**ESSAY GUIDE**

**INTRODUCTION**

Why have you chosen this artist?

What particular aspects of their work interests you?

What line of enquiry do you intend to follow in their work?

**KEY BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS AND INFLUENCES**

Summarise their career, with key dates (avoid talking about tea with granny etc unless it is directly relevant to their work!)

Consider the context in which they were working? At a time of war, peace, as a foreigner working in a different country: how did these things impact on their work

Discuss the influence other art had on the artist’s career? In what ways did their work differ from what had gone before?

What art movements were the artists associated with? What were the aims of the movement? How did their work develop throughout their life? What artists did they influence?

Quote the artist’s comments on their own work and the work of others.

Quote other artists’/writers’ comments about the artist’s work.

**DESCRIBE THE ARTWORK**

Describe the subject matter of the artwork – is it abstract, figurative , landscape or portraiture

What ideas and thoughts does it explore? For example, is it about politics, class, nature, gender, society, consumerism etc?

Is the subject matter of the artwork the artwork itself? For example, is it just about line, colour, composition, texture, mark making, shape etc.

**Describe the use of materials and the use of the formal elements. The formal elements are line, colour, tone, texture, shape, depth, rythym etc.**

How is the artwork drawn, sculpted or painted?

Describe the mark making. For example, what kind of brush or tool was used to make the marks, what size are the marks, were the marks carefully applied, slapped on, dripped, scratched, blended, dotted etc.

Describe the consistency of paint. For example, is it thick, thin, encrusted, scumbled, glazed, dry, oily etc.

To what extent has the subject matter been stylised? For example, has it been elongated, made angular or squat, fragmented, simplified etc

How much depth is there in the artwork? For example, does it seem flat, or create the illusion that some forms are further away than others?

Describe the use of colour. For example, is the colour exaggerated or does it closely resemble the colours of the actual subject?

Describe how colour is used to convey mood and atmosphere. For example, describe the use of complimentary colours, hot and cold colours etc.

Describe the tonal range of the artwork. For example, does it go from dark areas to light areas or is it all dark or all light or all middle tone?

Describe the texture. For example is it rough, smooth, cracked, lumpy etc.

Describe the composition. For example, are there dramatic angles, is it made up of horizontal or vertical shapes, is the subject being viewed from above, below, eye level

**ANALYSE THE IMPACT AN ARTWORK HAS ON YOU**  
We are interested in your opinions – positive or negative – about the artwork. This can be about the subject matter, or focus on the use of materials and the formal elements.  
  
For example:  
  
*I (love, like, dislike) or I am ( fascinated by, obsessed with, interested in) the artist’s use of ( formal element – line , colour, tone etc.) or exploration of ( subject matter – landscape, the figure, war, abstraction)  
  
For me, the key to this work is the (use of or interaction/relationship between) ( formal element- line, colour, tone etc.)***However, to achieve a high grade we expect you to reflect on WHY you like or dislike something.**  
You should describe or analyse how the artist's approach to subject matter or his/her use of formal elements impacts on you.  
  
Describe how the artist has used the formal elements to convey or express an emotion and create a specific mood or atmosphere.  
  
For example:  
  
*1. I think the artist [creates/evokes] [a sense/feeling or an atmosphere/experience] of [calm/energy/melancholy/foreboding/space/lightness/delicacy] [through the use of/by using/] [a variety of/bright/rhythmic] [line/colour/shape].  
  
The [bright/rhythmic/bold] use of [line/colour/shape] creates an overwhelming [atmosphere/sense/feeling/experience] of [calm etc.]  
  
2. I am [struck by/fascinated by/inspired by/drawn to/impressed with] the artist's use of [bright colours/line/shape], which [capture/evoke/create] the experience of [heat/loneliness/joy].  
  
I enjoy the way that the artist exploits the [tactile/textural] qualities of the [materials/media].  
  
3. The inclusion of the [cypress tree/ woman in black/ blue circle] [on the far left/linking earth and sky] creates an air of [mystery/menace/tranquillity].  
  
4. The artist's [bold/subtle] use of [line/colour/shape] encourages the viewer to [explore/focus on/reflect on] the [experience/impact/role] of [women/poverty] in [20th century wherever].  
  
5. The apparent order of the composition [is offset by/is undermined by/contrasts with] the [random/unexpected/free/spontaneous] use of [colour/paint/shape].  
  
I am interested in the way that the use of [felt/colour/silk] [softens/mitigates/balances] what would otherwise be a [harsh/cold/dull] piece.  
  
I love the way that the artist uses techniques usually associated with [popular culture/children's cartoons] to address serious issues of [whatever].  
  
6. The [bold/bright/muted] colours remind me of [whatever].  
  
I associate the [bold/bright/muted] colours with [a feeling of/a sense of] [whatever].  
  
This artwork is the visual equivalent of a (slap in the face with a dead fish, poem, music, the hustle and bustle of rush hour)  
  
7. A [stark beauty/sense of opulence] is created by the [subtle/precise] [interaction/interplay] of [simple geometric shapes].  
  
8. The artist celebrates [pop culture] by the use of [gaudy colours/simple outlines]  
  
9. I think the artist deliberately [distances/alienates/confuses/confounds] the viewer by [painting in a naive style/focusing on...].  
  
10. The technique of [layering/distressing materials] forced me to [consider/confront] the issue of [memory/time passing] by [allowing only some parts of the work to be visible].*

**COMPARE AND CONTRAST THE ARTWORK WITH OTHER ARTISTS' WORK OR WITH WORK FROM LATER IN THE ARTIST’S CAREER – DESCRIBE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES.**

**CONCLUSION AND CONNECTIONS WITH OWN WORK**

Sum up why this artist’s work appeals to you.

In what ways have you been able to use the ideas and information gained from producing this personal study in your own work?

What are the similarities and differences between your work and the work of the artist you have studied?

What is your next step? Will you continue to develop from specific points outlined in this study or has this work given you ideas about other areas in which to research?