

# A LEVEL ART AND DESIGN

## Lesson Element

### Colour Theory Lesson 2

#### – Advanced Colour Theory

**A simpler version of this lesson is covered in the basic version of these teacher notes.**

#### Task instructions

The objective of the lesson is to learn about and apply the more advanced uses of and meanings associated with colour. This is a key part in students improving the development (AO1) in their work. Furthermore it could be a springboard to AO2 experiment in the work of the student. The lesson provides the opportunity for students to engage in independent learning by using practical pairs work applying the research previously conducted and build on the basic knowledge acquired in the first colour theory lesson. Before the lesson students should have completed the work on basic theory and shown some evidence of the use of basic colour theory terms. They may need some guidance on where to find more advanced reading materials for the lesson depending upon the nature of/abilities within the group.

When students enter the classroom for the lesson they should be asked to form groups of four and assigned the role of 'Design Agency Research teams'. Their teacher has the role of the client. In their groups they must find examples of each use of colour specified from the list of prescribed colour theory examples and identify its use in an image from a collection of cards. Further to this and as an extra challenge, two of the team take the stance that the colour has been successfully used and the opposing two team members must argue that the colour has not been successfully used. These arguments can then be presented to the client. This should take about 20 minutes. They join together as one class once the time is up and ask the client leads a general Q+A about the reasons for picking certain images over other ones. This should lead to an overall summary of 'good practice with colour in design'. The class then moves back into pairs and write a joint notes page based on the information discussed in the first part of the lesson.



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## Teacher preparation for their role in activity

### A summary of key information and background to the topic

A short revision session on the key terms and phrases can be conducted at the beginning of the session so that the most important definitions are shared with the group. Definition cards could be used as a way of differentiating for less able students. Teachers will need a basic knowledge of the following key terms:

#### Basic terms

- Primary colour: Three Colours which cannot be mixed.
- Secondary colour: Formed when mixing two primaries together.
- Tertiary colour: Formed when mixing primary and secondary colours together.
- Additive colour: Creation of colour through light.
- Subtractive colour: Creation of colour through pigment.
- Complementary colour: two colours opposite each other on the colour wheel.

#### Advanced terms

- Analogous colour: Colours from the same section of the colour wheel.
- Passive colour: Colours that appear to be static.
- Active colour: Colours that appear to be active.
- Hue: The given name of the colour.
- Tone: Relative lightness or darkness of a colour.
- Saturation: The brightness of a colour.
- Temperature: The amount of warm or cool value in a colour.
- Visual Effects: Use of colour to emphasize something within an image.
- Symbolism: Creation of meaning using colour.
- Legibility: Clearness defined by colours.
- Connotation: Use of colours to change or define meaning in an image.

### Types of questions students might ask

#### Do designers always think about colours when they are making images?

Colour is not always considered by designers and is not always applied with the intention of creating symbolism. However, most designers have studied to a high level and understand the power of colour and how to use it successfully in an image.

#### Does it really matter that I know about colour when I am creating designs?

Yes, you need to develop your understanding of the materials and methods used by designers to demonstrate understanding. Colour is one way in which you can increase your awareness of how images develop and how recording is used in different ways.



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## **Why do we think certain things when we are looking at particular colours?**

History, tradition, culture and values all play a part in our understanding of colour as well as technology and physics. For example, red reaches our eye first on the colour spectrum because it has the shortest wavelength. This gives it particular significance in things like corporate advertising and branding.

## **What is the difference between additive and subtractive?**

Additive colour is the term given to the creation of colour through the projection of light (projectors, strip lights etc). Subtractive colour is the term given to the mixing of colours with pigment.

## **Why does the colour I mix in paint not look like the colour that is used on the computer screen?**

This is because the colour on the computer screen is made up of millions of pixels which are red blue and green. Our eye creates the colour through the mixing of these tiny dots. In other words the colour on the screen is not real but formed in our eye rather than in real blocks.

## **What is CMYK? Why is the colour on the computer screen different from what gets printed?**

This is Cyan, Magenta, Yellow and Key. These are the names of the colours used in printers and ink cartridges. These colours together, when mixed in different ratios can create any colour on the spectrum. 'Key' is the black used to underpin these colours. The computer screen is using light to mix the colours whereas the ink in the printer cartridge is approximating this so it will not look as bright.

## **How do I find out what is symbolized in colours?**

There are many good books which can be used for research on colour theory, however you can also discuss different meanings created by colours in your classes.

### **Key places to look for information**

Basic Colour Theory – [www.worqx.com/color](http://www.worqx.com/color)



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## Classroom activity – Brief

Teacher: In groups of four, write up colour theory notes in your designers diary using your findings from the advanced session on colour theory and terms. Then find an image that has an interesting use of colour and analyse it according to its use colour. Consider the following questions;

- What type of colour is it?  
Primary/Secondary/Tertiary/Complementary/Active/Passive/Harmonious etc...
- What sort of wavelengths do the colours have? What do you see first? How does this alter the design?
- What connotations/further symbolic meanings might the colour have? How might this affect your perception?
- Are the colours saturated/unsaturated, warm/cool, bright/dull? What effect does this have?
- How do the foreground colours contrast with the midground/background colours? Do they make anything appear bigger/smaller?
- Why may the designer have chosen that particular colour?
- Do you think the design is successful in its use of colour?
- Do you think the use of colour aids in the message?
- What ideas have you got from this piece of work about how to use colour? Can you form any links between this piece of work and any of your own?

The diagram on the following page can be used in class to illustrate colour theory.

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**Colour Connotations**

In pairs brainstorm as many different connotations as possible for your given colour

**Legibility**

TYPOGRAPHY

TYPOGRAPHY

**Visual Effects of Touching Colours**

**Temperature**

What colours appear to be hotter or cooler and why?

Bravo  
Bravo  
Bravo  
Bravo  
Bravo  
Bravo

**Hue, Tone and Saturation**

Saturation is roughly equivalent to brightness

tone

saturation

The Hue distinguishes one colour from another. It is the generic name of the colour

Tone is the relative lightness or darkness of a colour. A colour with added white is called a tint. A colour with added black is called a shade.

Analogous

Passive

