Creative Collages: Techniques and Textures

1. A collage is a piece of art made by sticking different materials, such as paper, fabric, or natural objects, onto a single backing surface. (2 marks)

Working: Definition of collage as an assembly of diverse materials.

Award 1 mark for mentioning sticking/assembling materials and 1 mark for mentioning a variety of materials.

2. An artist might use these together to create contrast. The rough bark provides a tactile, natural texture, while the smooth foil provides a shiny, reflective surface, making the artwork more interesting to touch and look at. (3 marks)

Look for: Mention of contrast between textures (rough vs smooth).

Good: They use them to make the picture look different.

Better: They use them to create contrast because the bark is rough and the foil is smooth.

Best: Zara uses them to create visual and tactile contrast; the rough, organic bark contrasts with the smooth, reflective foil to make the collage more engaging.

What moves an answer up: Moving from 'different' to 'contrast' and explaining the sensory effect increases the quality.

3. Composition is the way you arrange items on your page to create a balanced design. You could balance your page by placing a large, heavy item on one side and several smaller items on the other to distribute visual weight. (4 marks)

Look for: Definition of arrangement and a specific method for balancing (e.g., symmetry or visual weight).

Good: Composition is where you put things on the paper. You can balance it by putting things in the middle.

Better: Composition is the arrangement of materials. You can balance the page by placing a large object on one side and smaller ones on the other.

Best: Composition refers to the intentional placement of elements to create a balanced design. You can achieve balance by using the 'rule of thirds' or by placing a large, dark object on one side to balance several smaller, lighter objects on the other.

What moves an answer up: Using specific terminology like 'visual weight' or 'rule of thirds' demonstrates a deeper understanding.

4. Layering is placing materials on top of each other to create depth. Overlaying is a specific type of layering where a transparent or semi-transparent material is placed over another to change its colour or texture. This adds complexity and a 3D effect to the art. (5 marks)

Look for: Distinction between general depth (layering) and the specific effect of transparency/modification (overlaying).

Good: Layering is putting things on top of each other. Overlaying is also putting things on top.

Better: Layering adds depth by stacking items. Overlaying is when you put something over another thing to change how it looks.

Best: Layering is the general process of stacking materials to create depth. Overlaying specifically involves placing a material over another to alter its appearance, such as using tissue paper to soften a colour, which adds complexity to the artwork.

What moves an answer up: Explaining the specific purpose of overlaying (altering appearance) distinguishes it from simple stacking.

5. Zara could use soft, shredded wool for the robin's feathers to show texture. For the leaves, she could use dried, pressed leaves for realism or green tissue paper for a crinkled texture. This differentiates the bird from the tree by using soft, organic materials for the bird and crisp, flat materials for the leaves. (6 marks)

Look for: Three materials identified with a clear reason for the choice (texture/colour).

Good: She could use wool for feathers, leaves for the tree, and paper for the sky. This makes it look real.

Better: She could use soft wool for the feathers and dried leaves for the tree. This helps because the wool feels soft like a bird and the leaves look like real nature.

Best: Zara could use shredded wool for the feathers to create a soft, tactile feel. For the leaves, she could use

crinkled green tissue paper to show texture, and perhaps sandpaper for the tree bark to create a rough contrast against the soft bird.

What moves an answer up: Providing a rationale for each material based on its specific sensory quality improves the answer.

6. Artists use recycled materials because they are free, which saves money. It is also environmentally friendly as it reduces waste. Furthermore, recycled items often have unique textures and patterns that you cannot buy in a shop. (5 marks)

Look for: Mention of cost, environment, or unique aesthetic qualities.

Good: It is cheaper to use old things and it is better for the planet.

Better: Using recycled materials is cheaper than buying new supplies and helps the environment by reducing waste.

Best: Beyond being cost-effective and environmentally sustainable, recycled materials offer unique textures and patterns—like the print on a newspaper—that add character to the artwork that store-bought supplies lack.

What moves an answer up: Adding the 'aesthetic' benefit of recycled materials shows an artist's perspective.

What a secure answer looks like

A secure answer demonstrates an understanding that collage is about intentional material selection to create texture and depth, rather than just sticking items down randomly.

If your child is stuck

Ask the child to close their eyes and imagine touching the materials. Ask: 'Does this feel rough, smooth, soft, or hard?' and 'How does that feeling change the picture?'

Common mistakes to watch for

1. Thinking collage is just about sticking paper down (ignoring 3D textures). 2. Confusing 'composition' with just 'filling the space' rather than 'balancing the space'.