



Dear prospective student,

We very much look forward to working with you over the next couple of years as you embark upon the A-level course in one of our available endorsements.

This letter is to outline a small amount of preparatory work for you to complete over the summer holidays in preparation to begin the course more effectively. You may, or may not, be familiar with some of the elements of this task; however, it is vital that everyone studying this A-level completes it to the best of their ability and use this time, and task, as a good way to bridge the gap between GCSE and A-level study. Please bring this work with you in September.

THE RATIONALE

At Advanced level, you are expected to be able to communicate your ideas, opinions and feelings about your own and others' work in a detailed and sophisticated way. This includes being able to write fluently and insightfully, use standard English accurately, include specialist subject terminology and ensure that this is all supported by a good level of research. The Component 1 portfolio includes an essay as part of the assessment, which we will support and guide you through; you must also be able to analyse artists' work in depth and with good understanding.

Here at Crossley Heath, we use a method called the 4C analysis model to help students to write to this more sophisticated standard. It is **ALWAYS** advisable to begin this process with a scrap piece of paper to note down initial ideas under the 4 'C' headings (explained below) before then writing the notes up in a more cohesive piece of continuous prose. We use 4C as an easy way to remember the method – you just need to learn what each of the 4C's are and mean. Below is a list of questions that you can ask yourself whilst looking at a piece of art work and thinking about each required component.

CONTENT (Subject matter/meanings)

- What is the piece of work about? Is there a meaning to it? What is happening in it? How do you know?
- What can you see in it? Describe the contents – include everything!
- Do you think the work was observed directly by the artist or was it imagined?
- Is the work realistic, abstract or representational?

COMPOSITION (Arrangement/placement/positioning)

- How have the items in the work been arranged?
- Is there a focal point in the piece? If so, how has it been created?
- Is it through lots of shapes directing your eye to a certain point? Is it because of colour?
- What is happening in the foreground, the background and the mid-ground?
- Describe what is happening in all of these different areas and how your eye is drawn from one area to another.
- Is there any perspective, dimension or depth to the piece?

CREATION (Methods/processes/techniques)

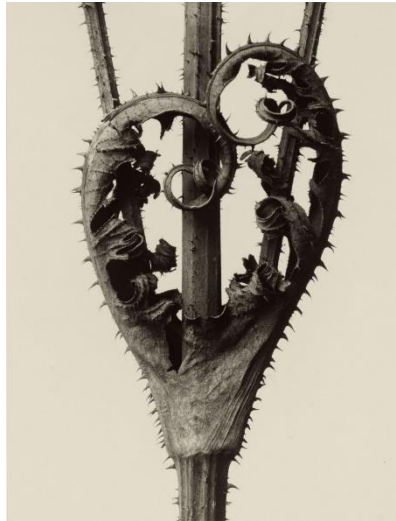
- This is the **ONLY** section that you **CANNOT** write about **WITHOUT** doing some **RESEARCH!**
- What has the artist used to make their work?
- What media has been used
- What materials have been used?
- What tools have been used?
- What processes have been used?
- What techniques have been used?

CHARACTERISTICS (Feelings/emotions/qualities)

- In this section you can use your research to your advantage too.
- Knowing what media has been used can help you to talk about the qualities.
- Does the work have texture?
- Does the work have a mood?
- If it has a mood, how is this created?
- Is it created through colour?
- Do the colours make you 'feel' any emotion, how? Why?
- Is the mood or emotion created through facial expression or body language?
- Can you imagine how the artist was feeling when they produced the work?

AN EXAMPLE

To give you some support, here is an image of a piece of photography work and an example of written analysis produced by an ex-student who studied A-level Fine Art.



This is a photograph taken from Blossfeldt's 1929 photography book 'Urformen der Kunst' (Original forms of Art). The photograph looks to be of a thorn-like plant from a very up-close perspective, a theme that is similar to the rest of Blossfeldt's pieces, and sticks to his recurring theme of interesting forms that exist in nature. This piece doesn't directly comment on any social or moral issues, but the general theme of Blossfeldt's work could make a comment on how beauty exists naturally and that it will be more impressive than anything man could ever make or synthesise. The shape of the piece forms the shape of a heart, this could be something Blossfeldt was looking for to express his love of nature, but it could also be a coincidental shape that occurred during the growth of the plant. Blossfeldt used his camera to make the photo quite dark and very contrasting, and these high contrasts emphasise the shapes within the plant. The photograph doesn't necessarily have much symbolism or meaning, apart from the amazing natural forms that exist in living things.

The composition of this piece is rather simple as Blossfeldt has centralised the subject and the plant takes up most of the photography, making it extremely dominant and very eye catching. The plant itself isn't completely symmetrical, however, some shapes give a symmetrical feel to the plant (such as the two outer arcs of the plant). The focal point is extremely clear as the plant is the only subject in the photograph and he has not used a golden mean or any false perspectives to make the plant more three-dimensional. I believe that the use of high contrasts in black and white give the photo some very deep layers and allows each section of the plant to differentiate with each other. I found the photograph to be very aesthetically pleasing to the eye as it is very interesting and looks unusual as it is not a shape that is regularly seen in nature.

This piece is a photograph that was taken by Blossfeldt in 1928/29 using a traditional film camera (as digital cameras had not yet been invented), so therefore this image must have been reproduced in a dark room before being copied into print in his book. This piece is just one of a very large collection of Blossfeldt's photographs of a similar nature that were published in his book. Blossfeldt will have used an extremely large macro lens in order to zoom into this tiny object, and it will have taken him a very long time to focus on such a small object. I assume that Blossfeldt did not go looking for this exact shape or even a shape similar to this but stumbled across it whilst looking into what he could photograph. Blossfeldt will have looked at more exotic plants as they usually have more exotic and interesting forms than everyday plants, such as grasses or garden flowers. He may have looked at cacti, exotic flowers, thorn bushes and even corals in order to find this shape. It is not referenced anywhere what exact plant this is from, but it looks like it may be from a thorn bush or cacti due to the spikes and thorns sticking out of it. It may have taken Blossfeldt weeks, or even months, to find this shape, the initial photography will have taken minutes as he will need to set up his camera and focus into the shape and then it could have taken up to an hour to produce the photo itself in the dark room.

The colour scheme in this photo is black and white and there is a high contrast. I believe this effect was a) the only option due to colour photography not yet being invented, and b) extremely effective in capturing the stark contrast and beauty of the shape itself. Had this been a colour photograph it would be more distinguishable as a plant, but your attention could be drawn away from the details and subtle intricacies of the plant form. The photograph has a dark and dramatic quality due to the thorns, which give it a dangerous and eerie feel, however, this is ironically contrasted with the heart-like shape of the plant.

THE TASK

I would like you to analyse the following image using the 4C model (as explained overleaf). Make notes initially, and then type up your analysis into a continuous piece of written prose. You should aim to write around 400 – 600 words, though you may find it exceeds this amount, which is fine.



by Russ Mills