award 1 mark for the correct classification.

3. I would choose soft blue or green colours and rounded, flowing shapes. These feel calm because they remind me of water or clouds, which are peaceful. (2 marks)

Look for: The student must link specific colours/shapes to the emotion of 'calmness' with a reason.

Good: I would use blue and circles because they look nice and quiet.

Better: I would use light blue and soft, curvy shapes because they feel gentle and relaxed like a calm sea.

Best: I would choose cool colours like pale blue and soft, organic shapes. These feel calm because they lack sharp edges and mimic the peaceful flow of water or a gentle breeze.

What moves an answer up: Moving from 'good' to 'best' requires using subject-specific vocabulary (cool colours, organic shapes) and explaining the psychological link to the emotion.

4. Geometric shapes have straight lines and sharp corners, like squares or triangles. Organic shapes are irregular, curvy, and free-flowing, like leaves or puddles. (2 marks)

Look for: Clear distinction between the mathematical/structured nature of geometric shapes and the natural/irregular nature of organic shapes.

Good: Geometric shapes are straight and organic shapes are curvy like nature.

Better: Geometric shapes are man-made and have straight lines like squares. Organic shapes are natural and irregular like blobs or leaves.

Best: Geometric shapes are defined by precise, straight lines and mathematical angles. In contrast, organic shapes are irregular, asymmetrical, and mimic the free-flowing forms found in the natural world.

What moves an answer up: The 'best' answer uses precise terminology (asymmetrical, mathematical angles) to define the structural differences.

5. The composition might make the viewer feel excited, alert, or even a bit tense because the dark lines and bright, contrasting colours create a strong visual impact. (2 marks)

Look for: The student must explain how the 'composition' (the arrangement of lines and colours) impacts the viewer's emotions.

Good: It might make the viewer feel happy because the colours are bright.

Better: The dark lines and bright colours create a strong contrast, which might make the viewer feel excited or energetic.

Best: The bold composition, using dark frames and high-contrast colours, creates a sense of tension and energy. It draws the eye quickly, making the viewer feel alert or stimulated.

What moves an answer up: The 'best' answer explains the effect of the 'contrast' and 'frame' on the viewer's focus and emotional state.

What a secure answer looks like

A secure answer demonstrates an understanding that abstract art is about emotional expression through formal elements rather than literal depiction. Students should use the vocabulary from the word bank correctly.

If your child is stuck

Ask the child to think about how a colour makes them feel (e.g., does red feel hot or angry? Does blue feel cold or calm?) and apply that to their art choices.

Common mistakes to watch for

Students often confuse 'abstract' with 'random' or 'messy'; remind them that abstract art is a deliberate choice of composition. They may also struggle to distinguish between 'geometric' and 'organic' if they haven't encountered these terms in maths or science.