Mastering the Watercolour Wash

1. A flat wash is a single, consistent colour applied evenly across an area. A gradient wash involves a gradual transition from one colour to another, or from a dark tone to a lighter tone. (2 marks)

Working: Definition of flat vs gradient techniques.

1 mark for defining flat wash; 1 mark for defining gradient wash.

2. Adding more water dilutes the pigment, spreading the colour particles further apart. This allows more light to pass through the paint layer, making it appear translucent rather than opaque. (2 marks)

Look for: The relationship between water, pigment concentration, and light penetration.

Good: Adding water makes the paint thinner so you can see through it better.

Better: Adding more water dilutes the pigment, which makes the paint less thick and more translucent.

Best: By adding more water, you dilute the pigment concentration, allowing more light to pass through the layer of paint, which creates a translucent effect.

What moves an answer up: Moving from good to best requires using technical vocabulary like 'pigment' and explaining the physical interaction with light.

3. Using too much water causes 'puddling', where the paper becomes oversaturated and buckles. The excess water pools on the surface, often causing the pigment to settle unevenly or create 'cauliflower' blooms as it dries. (2 marks)

Working: Observation of paper saturation and drying effects.

1 mark for mentioning paper buckling/saturation; 1 mark for mentioning uneven pigment/blooms.

4. Zara should use the 'wet-on-wet' technique. By applying wet paint to a damp surface, the colours will bleed into each other, creating a smooth, seamless blend for the sunset. (2 marks)

Working: Application of the wet-on-wet technique to a specific scenario.

1 mark for identifying wet-on-wet; 1 mark for explaining why it works (blending/bleeding).

5. £6.50 (2 marks)

Working: 3 x £4.50 = £13.50. £20.00 - £13.50 = £6.50.

1 mark for correct total cost; 1 mark for correct change.

What a secure answer looks like

A secure answer demonstrates an understanding of how water-to-pigment ratios directly affect the opacity and flow of the paint. Students should use the provided vocabulary correctly in their explanations.

If your child is stuck

Suggest they try painting a small square with very little water, then add a drop more water for the next square to see the change in transparency themselves.

Common mistakes to watch for

Students often confuse 'translucent' with 'transparent' or assume that adding water simply makes the colour 'lighter' without understanding the role of pigment dilution.