

Unit 5A Objects and meanings

ABOUT THE UNIT

In this unit children select, arrange and present objects in a still-life painting. They investigate the work of artists who have used the theme of still life in a variety of ways to convey ideas and feelings. They develop skills of observation and recording, and knowledge and understanding of colour, tone and composition.

WHERE THE UNIT FITS IN

This unit builds on Unit 3A 'Portraying relationships' and Unit 4A 'Viewpoints', where children develop ideas relating to themselves and their experiences. It also builds on Unit 6E 'What can we learn from Christian religious buildings?' in the religious education scheme of work.

WHAT THE UNIT COVERS

| Art | Craft | Design | 2D | 3D | Individual work | Collaborative work | |
|----------|---------|----------|---------------|-----------|-----------------|--------------------|-------|
| Line | Tone | Colour | Pattern | Texture | Shape | Form | Space |
| Painting | Collage | Textiles | Digital media | Sculpture | Print making | | |

VOCABULARY

In this unit children will have an opportunity to use the following words and phrases:

- still life
- natural and made forms
- viewpoint, viewfinder
- composition, arrangement
- 'family of colours', eg blues and purples
- contrasts, differences

RESOURCES

For practical work

- sketchbooks
- viewfinders (made from a plastic slide mount or card frame 3–5cm wide)
- coloured, patterned or chequered background material
- sugar/cartridge paper
- materials for drawing and painting, including small, medium and large brushes

Suggested examples of art, craft and design

- a range of still-life images of domestic scenes, scenic and/or leisure activities, eg work by Manet, Renoir, Cassatt, Matisse
- examples of symbolic compositions, eg 'Annunciation 1435' by van der Weyden; 'The Black Clock' by Cézanne; 'The Toy Shop' by Peter Blake; 'Still life: An allegory of the vanities of human life' by Harmen Steenwyck; 'The uncertainty of the poet' by Giorgio de Chirico

EXPECTATIONS

At the end of this unit

most children will be able to:

explore ideas for a still-life painting of objects that have meaning for them; collect visual and other information for their work; organise and combine visual and tactile qualities; experiment with and use their knowledge of painting techniques to communicate ideas and experiences; compare and comment on ideas, methods and approaches in their own and others' work; adapt and improve their own work, according to its purpose

some children will not have made so much progress. They will be able to:

explore visual and tactile qualities; investigate materials and processes and use these to make a still-life painting; talk about the differences between their own and others' work; suggest improvements to their own work

some children will have progressed further. They will be able to:

record and collect visual and other information to develop their ideas for a still-life painting; manipulate visual and tactile qualities and different materials and processes, matching these to suit their intentions; analyse and comment on the ideas, methods and approaches used in their own and others' work; adapt and refine their own work to reflect its meaning and purpose

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES

LEARNING OUTCOMES

POINTS TO NOTE

CHILDREN SHOULD LEARN

CHILDREN

EXPLORING AND DEVELOPING IDEAS

- to collect visual and other information to help them develop their ideas
 - to question and make thoughtful observations about starting points and to explore ideas for a still-life arrangement
- Ask the children to collect a variety of visually interesting objects. Guide them by discussing the kind of objects they might collect, *eg roots, old ironware, objects from the coast or sea, crockery, fabric remnants, bottles, objects chosen for their shape, colour and personal significance.*
 - Discuss and list the qualities of the objects selected. Ask the children to sort and group the objects, considering their similarities and differences. Discuss the idea of contrasts, *eg straight and curved, bright and dull, coloured and plain.*
 - Ask the children to work in small groups and arrange the objects into a composition for a still life. Encourage them to put large pieces at the back, to create interesting overlaps between the objects, to use a background cloth that contrasts or blends with the objects and to think about the shapes made by objects and groups of objects.

- collect, sort and group a collection of visually interesting objects
- arrange objects to create a visually interesting composition for a still-life painting

- Use boards so that children can move their arrangements. Or use cardboard boxes, opened on one side, to 'contain' objects.
- Children will need different levels of help to make their arrangements.
- Still life – representation of inanimate objects such as flowers, fruits, musical instruments – has been practised by artists since ancient times and survives in murals and mosaics from Pompeii and Rome. It developed in the West in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and Dutch painters made 'vanitas' – paintings that held meanings that reminded the viewer of the vanity of earthly pleasures.

- to select and record from first-hand observation
 - to compare ideas, methods and approaches in their own and others' work and say what they think and feel about them
- Guide the children to make a range of small studies in their sketchbooks by using a viewfinder to select parts of the arrangement. Encourage the children to choose media that reflect the focus of their work, *eg charcoal and chalk to represent tonal contrasts.* Ask them to think about:
 - the arrangement of shapes
 - the 'colour families' they work with
 - the idea of contrasts
 - the effect of light and shade
 - the textures of objects
 - Discuss the use of line, colour, tone, texture and composition in selected artists' works as well as the ideas that inform still-life painting. Ask the children to compare the methods and techniques of others' with their own work, identifying similarities and differences in subject matter, contrasts, viewpoints and techniques.
 - After this discussion, ask the children to review their choice and arrangement of objects. Talk about the possibilities for arrangements that highlight the meanings in their chosen objects and the association of objects. Encourage the children to develop and refine their ideas.

- make a number of small studies that explore different ideas
- compare and comment on ideas, methods and approaches used in still-life paintings
- identify similarities and differences in others' work

- 'Still life: An allegory of the vanities of human life' by Harmen Steenwyck is an example of vanitas and is in the National Gallery's collection. Visit the National Gallery's website on www.nationalgallery.org.uk for further information.
- It is possible to find examples of still life in paintings on different themes, *eg in 'The Ambassadors' by Holbein; 'The Supper at Emmaus' by Caravaggio.*

INVESTIGATING AND MAKING

- to apply their experience of materials and processes, developing their control of tools and techniques for painting
- Ask the children to choose an idea from their sketchbook studies to develop into a larger picture. Ask them to draw in the main shapes of the composition.
 - Demonstrate how to apply paint to create large, flat areas of colour. Guide children about brushwork and methods of painting to the edge of a shape. Talk about using colour symbolically.
 - Ask the children to paint the main shapes using large flat areas of colour. Ask the children to decide how they will develop their work. They could choose to:
 - either
 - use a 'family' of colours, *eg blues and purples, reds and yellows.* They could consider how the main colours can be complemented by the limited use of another colour. Consider how contrasts can be achieved by using light and dark tones of colour and by overpainting large bold shapes to emphasise contrast and qualities of shape and tone
 - or
 - eliminate tone and details, focusing on shape, colour and composition

- make a still-life painting, using methods and techniques to communicate their ideas and meanings

- Children might use some of their sketchbook studies to experiment with overpainting techniques.
- Show children how different size brushes can be used to make a variety of effects.
- Discuss the different ways in which the children can use their sketchbooks, such as:
 - to make small studies as reference for their work, trying different arrangements
 - to try out colour mixing and painting techniques, making colour notes, etc

EVALUATING AND DEVELOPING WORK

- to adapt their work according to their views and describe how they might develop it further
- Review the use of methods and techniques in the children's paintings. Discuss whether the paintings communicate the ideas that the children intended.

- consider their work at each stage and adapt and improve it

- Talk with children individually, in small groups and as a whole class about the ideas their work communicates.

- to compare ideas, methods and approaches in their own and others' work and say what they think and feel about them
- Ask the children to compare and comment on a range of examples of still-life painting. Ask them to look at:
 - the subject matter, *eg the group of objects*
 - the contrasts that artists used in the work, *eg colour, light and dark*
 - the viewpoints, *eg a whole arrangement shown or parts of objects*
 - the painting techniques, *eg flat or varied areas of colour, textured or plain surfaces, painting that shows brushstrokes or conceals them*
 - the strengths and difficulties of working in the different media
 - the ways in which three-dimensional objects can be represented in two dimensions
 - Ask the children to compare these paintings with their own work.

- compare and comment on the still-life paintings of others and make comparisons with their own work

- Talk with children about how we make choices to 'realise' our intentions. Encourage children to talk about their own and others' work. Use key words and phrases and help children build up their vocabulary.

PRIOR LEARNING

It is helpful if children have:

- drawn and painted natural and made forms
- used a variety of painting techniques
- mixed different tones of colour
- looked at the use of different viewpoints, colour and painting techniques in still-life paintings

FUTURE LEARNING

In Unit 6C 'A sense of place', children develop their painting skills and their knowledge and understanding of composition and colour.

ADAPTING THE UNIT OF WORK

Children could:

- explore the effects of light and shadow on objects by developing large-scale still life in black and white, using charcoal and chalk. This work could be linked with Unit 3F 'Light and shadows' in the science scheme of work
- explore the effects of reflected light and reflections by developing a still life exploring images reflected in different surfaces such as polished metal, convex and concave mirrors. This work could link with Unit 6F 'How we see things' in the science scheme of work

