Mastering Movement: The Art of Vincent van Gogh

1. Impasto. (1 mark)

Working: The text states: 'He often applied paint very thickly, a technique known as impasto'.

Award 1 mark for identifying 'impasto'.

2. Blue and orange (or yellow and purple, or red and green). (2 marks)

Working: Complementary colours are pairs that sit opposite each other on the colour wheel.

Award 1 mark for each correct pair identified.

3. Van Gogh painted how scenes made him feel rather than how they looked in reality to create energy and emotion. (3 marks)

Look for: The student must link the distortion to the expression of personal feelings or emotions.

Good: He wanted to show his feelings instead of just painting what he saw.

Better: He used swirling lines and shapes to paint how a scene made him feel, which created more energy than a realistic painting.

Best: Van Gogh prioritised emotional expression over realism; by using distorted shapes and swirling lines, he could convey the intensity of his feelings rather than just capturing a literal image.

What moves an answer up: Moving from 'good' to 'best' requires using specific terminology like 'emotional expression' and explaining the purpose of the distortion.

4. 1. A photograph captures realistic colours, whereas Van Gogh used vibrant, non-realistic colours. 2. A photograph has a smooth surface, while Van Gogh's work has physical texture from impasto. (4 marks)

Look for: Comparison between realistic/smooth vs. expressive/textured.

Good: Photos look real and smooth, but Van Gogh's paintings are bright and bumpy.

Better: A photograph shows the scene exactly as it is with natural colours, but Van Gogh uses bold, contrasting colours to show his emotions.

Best: A photograph provides a literal, smooth representation of a landscape. In contrast, Van Gogh’s work uses vibrant, non-naturalistic colours and thick impasto texture to create a sense of movement and personal feeling.

What moves an answer up: The 'best' answer uses comparative language and specific art terms like 'non-naturalistic' and 'impasto'.

5. Zara could use thick, layered paint (impasto) to create swirling clouds and use complementary colours like yellow stars against a deep blue sky to make the scene feel vibrant and alive. (5 marks)

Look for: Application of both 'impasto' and 'complementary colours' to the night sky theme.

Good: She could use thick paint for the stars and use blue and yellow together.

Better: Zara could use the impasto technique to make the stars look thick and textured, and use yellow and blue, which are complementary, to make the sky pop.

Best: To create energy, Zara should apply thick impasto brushstrokes in swirling patterns to give the sky physical texture. By placing vibrant yellow stars against a deep blue background, she uses complementary contrast to make the night sky feel dynamic.

What moves an answer up: The 'best' answer explains the 'how' and 'why' of the techniques rather than just listing them.

6. He might use a digital stylus with pressure sensitivity to mimic the thickness of paint, or use software brushes that layer digital 'ink' to create a 3D effect on the screen. (5 marks)

Look for: A logical link between digital tools and the physical nature of impasto.

Good: He could use a computer to draw thick lines that look like paint.

Better: He could use digital art software with a special brush tool that adds depth and shadow to make the strokes look like thick, layered paint.

Best: Van Gogh could use a digital tablet with a pressure-sensitive stylus to replicate the physical layering of impasto. By adjusting the opacity and 'height' settings in digital software, he could simulate the 3D texture of oil paint on a flat screen.

What moves an answer up: The 'best' answer demonstrates an understanding of how digital hardware and software can

simulate physical art techniques.

7. Expressionism is an art style that focuses on the artist's inner emotions rather than physical reality. His work fits this because he used bold colours and distorted lines to show his feelings. (5 marks)

Look for: Definition of Expressionism and a link to his subjective style.

Good: He is an Expressionist because he painted his feelings instead of real life.

Better: Expressionism is about showing emotions through art. Van Gogh fits this because he used swirling lines and bright colours to show how he felt about a scene.

Best: Expressionism is a style where the artist prioritises emotional experience over objective reality. Van Gogh is considered an Expressionist because he used dramatic, swirling brushwork and non-naturalistic colours to project his internal state onto the canvas.

What moves an answer up: The 'best' answer provides a formal definition and uses sophisticated vocabulary like 'objective reality' and 'internal state'.

What a secure answer looks like

A secure answer demonstrates an understanding that Van Gogh's style was a deliberate choice to convey emotion, not a lack of technical skill. Students should use the provided vocabulary correctly in their explanations.

If your child is stuck

Ask the child to imagine they are painting a stormy day. Would they use soft, straight lines or jagged, swirling ones? How would that change the 'mood' of the picture?

Common mistakes to watch for

Students often confuse 'Impasto' with just 'thick paint' without mentioning the physical texture it creates. They may also struggle to explain 'complementary colours' as a tool for energy, seeing them only as 'colours that look nice together'.