

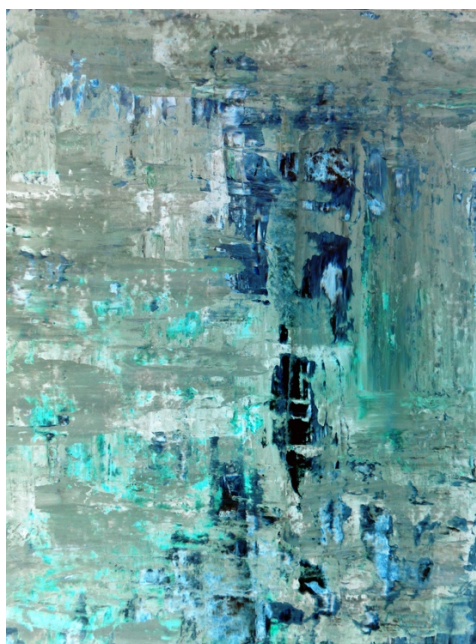
AE Academic English UK

Vocabulary in Art Workbook

*The artist uses **contrast** between light grey and deep blue to create atmosphere.*

*The **composition** highlights a central theme of mystery and depth.*

*This painting shows **symbolism** through its blurred boundaries, suggesting uncertainty.*



*The painting reflects its urban **context**, resembling walls or structures eroded by time.*

*Viewers can see a shifting **narrative** emerging from the abstract textures.*

*This work explores **identity** through fragmented and layered forms.*

EXAMPLE BOOKLET

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Vocabulary in Art Workbook

EXAMPLE

1. Who is it for?

This booklet is designed for international students who are preparing to, or already studying, at university or college where English is the medium of instruction. It focuses on developing academic vocabulary through the theme of art, helping students build the language needed to describe, discuss, and analyse artworks. No prior knowledge of art history is required, but depending on their level of English, students may need extra time to process the material before completing the tasks. Each unit combines definitions, practice activities, and discussion, enabling learners to use art vocabulary actively in both written and spoken contexts.

2. How long will it take to complete the booklet?

The time needed will vary depending on the student's level of English and their prior subject knowledge. On average, each unit is designed to take between **60-90 minutes** to complete, including vocabulary input, practice tasks, and discussion and writing activities. There are ten core units in total, which can be studied consecutively as a complete course or selected individually to focus on particular themes.

4. What context will be used?

The theme of this booklet is art and academic English. Each vocabulary unit is connected to the context of visual art, artists, and exhibitions, so that students can practise academic English through meaningful subject content. The topics include describing artworks, discussing techniques and movements, exploring interpretation, and debating contemporary issues.

5. How to use this booklet?

Each unit follows a clear structure: a vocabulary input activity, practice tasks, and a discussion and writing task to use the new words in context. Students are encouraged to complete all parts of the unit so they can see how vocabulary moves from recognition to active use in speaking and writing.

The booklet is designed for both independent study and classroom use. In class, teachers may want to set the practice tasks for pair or group work, followed by discussion. For self-study, students should take extra time to compare their answers with the key and say the words aloud to reinforce meaning and pronunciation.

6. What outcomes should students expect?

By the end of this booklet, students will have practised using a wide range of art-related academic vocabulary. They will be able to:

- *describe artworks, techniques, and movements more accurately and fluently.*
- *use subject-specific vocabulary to discuss meaning, context, and interpretation.*
- *participate in pair or group discussions with greater confidence.*
- *build short academic responses that integrate new vocabulary naturally.*
- *transfer these vocabulary skills into other areas of academic study at university.*

Workbook Contents

EXAMPLE

0.	Working with a partner
1.	Materials & Media
2.	Techniques & Processes
3.	Styles & Movements
4.	Visual Elements
5.	Adjectives for Critique
6.	Art History & Culture
7.	Museums & Exhibitions
8.	Interpreting Art
9.	Contemporary Issues in Art
10.	Critical Analysis in Art
11.	Teacher's answer key
12.	Appendix 1: Discussion sample prompts
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Working with a Partner

Work through each task on your own first so you can practise using the vocabulary independently. When you have finished a task, compare your answers with a partner. This gives you the chance to check your ideas, notice differences, and learn from each other before moving on to the next activity. As you compare, say the words aloud with your partner to practise accurate pronunciation and natural use. This approach not only strengthens your vocabulary but also prepares you for assessments and real discussions about art.



English for Art: Materials and Media

EXAMPLE

Task 1

Match the **TEN** words with the correct definition.

	Vocabulary		Definition
1.	Oil paint	a.	A black drawing material made from carbon, often used for sketches.
2.		b.	Paint
3.	Watercolour	c.	A hard stone often used for carving statues and monuments.
4.		d.	, or video.
5.	Charcoal	e.	A strong fabric surface used for painting, usually stretched on a frame.
6.	Clay	f.	A natural,
7.		g.	Paint made with pigments mixed in oil, slow-drying and rich in colour.
8.	Marble	h.	or medium.
9.		i.	Paint with synthetic resins, fast-drying and common in modern art.
10.	Digital media	j.	sculptures.

1.		2.		3.		4.		5.		6.		7.		8.		9.		10.	
----	--	----	--	----	--	----	--	----	--	----	--	----	--	----	--	----	--	-----	--

Task 2

Put each word from the list into the and add some more of your own.

	Painting/Drawing		Other Media
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			

Task 3

Complete the sentences with words from task 1.

1.	The artist created a life-sized _____ using clay and bronze.
2.	_____ oil paint on _____.
3.	This exhibition combines photography with sculpture, making it a _____ display.
4.	Many contemporary artists experiment with _____ to create digital artworks.
5.	Ancient Greek _____ temples.
6.	Leonardo da Vinci used _____ in many of his early drawings.
7.	_____ on a potter's wheel before firing it.
8.	The church commissioned a _____ statue for its main altar.
9.	Warhol produced prints using _____.
10.	_____ with _____, producing transparent layers of colour.

Task 4

Read the following questions carefully and plan your responses in the space provided. Discuss each question with your group, rather than short answers.

	Question	Space for Notes
i.	Which material or medium do you most enjoy looking at in artworks, and why?	

ii.	How does _____, or acrylic paint change the effect of a painting _____?	
iii.	Do you think _____, or bronze expresses ideas differently from _____.	
iv.	If you were a curator, which materials or media would you select for a new exhibition, and why?	
v.	In your opinion, which medium best _____ today: traditional painting, _____? Give reasons.	

Task 5

Write a short _____, using at _____ from this unit.

English for Art: Techniques and Processes

EXAMPLE

Task 1

Match the **TEN** words from this unit with the correct definition.

	Vocabulary		Definition
1.		a.	contrast in drawing.
2.	Shading	b.	Cutting designs into a hard surface with sharp tools to create prints.
3.		c.	The marks .
4.	Carving	d.	Pouring liquid metal into a mould to create a sculpture.
5.		e.	printing.
6.	Etching	f.	Applying thin layers of paint on top of each other to create depth.
7.	Glazing	g.	Shaping .
8.		h.	Covering pottery with a glass-like coating, often for colour and shine.
9.	Sketching	i.	or patterns.
10.		j.	Making a basic drawing, often quickly, to prepare for a final work.

1.		2.		3.		4.		5.		6.		7.		8.		9.		10.	
----	--	----	--	----	--	----	--	----	--	----	--	----	--	----	--	----	--	-----	--

Task 2

Put each word from the list into the and add some more of your own.

	Painting/Drawing		
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Task 3

Complete the sentences with words from task 1.

1.	the surface with acid.
2.	The painter's bold gave the portrait a sense of energy and movement.
3.	The craftsman .
4.	Renaissance painters often built up colour by careful .
5.	The surface.
6.	Picasso often began by quick outlines before painting larger works.
7.	Rodin .
8.	The artist used to create shadows that made the drawing look three-dimensional.
9.	detailed human forms.
10.	The sculptor produced a bronze figure by liquid metal into a mould.

Task 4

Read the following questions carefully and plan your responses in the space provided.

Discuss each question with your group, making sure you give full explanations rather than short answers.

	Question	Space for Notes
i.	require the most patience, and why?	

ii.	How is [REDACTED] carving, casting, or modelling different from painting [REDACTED]?	
iii.	Which process do you think is most effective for [REDACTED], or sketching ? Explain your answer.	
iv.	In your opinion, how [REDACTED] the overall effect of an artwork?	
v.	If you were to learn one new technique, would you choose a drawing process, a sculptural process, or a printing process ? Give reasons.	

Task 5

Write a short description [REDACTED], using at least **FIVE words** from this unit.

English for Art: Styles & Movements

EXAMPLE

Task 1

Match the **TEN** words from this unit with the correct definition.

	Vocabulary		Definition
1.	Realism	a.	_____.
2.	_____	b.	Capturing a moment with light, colour, and visible brushstrokes.
3.	Cubism	c.	_____.
4.	_____	d.	Style based on popular culture and everyday consumer goods.
5.	Surrealism	e.	A movement _____.
6.	Abstract Expressionism	f.	Approach that simplifies art to basic forms.
7.	_____	g.	_____.
8.	Minimalism	h.	Art that depicts ordinary life and people as realistically as possible.
9.	_____	i.	Mixing many _____.
10.	Postmodernism	j.	Large expressive gestures showing emotion.

1.		2.		3.		4.		5.		6.		7.		8.		9.		10.	
----	--	----	--	----	--	----	--	----	--	----	--	----	--	----	--	----	--	-----	--

Task 2

Put each word from the list into the _____ and add some _____.

	Non-representational	Movements
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Task 3

Complete the sentences with words from task 1.

1.	_____ century Paris led to the rise of _____.
2.	_____ artists working in _____.
3.	By using _____ and low culture through _____.
4.	The loose brushwork and outdoor settings of late 19th-century painters are typical of _____.
5.	Action _____ forms of _____.
6.	_____ of modern cities were associated with _____.
7.	Depicting peasants and workers in everyday life was central to _____.
8.	_____ reflect the ideas of _____.
9.	_____ and embrace new forms belonged to _____.
10.	The ironic mixing of styles in architecture and advertising is often linked with _____.

Task 4

Read the following questions carefully and plan your responses in the space provided. Discuss each question with your group, making sure you give full explanations rather than short answers.

	Question	Space for Notes
i.	Which movement do you personally find most interesting, and why?	
ii.	How [redacted] different in their approach to representing the world?	
iii.	Do you [redacted] reflect modern society in different ways? Explain.	
iv.	How did movements like Futurism and Abstract [redacted] ideas of what art could be?	
v.	In today's world, which movement (Realism , [redacted]) do you think best describes contemporary culture? Give reasons.	

Task 5

Write a short paragraph [redacted], using at least **FIVE** words from this unit.

English for Art: Visual Elements

EXAMPLE

Task 1

Match the **TEN** words from this unit with the correct definition.

	Vocabulary		Definition
1.		a.	_____ in an artwork.
2.	Shape	b.	The arrangement of parts to create stability or harmony in a work.
3.		c.	_____.
4.	Colour	d.	How objects are arranged to suggest depth or distance.
5.		e.	A mark _____ movement.
6.	Space	f.	The way something feels or appears to feel (rough, smooth, soft).
7.		g.	_____, width and depth.
8.	Balance	h.	Shading and highlights that make objects and details visible.
9.		i.	The quality _____.
10.	Perspective	j.	A two-dimensional enclosed area, such as a square or circle.

1.		2.		3.		4.		5.		6.		7.		8.		9.		10.	
----	--	----	--	----	--	----	--	----	--	----	--	----	--	----	--	----	--	-----	--

Task 2

Put each word from the list into the _____ and add some _____.

	Basic Elements	_____	Compositional Principles
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			

Task 3

Complete the sentences with words from task 1.

1.	_____.
2.	The rough _____ of the paint surface gave the work a tactile quality.
3.	_____.
4.	A sculpture has three-dimensional _____, while a drawing is flat _____.
5.	_____.
6.	The symmetrical arrangement of figures gave the painting a sense of _____.
7.	_____.
8.	Shading and highlights created the effect of _____ on the objects.
9.	Empty _____.
10.	The artist used a diagonal _____ to guide the viewer's eye across the painting.

Task 4

Read the following questions carefully and plan your responses in the space provided. Discuss each question with your group, making sure you give full explanations rather than short answers.

	Question	Space for Notes
i.	Which visual element do you think has the strongest impact on how a viewer experiences a painting? Why?	

ii.	_____ and contrast differently to create interest in an artwork?	
iii.	In _____ change the meaning or mood of an image?	
iv.	_____ plays a more important role in creating atmosphere? _____	
v.	How could the combination of line, shape, _____ composition of a design?	

Task 5

Write a short paragraph (3–4 sentences) about _____, using at least **FIVE** words from this unit.

English for Art: Adjectives for Critique

EXAMPLE

Task 1

Match the **TEN** words from this unit with the correct definition.

	Vocabulary		Definition
1.		a.	
2.	Harmonious	b.	Showing strong feeling or emotion.
3.		c.	
4.	Delicate	d.	Representing real objects or figures.
5.		e.	
6.	Expressive	f.	Composed in a balanced or pleasing way.
7.		g.	
8.	Abstract	h.	Non-representational, not depicting recognisable objects.
9.		i.	
10.	Symbolic	j.	Broken into parts or appearing incomplete.

1.		2.		3.		4.		5.		6.		7.		8.		9.		10.	
----	--	----	--	----	--	----	--	----	--	----	--	----	--	----	--	----	--	-----	--

Task 2

Put each word from the list into the _____ and add some _____.

		Negative/Critical
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		

Task 3

Complete the sentences with words from task 1.

1.	
2.	The bold colours and sweeping lines gave the mural a _____ quality.
3.	The _____.
4.	The delicate brushwork created a _____ effect, almost like lace.
5.	_____.
6.	The vast scale of the sculpture was truly _____.
7.	The artist's _____.
8.	Early Renaissance artists produced _____ paintings of the human body.
9.	The design _____.
10.	The shapes were non-representational, giving the painting an _____ style.

Task 4

Read the following questions carefully and plan your responses in the space provided. Discuss each question with your group, making sure you give full explanations rather than short answers.

	Question	Space for Notes
i.	Which quality do you think makes a painting or being expressive ? Why?	
ii.	Can still feel harmonious ? Give an example or	
iii.	How create a drawing?	
iv.	Do you find abstract art less engaging different strengths?	
v.	In your opinion, is art more effective when it ? Explain.	

Task 5

Write a short paragraph (3–4 sentences) , using at least **FIVE** words from this unit.

English for Art: Art History & Culture

EXAMPLE

Task 1

Match the **TEN** words from this unit with the correct definition.

	Vocabulary		Definition
1.	Fresco	a.	Painting _____
2.	_____	b.	17th-century style with drama, movement, and detail.
3.	Patronage	c.	A work _____
4.	_____	d.	Subject matter or category of art, such as landscape or portrait.
5.	Baroque	e.	_____.
6.	_____	f.	Symbols and imagery used to convey deeper meanings in art.
7.	Avant-garde	g.	_____.
8.	_____	h.	Radical or experimental approaches that challenge existing art forms.
9.	Genre	i.	14th–16th- _____
10.	_____	j.	The material or technique an artist uses to create a work.

1.		2.		3.		4.		5.		6.		7.		8.		9.		10.	
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Task 2

Put each word from the list into the _____ and add some _____.

	_____	_____	Concepts / Ideas
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Task 3

Complete the sentences with words from task 1.

1.	Cubism _____ of _____.
2.	_____ reveals symbolic meanings in religious art.
3.	Caravaggio's _____.
4.	Many Gothic altarpieces were designed as a _____ with movable side panels.
5.	_____ their major works.
6.	Still life, portrait, and landscape are all examples of a particular artistic _____.
7.	Michelangelo _____.
8.	Oil paint became a popular _____ because it allowed greater detail and richer colours.
9.	_____ of _____.
10.	The Dada movement shocked the art world with its radical and experimental _____ ideas.

Task 4

Read the following questions carefully and plan your responses in the space provided.

Discuss each question with your group, making sure you give full explanations rather than short answers.

	Question	Space for Notes
i.	Which period do you think had a greater influence on Western art: the Renaissance or Modernism ? Why?	

ii.	success of artists in the past, and exists today?	
iii.	differ from the Avant-garde ?	
iv.	Do you think techniques such for contemporary artists, or mainly of historical interest?	
v.	and genre help us understand cultural values in art?	

Task 5

Write a short paragraph (3–4 sentences) about , using at least **FIVE** words from this unit.

English for Art: Museums & Exhibitions

EXAMPLE

Task 1

Match the **TEN** words from this unit with the correct definition.

	Vocabulary		Definition
1.	Curation	a.	
2.		b.	The act of obtaining an artwork for a museum or gallery.
3.	Installation	c.	A group of artworks.
4.		d.	A space or building where artworks are displayed.
5.	Conservation	e.	Public display of artworks, often temporary.
6.		f.	Protecting artworks from damage.
7.	Archive	g.	A record or listing of works in an exhibition or collection.
8.		h.	A store of documents, records, or historical materials.
9.	Acquisition	i.	
10.		j.	

1.		2.		3.		4.		5.		6.		7.		8.		9.		10.	
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Task 2

Put each word from the list into the **Records / Documentation** column and add some **Notes**.

			Records / Documentation
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Task 3

Complete the sentences with words from task 1.

1.	The museum recently made an important _____ of a rare manuscript.
2.	A temporary _____ of _____.
3.	The mural was presented as a site-specific _____ that covered the entire room.
4.	The _____ deterioration.
5.	A detailed _____ was produced to accompany the exhibition, listing all the works.
6.	The _____ of _____.
7.	The library holds an extensive _____ of letters, drawings, and historical documents.
8.	The _____ artworks.
9.	Careful _____ ensured that the works were selected and arranged with a clear theme.
10.	_____.

Task 4

Read the following questions carefully and plan your responses in the space provided.

Discuss each question with your group, making sure you give full explanations rather than short answers.

	Question	Space for Notes
i.	Which do you think is more important for a museum: conservation of artworks or new acquisitions ? Why?	

ii.	an exhibition more successful for visitors?	
iii.	affects its cultural value, or only its market value?	
iv.	in education compared ?	
v.	be kept in one place, exhibitions ?	

Task 5

Write a short paragraph (3–4 sentences) and present art, using at least **FIVE** words from this unit.

English for Art: Interpreting Art

EXAMPLE

Task 1

Match the **TEN** words from this unit with the correct definition.

	Vocabulary		Definition
1.	Context	a.	The story or sequence of events shown in an artwork.
2.		b.	The _____ created.
3.	Symbolism	c.	The people who view, read, or experience a work.
4.		d.	The _____.
5.	Perspective	e.	The way something is shown or depicted in art.
6.		f.	_____.
7.	Representation	g.	Use of images or signs to suggest ideas or meanings beyond the literal.
8.		h.	_____.
9.	Function	i.	The act of explaining or understanding a work's meaning.
10.		j.	Artistic _____.

1.		2.		3.		4.		5.		6.		7.		8.		9.		10.	
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Task 2

Put each word from the list into the _____ and add some _____.

	Art Itself	_____	Reception / Purpose
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Task 3

Complete the sentences with words from task 1.

1.	_____.
2.	Religious icons often contain _____, such as a dove representing peace.
3.	_____.
4.	One possible _____ of the sculpture is that it represents hope after war.
5.	_____.
6.	A portrait is a _____ of a person, even if it is stylised.
7.	The _____.
8.	Viewers questioned the _____ of the abstract installation and its link to identity.
9.	A _____ at eye level.
10.	The museum carefully considered its target _____ when designing the exhibition.

Task 4

Read the following questions carefully and plan your responses in the space provided.

Discuss each question with your group, making sure you give full explanations rather than short answers.

	Question	Space for Notes
i.	How does knowing the context of an artwork change its meaning ?	

ii.	_____ when it is obvious or when it requires _____	
iii.	How can an artist use narrative _____?	
iv.	In what ways does perspective influence the audience's experience of an artwork?	
v.	_____, or is ambiguity valuable?	

Task 5

Write a short paragraph (3–4 sentences) _____, using at least **FIVE** words from this unit.

English for Art: Contemporary Issues in Art

EXAMPLE

Task 1

Match the **TEN** words from this unit with the correct definition.

	Vocabulary		Definition
1.		a.	The
2.	Identity	b.	Using elements of one culture in another, often controversially.
3.		c.	The
4.	Activism	d.	Artistic practice in public spaces, often outside traditional galleries.
5.		e.	Actions
6.	Sustainability	f.	Suppression or control of artistic expression by authorities.
7.		g.	
8.	Street art	h.	Inclusion of varied cultural, social, or personal backgrounds.
9.		i.	across the world.
10.	Diversity	j.	How personal or group characteristics are expressed in art.

1.		2.		3.		4.		5.		6.		7.		8.		9.		10.	
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Task 2

Put each word from the list into the and add some .

	Forces / Influences		
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Task 3

Complete the sentences with words from task 1.

1.	
2.	The rapid spread of ideas through travel and technology drives .
3.	Some .
4.	A mural in a city neighbourhood is an example of .
5.	is usually classified as .
6.	Artwork using recycled materials connects directly to .
7.	When cultural .
8.	Portraiture can explore personal or cultural aspects of .
9.	in the art world reflects .
10.	Art and are closely connected through issues of funding and propaganda.

Task 4

Read the following questions carefully and plan your responses in the space provided.

Discuss each question with your group, making sure you give full explanations rather than short answers.

	Question	Space for Notes
i.	How has globalisation changed the way artists share ideas and reach an audience ?	

ii.	_____ vandalism, or can it _____?	
iii.	Do you think censorship ever protects _____ artistic freedom?	
iv.	How can sustainability influence the choice _____ in contemporary art?	
v.	_____, or can it sometimes create valuable new perspectives on identity ?	

Task 5

Write a short paragraph (3–4 sentences) _____, using at least **FIVE** words from this unit.

EXAMPLE

Match the **TEN** words from this unit with the correct definition.

1.		2.		3.		4.		5.		6.		7.		8.		9.		10.	
----	--	----	--	----	--	----	--	----	--	----	--	----	--	----	--	----	--	-----	--

Put each word from the list into the and add some .

Task 3

Complete the sentences with words from task 1.

Task 4

Discuss each question with your group, making sure you give full explanations rather than short answers.

ii.	_____ free from subjective views?	
iii.	_____ when compared with more traditional forms of evaluation ?	
iv.	_____ lead to a clear judgement , or is open-ended analysis valuable?	
v.	_____ perspective change _____ ?	

Task 5

Write a short paragraph (3–4 sentences) _____, using at least **FIVE** words from this unit.

English for Art: Materials and Media (ANSWERS)

Task 1

Match the **TEN** words with the correct definition.

	Vocabulary		Definition
1.	Oil paint	k.	A black drawing material made from carbon, often used for sketches.
2.	Acrylic paint	l.	Paint that uses water as a medium, creating transparent layers.
3.	Watercolour	m.	A hard stone often used for carving statues and monuments.
4.	Canvas	n.	Art created with computer technology, photography, or video.
5.	Charcoal	o.	A strong fabric surface used for painting, usually stretched on a frame.
6.	Clay	p.	A natural, soft material shaped when wet and hardened when fired.
7.	Bronze	q.	Paint made with pigments mixed in oil, slow-drying and rich in colour.
8.	Marble	r.	An artwork made using more than one material or medium.
9.	Mixed media	s.	Paint with synthetic resins, fast-drying and common in modern art.
10.	Digital media	t.	A metal alloy of copper and tin, used in casting sculptures.

1.	<i>g</i>	2.	<i>i</i>	3.	<i>b</i>	4.	<i>e</i>	5.	<i>a</i>	6.	<i>f</i>	7.	<i>j</i>	8.	<i>c</i>	9.	<i>h</i>	10.	<i>d</i>
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Task 5

Write a short description (3–4 sentences) of an artwork, using at least **FIVE** words from this unit.

*The painting was created on a large **canvas** using bright **oil paint** that gave it depth and richness. The artist combined areas of **watercolour** for softer tones with bold marks of **charcoal** to add contrast. In the same exhibition, a **bronze** sculpture stood nearby, showing how different materials can work together to create a powerful atmosphere.*

Appendix 1: Sample Prompts for Discussion Task

1. Materials and Media

	Question	Sample Prompts
i.	Which material or medium do you most enjoy looking at in artworks, and why?	<i>I enjoy looking at ___ because it feels ___ / looks ___.</i>
ii.	How does using a canvas , watercolour , or acrylic paint change the effect of a painting compared to oil paint?	<i>Oil paint is ___, but watercolour/acrylic is ___.</i>
iii.	Do you think sculpture in marble , clay , or bronze expresses ideas differently from painting? Explain.	<i>Sculpture shows ideas by ___, while painting shows ideas by ___.</i>
iv.	If you were a curator, which materials or media would you select for a new exhibition, and why?	<i>If I were a curator, I would choose ___ because it shows ___.</i>
v.	In your opinion, which medium best represents contemporary culture today: traditional painting, sculpture, or digital media ? Give reasons.	<i>The medium that best represents today's culture is ___ because ___.</i>

ALL ANSWERS, SAMPLE WRITINGS, SPEAKING PROMPTS & QUIZ INCLUDED IN PAID VERSION...