# Making mark

Create works of art that convey line and tone using a wide range of drawing materials

Line and tone are at the very basics of teaching art and design. The quality of a line can vary enormously, from the faintest and most precise of lines made by the sharpest pencil, to the broadest and bluntest sweeping gesture from a thick stick of charcoal. Similarly, picture a selection of blue objects and you'll quickly appreciate that within a single colour there is an almost endless range of tones – light, medium, dark and all points in between – to be found.

The ideas and activities on these pages illustrate examples of practical work that demonstrate that, with a little thought and imagination, children can create a range of intriguing works of art through exploring line and tone. Each of these ideas can be adapted for use in any Key Stage 2 classroom. Some examples are drawings, others are prints or paintings, while others are the result of experiments with less conventional art material – you might never look at that coffee stain in quite the same way again!

### Drawing materials you can use

| Conventional | Non-conventional |
|---|---|
| • Pencils (HB to 6B) | • Feathers |
| • Charcoal – thick and thin sticks | • Sticks |
| | • Forks |
| • Graphite sticks | • Stones |
| • Chalk pastels | • Matchsticks |
| • Oil pastels | • Cotton buds |
| • Wax crayons | • Combs |
| • Ink pens | |

## Experiments with mark-making

Children need time to explore the art materials that they work with, without feeling pressure to create a recognisable image. The discoveries they make through experimenting with processes can then be incorporated into more finished pieces.

As an exploratory 'warm-up' exercise, provide children with a list of line and tone vocabulary like the one below (try handing out a set of flashcards) and challenge them to make a mark, or collection of marks that match each word. Restrict children to the same drawing tool or provide a selection, but encourage them to explore the full range of possibilities that the tools have to offer.

## Line and tone – key vocabulary

### Light to dark

Ink pens of varying thicknesses were used to create this web of lines that becomes increasingly dense, moving from light to dark.

### Translucent to opaque

A coffee and water mixture was brushed onto white paper in translucent layers. Opaque diagonal lines were added, resulting in a contrasting effect.

### Sharp and smudged

Brown and white paint has been applied with a plastic knife to create these subtle textures.

### Precise and scribbled

Children love experimenting with ink pens – challenge them to create a range of marks, from precise patterns to expressive scribbles.

### Blend and contrast

Adding water will thin down paint and lighten its tone, while wax crayon marks will resist any watercolour that is applied over it.

WITH THANKS TO HAYDN (YEAR 5 AT ST PETER'S PRIMARY SCHOOL, WRECCLESHAM) AND SHIRLEY DEMETRIADES AT ROEHAMPTON UNIVERSITY

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## ACTIVITIES Ages 7–11

### 1 Picasso faces

In groups of four, children take turns to make individual drawings of each other's facial features, taking care to use a range of tones. In this example pencil, charcoal and chalk have been used, though oil and chalk pastels could be introduced for colour. Making drawings of fellow classmates can be a stressful experience, but when individual features from different drawings are cut out, re-assembled and pasted into place, the resulting 'Picasso-esque' composition should neither flatter nor offend anyone!

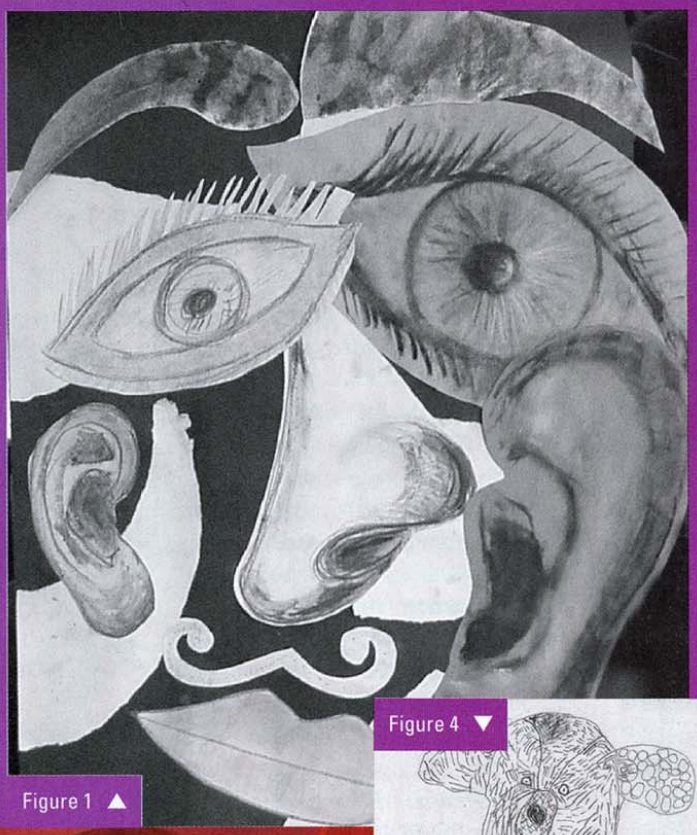

Figure 1 ▲

### 2 Take a line for a walk

Shirley's painting is a great example of combining line and tone. Inspired by the artist Paul Klee's famous idea of 'taking a line for a walk', she began by making a series of pencil lines from one edge of the paper to another. As these lines twisted and crossed they created random shapes, each of which were then painted with tones of red, ranging from pale pinks to reddish browns.

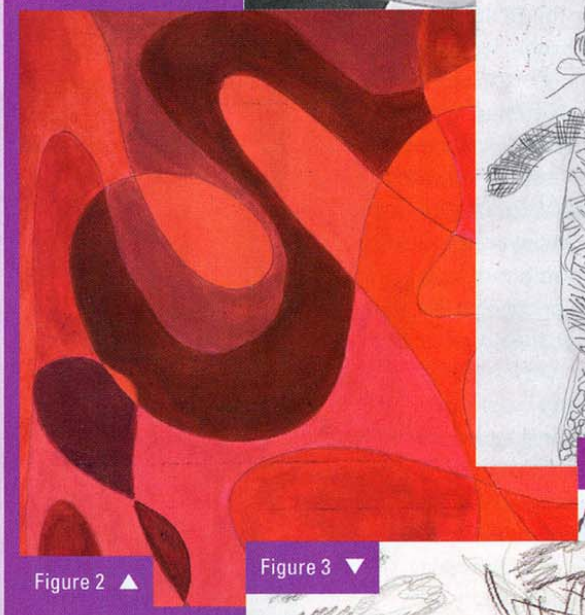

Figure 2 ▲

### 3 Bringing a scene to life

Children's drawings of everyday scenes can often become repetitive and lacklustre. Following a lesson on markmaking, Haydn produced this striking illustration using soft, thick pencils to make strong, expressive lines that give a sense of space and movement. Scribbled and smudged tones also create a sense of energy in the picture.

Figure 3 ▼

### 4 Observational drawing

Children often develop short-hand techniques for drawing familiar objects. Sometimes, returning to these objects to look at them with a more analytical eye can produce surprising results. An ink pen was used to draw this teddy bear from observation. Note how cross-hatched lines, zig-zag lines, and even noughts and crosses combine to create an interesting range of textures.

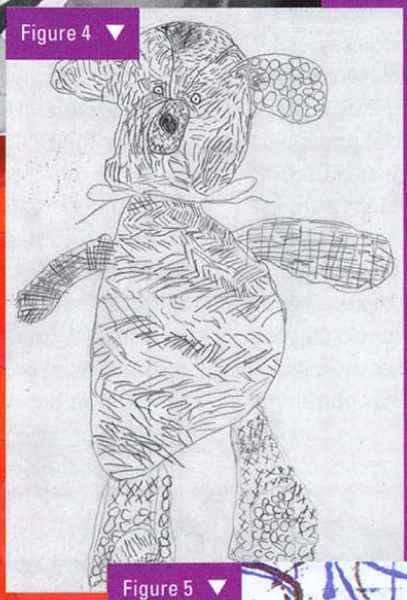

Figure 4 ▼

### 5 String printing

String prints are a wonderful way of experimenting with linear compositions. Try painting a length of string (keep the brush still on the palette and pull the string through the bristles) and then arranging it into twisting shapes before pressing a sheet of paper over the top. Alternatively, cover a piece of card with a thin coat of PVA glue, arrange a length of string carefully across it and press down. When the glue is dry it will become transparent. Ink can be rolled across the card and paper placed on top to make a print. Experiment with rotating and repeating prints and making collographs – pieces of card, fabric or other textured material stuck to card, inked up and printed. ■

Figure 5 ▼

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