Exploring the Art of Printmaking

1. A relief print is made by carving away areas of a matrix so that the raised parts hold the ink. It differs from a drawing because a drawing is made directly onto the final surface, whereas a print requires a matrix to transfer the image. (2 marks)

Working: Relief print = carving/raised parts. Drawing = direct application.

1 mark for defining relief print; 1 mark for explaining the difference (transfer vs direct).

2. Zara will need a brayer (to spread the ink) and a tray or flat surface (to roll the ink out onto). (2 marks)

Working: Equipment needed for ink application.

1 mark for brayer, 1 mark for ink tray/plate.

3. Registration is important to ensure that each colour layer aligns perfectly with the others. Without it, the colours might overlap incorrectly or leave gaps, ruining the intended design. (3 marks)

Look for: The concept of alignment and preventing misalignment of layers.

Good: It helps you line up the colours so they don't look messy.

Better: Registration is important because it makes sure each colour layer is placed in the right spot so the image lines up correctly.

Best: Registration ensures that multiple colour layers align precisely on the paper. Without it, the layers would be misaligned, causing gaps or overlapping that would distort the final image.

What moves an answer up: Moving from good to best involves explaining the consequence of poor registration (distortion/gaps) and using precise terminology.

4. A monoprint is a unique print made by applying ink to a flat surface (like glass or plastic) and then pressing paper onto it. It is different from a lino block because it is not carved; the image is created directly on the surface and can only be printed once. (4 marks)

Look for: Unique, non-carved, direct application.

Good: A monoprint is a print you make once by painting on a flat surface.

Better: A monoprint is made by putting ink on a flat plate and pressing paper on it. It is different because you don't carve anything into it like you do with lino.

Best: A monoprint is a unique, one-off print created by applying ink to a flat, uncarved surface. Unlike a lino block, which is a permanent matrix that can be reused, a monoprint is created directly on the plate and cannot be replicated exactly.

What moves an answer up: Moving from good to best requires explaining the 'unique' nature and the lack of a permanent matrix.

5. First, apply a thin, even layer of ink to the leaf using a brayer. Place the leaf onto the paper, then apply firm, even pressure across the entire surface to ensure the veins and edges transfer clearly. (4 marks)

Look for: Even ink application and firm, consistent pressure.

Good: Put ink on the leaf and press it down hard on the paper.

Better: Use a brayer to get ink on the leaf, then press it onto the paper firmly so the details show up.

Best: Apply a thin, even layer of ink to the leaf using a brayer. Carefully place it on the paper and apply firm, consistent pressure to ensure the fine details of the leaf's veins are transferred to the surface.

What moves an answer up: Moving from good to best involves mentioning the brayer for even coverage and the importance of pressure for detail.

6. 1. Composition: A central oak tree with falling leaves. 2. Colours: Oranges, reds, and browns to represent autumn. 3. Carving: Deep, bold cuts to create strong shadows and textures in the bark. (5 marks)

Look for: Integration of composition, colour theory, and carving technique.

Good: I would draw a tree with orange leaves. I would carve deep lines to make it look real.

Better: My print shows an oak tree in autumn. I chose red and brown ink to show the season. I will carve deep lines to make the bark look rough and textured.

Best: My composition features a central oak tree shedding leaves. I chose warm autumnal colours like burnt orange and deep brown to reflect the season. By using deep, jagged carving techniques, I can create high-contrast textures in the bark, making the final impression look rugged and natural.

What moves an answer up: Moving from good to best requires linking the artistic choices (colour/carving) to the intended mood and visual outcome.

7. A sponge is porous and holds too much ink, which would fill in the fine lines and cause smudging. A brayer provides a thin, controlled, and even layer of ink, which is essential for keeping fine details sharp and clear. (5 marks)

Look for: Control of ink volume and precision.

Good: A sponge is too messy and puts too much ink on the block.

Better: A sponge holds too much ink, which would clog the fine lines. A brayer is better because it spreads the ink thinly and evenly.

Best: A sponge is too porous and uneven, leading to ink pooling in the fine grooves and blurring the image. A brayer allows for a thin, consistent layer of ink, ensuring that the fine lines remain sharp and distinct in the final impression.

What moves an answer up: Moving from good to best requires explaining the physical reason (porosity/pooling) for the failure of the sponge.

What a secure answer looks like

A secure answer demonstrates an understanding that printmaking is a process of transferring ink from a matrix to paper, requiring control of pressure and ink volume. Students should recognise that carving creates a 'negative' space that remains white.

If your child is stuck

Ask the child to imagine they are a stamp; if they press too hard or use too much ink, what happens to the image? This helps them understand the importance of pressure and ink control.

Common mistakes to watch for

Students often forget that printmaking creates a mirror image of the design. They also frequently underestimate the amount of pressure needed to get a clean, solid impression.