# 1.1 Visual analysis, context and comparison

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ **Total: 30 marks**

**KEY WORDS** formal element • principle of art • composition • woodblock print • complementary colour

## Objective

Analyse artworks with the **formal elements** and **principles** of art, explain their **context** and **function**, and **compare** works from different cultures.

**You must be able to:**

- name and use the formal elements and principles
- analyse composition: focal point, balance, the rule of thirds
- explain context, function and meaning
- compare two artworks from different cultures
- use the vocabulary of art clearly

## 1 Key knowledge and worked examples

### Formal elements and principles

| elements | principles |
|---|---|
| line, shape, form, colour, value (tone), texture, space | balance, contrast, emphasis (focal point), movement and rhythm, proportion, unity |

**Colour words:** primary, secondary, complementary (opposite on the colour wheel: blue and orange), warm / cool, saturated / muted.

### Analysis method

**Describe** (what we see) → **analyse** (how elements and principles are organized) → **interpret** (meaning, mood) → **context** (who, when, where, why; materials; function) → **evaluate** (how well, and for whom).



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### Two works used on this sheet

**Katsushika Hokusai, *Under the Wave off Kanagawa* (the "Great Wave"), about 1831:** a colour woodblock print from the series *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*. A huge wave with claw-like foam rises over three boats; tiny Mount Fuji sits low in the distance. Prussian blue, a new imported pigment, dominates.

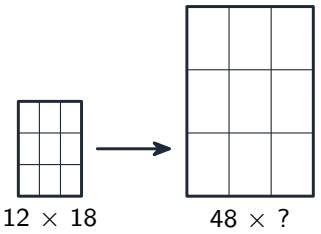
**Vincent van Gogh, *The Starry Night*, 1889:** oil on canvas, painted at the asylum in Saint-Rémy. Swirling lines fill the sky above a quiet village; a dark cypress rises in the foreground. Van Gogh collected Japanese prints and admired Hokusai's wave.

**Worked example.** In the Great Wave, the curve of the wave leads the eye from left to right and down onto the boats; small Fuji framed inside the curve creates a contrast of scale: nature's power against human fragility.

## 2 Practice

**2.1** Name **two** formal elements and **two** principles of art. [2]

**2.2** A student enlarges a 12 cm × 18 cm sketch of the Great Wave with a grid. The final work is 48 cm wide (on the 12 cm side). Calculate the scale factor and the final height, and the area increase. [3]



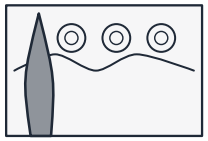
**2.3** Explain how the composition of the Great Wave creates **contrast** and **movement**. [4]

**2.4** Compare how Hokusai and Van Gogh use **line** and **colour**, and link one difference to the **materials** each used. [6]

## 3 Exam-style questions

**3.1** *(Comparative analysis.)* Compare the Great Wave and The Starry Night: formal qualities, function and context, and the link between them. Use art vocabulary throughout. [15]


the Great Wave


The Starry Night





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## Solutions

Marking: **M1** a correct method, **A1** the correct answer, **B1** an independent mark.

Each answer shows the steps, then the **result**.

**2.1**

any two elements, e.g. line, colour; any two principles, e.g. balance, contrast

**2.2**

scale factor $48/12 = \mathbf{4}$; height $18 \times 4 = \mathbf{72}$ cm; area $4^2 = \mathbf{16}$ times larger

**2.3**

contrast of scale: huge wave, tiny Fuji and boats; contrast of value: white foam against deep blue; movement: the curving line of the wave leads the eye; claw-like foam and the diagonal of the boats suggest the moment before the wave falls

**2.4**

Hokusai: crisp, clear outlines; flat areas of Prussian blue; Van Gogh: thick, swirling brushstrokes, line made of paint; contrasting blue and yellow, complementary-like contrast; woodblock printing gives flat colour and clean edges; oil paint allows thick texture (impasto)

**3.1**

Mark with the markbands: [top] precise subject vocabulary, clear analysis linked to context and purpose, well-chosen examples, reflection that shows how ideas developed, clear organization; [middle] relevant, some analysis and examples, some reflection; [bottom] mostly description, little analysis. Points that may be included: a clear comparative argument; Hokusai: composition and focal point; line and colour; woodblock print: a work for many buyers; context: Edo Japan, Mount Fuji's importance; Van Gogh: swirling line; colour and texture; oil painting, personal expression; context: Saint-Rémy, 1889; link: Van Gogh's interest in Japanese prints; a similarity, e.g. curving rhythms of nature; a difference in mood; interpretation supported by evidence; evaluation; clear organization



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