

2018 N5 Prelim answers

Q.2 Goldfish and Palette (1914) by Henri Matisse

SHAPE

Matisse uses a series of shapes for visual impact. A large rectangular shape sits prominently on the left-hand side of the canvas. The viewer's eye is immediately drawn to this shape as it is the biggest and darkest shape on the canvas.

Matisse cleverly uses a large triangular shape on the bottom right of the composition to lead our eye to the large rectangle and the goldfish bowl that sits inside it.

The tip of the triangle points directly towards the 2 goldfish establishing them as the main focal point of the painting.

Other triangles are visible on the top right-hand side of the canvas. One of these triangles points to the goldfish bowl –further establishing the idea that the goldfish are the focal point- and some help to balance the other shapes in the picture.

The white geometric shape that the goldfish bowl sits on is mirrored by the white shape used for the palette, giving the painting a sense of harmony and balance.

LINE

Thick outlines are used to establish the shapes of the bowl, table and palette.

The goldfish bowl is framed by curved lines on either side of it, drawing our eye towards the fish.

The curved lines may playfully suggest the tails of a goldfish.

COLOUR

The reddish orange colours of the goldfish contrast with the white paint inside the bowl, which creates visual impact.

The red also contrasts with the green leaves above it. Two complementary colours sitting beside each other makes each colour seem more vibrant.

OPINION

In my opinion I think that this approach is incredibly successful. At first glance the painting seems quite simple but the artist has obviously thought very carefully about colour and composition to achieve maximum visual effect. An example of this is the colour scheme- blue dominates the canvas and that would usually create a cold atmosphere however this is balanced by the warm colours used for the lemon yellow and red fish, creating a pleasant, tranquil mood.

I also like this approach to painting because it is semi abstract rather than completely abstract. The artist has simplified shapes and details to create balance and harmony but still shows enough detail for the viewer to make out what each individual object is.