Mastering the Art of Still Life

1. Overlapping objects creates depth and a sense of space, whereas a straight line looks flat and uninteresting. (2 marks)

Working: Overlapping creates layers, which helps the viewer understand the distance between objects.

1 mark for identifying depth/dimension, 1 mark for explaining that a straight line lacks visual interest.

2. The shadow will fall to the right. This creates contrast and helps define the three-dimensional shape of the objects. (2 marks)

Look for: The student must identify the opposite side for the shadow and mention depth or form.

Good: The shadow will be on the right side of the objects.

Better: The shadow falls to the right, which makes the objects look more solid and real.

Best: The shadow falls to the right, creating contrast that helps the viewer perceive the volume and three-dimensional form of the objects.

What moves an answer up: Moving from a simple observation to explaining the artistic purpose of the shadow increases the level.

3. Using different textures creates visual contrast, which makes the artwork more engaging and helps the viewer distinguish between the objects. (2 marks)

Look for: The student must link texture to visual interest or contrast.

Good: It makes the drawing look more interesting to look at.

Better: It creates contrast between the smooth glass and rough bark, which makes the objects stand out.

Best: By contrasting the smooth glass with the rough bark, the artist creates visual variety that draws the eye and makes the composition feel more realistic.

What moves an answer up: The best answer explains the specific effect of the contrast on the viewer's eye.

4. You could draw the coin larger than the apple or place it in the foreground to make it appear more significant. (2 marks)

Working: Scale refers to the relative size of objects; making an object larger or closer makes it the focal point.

1 mark for mentioning size/scale, 1 mark for mentioning placement (foreground).

5. A plain background prevents the composition from looking too busy, ensuring the viewer focuses on the objects rather than the pattern. (2 marks)

Working: Neutral backgrounds reduce visual noise.

Accept any valid reason regarding focus, simplicity, or reducing distraction.

What a secure answer looks like

A secure answer demonstrates an understanding that still life is about the relationship between objects, light, and space, rather than just drawing items in isolation.

If your child is stuck

Ask the child to place a mug on a table and move a torch around it. Ask them to notice how the shadow changes shape and length as the light moves.

Common mistakes to watch for

Students often draw objects as separate, floating items rather than overlapping them to create a cohesive scene. They may also forget that shadows are essential for showing 3D form.