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.

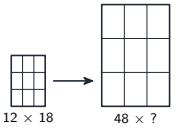
Vincent van Gogh, *The Starry Night*, 1889: oil on canvas, painted at the asylum in Saint-Rémy. Swirling lines fill the sky above a quiet village; a dark cypress rises in the foreground. Van Gogh collected Japanese prints and admired Hokusai's wave.

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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