Your notes

GCSE Art and Design: revision notes

The formal elements

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The formal elements

- Line: marks that show outline, movement and energy; they can be thick, thin, broken or expressive.
- **Tone**: how light or dark something is; **tone** creates form and mood.
- Colour: hue, and how light (**tint**) or dark (**shade**) it is.
- Shape (2D) and form (3D): outlines of flat areas, and objects with volume.
- Texture: how a surface feels or looks as though it would feel, such as rough bark.
- Pattern: repeated lines, shapes or colours.
- **Composition**: how everything is arranged in the artwork.

Colour theory

- Primary colours are red, yellow and blue; mixing two makes the secondary colours orange, green and purple.
- **Complementary colours** are opposite each other on the colour wheel (red and green, blue and orange, yellow and purple). Placed together they make each other look brighter.
- Harmonious (analogous) colours are next to each other on the wheel and look calm together.
- Warm colours (reds, oranges, yellows) seem to come forward; cool colours (blues, greens) seem to go back.
- A **tint** is a colour mixed with white; a **shade** is a colour mixed with black.

Composition

- The **rule of thirds** places the **focal point** about a third of the way into the picture, which often looks more interesting than the centre.
- Foreground, middle ground and background create depth. Perspective uses vanishing points to show distance.
- Balance can be symmetrical (formal) or asymmetrical (more dynamic).

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Key terms

Tone	How light or dark something is.
Complementary colours	Colours opposite each other on the colour wheel.
Harmonious colours	Colours next to each other on the colour wheel.
Tint	A colour mixed with white.
Shade	A colour mixed with black.
Composition	How the parts of an artwork are arranged.
Rule of thirds	Placing key features a third of the way into the picture.
Focal point	The part of an artwork the eye is drawn to first.

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. What are the three primary colours?
2. What colour is complementary to red?
3. What colour is complementary to blue?
4. What is a tint?
5. What is a shade?
6. What is tone?
7. What are harmonious colours?
8. Which colours seem to come forward in a picture?

Answers

1. Red, yellow and blue
2. Green
3. Orange
4. A colour mixed with white
5. A colour mixed with black
6. How light or dark something is
7. Colours next to each other on the colour wheel
8. Warm colours

What to do next

Practise 11 questions on this topic

Try 3 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

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