

In HKDSE VA paper 1 part A, art appreciation, you have 45 min to choose and answer one question, which is worth 10% of your overall grade. It is recommended to do 4 paragraphs, each with 5 keypoints featuring relevant keywords, following the D A I J structure. Some students do 5 paragraphs with the first as an intro.	To learn more about the DAIJ structure and the keywords under the CSSFLTV and MCUBEPP frameworks, go to page 1. To learn how to better prepare for Part A, see page 2(6). https://mrwonglessons.com/va/foundations/ https://mrwonglessons.com/va/appreciation/
In HKDSE VA paper 1 part B, you have 3 hr 15 min to visually express a given theme clearly, in a personal and creative way, which is worth 40% of your overall grade. It is recommended to use time-efficient techniques to establish mid tone on the canvas quickly, define perspective, foreground, main focus, background of the composition, and present the symbolic elements that signify the theme both literally and figuratively.	To learn more about time-management and level 5+ tips for part B, go to page 2. https://mrwonglessons.com/va/bg/background5 To see what materials or tools you can or cannot bring to the exam for part B, go to page 5.
When making HKDSE VA SBA artworks, you need to visually express your theme clearly, in a personal and creative way, which is worth 30% of your overall grade. It is important that you make good use of the unique qualities of your chosen medium to relate to the social, historical, or cultural context of your theme.	To see level 5+ tips for SBA artworks, go to page 3. For inspiration: https://artslideshow.netlify.app/ https://mrwonglessons.com/va/bg
When making the HKDSE VA SBA workbook, which is worth 20% of your overall grade, you need to commit to the 4 key assessment areas: Inspiration & research, Artist references, Experimentation, and Reflection & evaluation.	To see level 5+ tips for the 4 key assessment areas, go to page 3 and 4. https://mrwonglessons.com/sba/general-guide https://mrwonglessons.com/sba/page-directions

A digital version of this guide is available at <https://mrwonglessons.com/va/pdf/f5dseva.pdf>

The answering framework

D A I J

Description

The commonalities of plate (a) and plate (b) is that both are ____.

In plate (a), I can see ____.

In plate (b), there is / there are ____.

Both artworks present ____ in different ways.

A key visual feature in both works is ____.

Analysis

In plate (a), the artist uses ____ to show ____.

In plate (b), the artist uses ____ creating a ____ feeling.

The contrast between ____ and ____ strengthens ____.

This arrangement creates a sense of ____ through ____.

Interpretation

In plate (a), I think the artist wants to show ____.

In plate (b), I think the artist wants to show ____.

____ may symbolize ____ in the social/cultural context.

The ____ mood suggests ideas of ____ and ____, hinted by ____.

Judgement

I think plate (a) is a success because ____.

I think plate (b) is / is not successful because ____.

I like plate () more because ____.

Overall, the stronger work is plate () because ____.

The most convincing visual decision is ____.

Key concepts and vocab

The 7 Elements of Art

C S S F L T V

Color: hue, intensity, value; for symbolism, pattern and contrast.

Space: positive/negative space, ? point perspective, isometric/orthographic format, foreground/middle/background.

Shape: closed, flat forms; geometric or organic.

Form: 3D form, real or illusion through perspective/shading.

Line: continuous, broken, jagged, vertical, horizontal, diagonal.

Texture: real or implied surface quality (rough/smooth/etc.).

Value: light-dark range; contrast drives mood and focus.

Key concepts and vocab

The 7 Principles of Art / Design

M C U B E P P

Movement & Rhythm: eye path and repetition flow.

Contrast: differences in size, value, color, etc.

Unity & Variety: coherence plus controlled variation.

Balance: visual weight (symmetrical, asymmetrical, radial).

Emphasis: focal point and attention control.

Proportion: scale relationship between parts.

Pattern & Repetition: repeated units that build order.

to familiarise yourself with those keywords. Go to <https://mrwonglessons.com/va/foundations/> fill in blanks ex and <https://mrwonglessons.com/va/appreciation/> to do the past paper demo

Google 'HKEAA VA' to read **Samples of Candidates' Performance** and **Level Descriptors** https://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en/hkdse/hkdse_subj.html?A2&2&25

1) What is the "Image Bank / Visual Library" and why is it important?

- It's a binder or folder where you collect different types of images for reference during the exam.
- Includes:
 - Photos
 - Other people's artworks (to show the difference between photos and drawings)
- Categories to collect:
 - Animals
 - Plants
 - People
 - Different types of Chinese New Year couplets / decorations
 - Famous people (you never know what the exam will ask)
 - Common objects – e.g., feathers, everyday items from Central Asia
- Purpose:
 - If you forget how to draw something during the exam, you can flip to that section immediately.
 - Saves time and reduces panic.
 - Organize by category – each category = 2–4 images.
- Extra tip: Also collect compositions from other artists (how they arrange the picture, **foreground/midground/background**). This helps you plan your layout quickly.

5) How important is it to finish the drawing? 🍌🍌🍌🍌🍌

- Extremely important. Running out of time is the biggest disaster.
- The speaker has never failed to finish.
- Strict time discipline:
 - Set a timer for each stage (e.g., 10 min for sketching – stop exactly at 10 min).
 - If 10 minutes is up, move on anyway.
 - Example: 1 hour for main character, 30 min for background, 1 hour for highlights.
- You must master this time control before DSE.

 **TRY speed run techniques! YKYK**

2) How should I manage time during the HKDSE VA exam?

This YouTuber's personal method:

- Sketching / draft: 10–15 minutes (Not too detailed – just composition and basic layout)
- Coloring: All remaining time except last 1 hour
- Final detailing: Last 1–1.5 hours (add details like highlights or lineworks to a fully colored picture)
- Last 15 minutes:
 - Write the artist's statement / reflection
 - Sign your name
 - Add any sketches or drafts (even if done after the artwork)

⚠️ Don't skip the written reflection – markers read it. Explain your materials, story, what you drew. They might not understand your drawing otherwise.

3) How did this YouTuber practice before the exam?

- Past papers (HKDSE VA papers): Did 6–7 years' worth, but at school (teacher did them in class regularly).
- At home:
 - Did not do full 4-hour past papers often.
 - Instead, practiced specific skills repeatedly – e.g., drawing the same reference image many times to master:
 - Color application
 - Brushstrokes
 - Details
- Goal: Become extremely familiar with drawing certain subjects so you don't waste time thinking during the exam.

On Site Exam Paper 1(50%):
Part A 10% (Art Appreciation) 45min
Part B 40% (practical art) 3hr15min

4) What techniques help you get Level 5 or above?

- Repetition of the same subject:
 - Example: If you draw an "old lady" the same way every time, you get faster and better.
 - Apply the same approach to animals, children, gangsters, etc.
- Develop a consistent style:
 - Markers seem to like exaggerated, dramatic styles (exaggerated stories, exaggerated character expressions).
- Creative storytelling:
 - Most candidates think of the same story for a given prompt.
 - To stand out, think of something unique and creative.
 - Example: "Water pipe bursts during class" → ask yourself:
 - What class?
 - Why did it burst?
 - Who caused it?
 - Write this story in your reflection and show it clearly in your drawing (who, when, where).
- A bad story is worse than a simple, safe story.

6) Is doing past papers useful for the theory / appreciation section?

- Yes, past papers are useful.
- But if the exam is very close and you haven't done many, cramming won't help much.
- Better to:
 - Look at high-scoring student answers. (HKEAA site Level 5 examples)
 - Focus on technique.
- Writing speed is critical: There is no time to stop and think. You write non-stop from the moment you see the question.

*This YouTuber scored ~15–16 out of ~20 in the English appreciation paper (normally got 18–20 at school). Still considered okay.

Four pieces of Artwork / Critical Studies for your theme(s) (30%), with at least one piece as artwork. Work spans S5 and S6.

30% from your 4 pieces of artwork :				20% from your workbook :			
Media, skills and techniques	Demonstrates excellence in manipulating media, skills and techniques / writing skills	Creativity and imagination / critical thinking skills	Demonstrates imagination, creative and complete ideas / Expresses informed personal view(s) with evidence support or insight	Exploration and development of theme or ideas	- Uses materials from diverse sources - Selects, transforms and integrates the materials in development of theme or ideas - Substantially investigates and inputs materials to produce original ideas	Interpretation of artworks and its articulation with artmaking / critical studies	- Recognises multiple contexts and formal qualities of the artwork - Expresses informed personal view(s) with support of evidence and/or insight - Articulates or translates contextual and formal knowledge to artwork / critical studies
Visual presentation / analysis	Demonstrates an exceptional use / analysis of visual elements and principles of organisation relevant to the theme	Overall presentation and communication of theme	Communicates the theme or message in an innovative way with a coherent and complete presentation	Experimentation of media and skills, and exploration of ways of expression	- Demonstrates abundant and thorough experiments of media and skills - Demonstrates abundant and thorough exploration of ways of expression	Reflection and progression in learning	- Continuously and thoroughly reflects on the portfolio from diverse perspectives - Shows substantial progression in learning
Relationship with context	Indicates deep knowledge of personal, aesthetic or cultural context(s) in relation to the theme	Progression of all 4 pieces of work	Shows substantial progression				

What NOT to do in your workbook		The 4 key assessment areas		Final tips
✗ Bad practice	✓ Good practice	Inspiration	Where ideas came from, personal experiences, how inspiration led to your concept	
Paste large images just to fill space(unless you write over it)	Paste small, meaningful images to the side	Artist references	Artist's style (brief), skills you learned, how you applied them (detailed) + small copy	
Draw random decorative things	Every drawing should serve a purpose / show learning	Experimentation	Different media, techniques, compositions – compare results, choose one	
Copy long passages from books (boring)	Write your own thoughts and applications	Reflection	Problems discovered, changes made, before/after photos, what you learned	
Ignore one of the 4 checkpoint areas	Develop all 4 areas equally			- Quality over quantity: Better to make excellent pages than many average pages. - Every page should have a purpose – no "filler" just to look pretty. - Take progress photos – you'll need them for the reflection section. - There are no limits – if you can think of it, you can try it in your SBA. - Describe your ideas in effective or poetic terms. - Have reflections and analysis.

What are the 4 key assessment areas?

#1	Inspiration & research	How you generate ideas, do research, collect references
#2	Artist references	Artists or artworks you studied and learned from
#3	Experimentation	Trying different colors, media, compositions
#4	Reflection & evaluation	Challenges faced, changes made, what you learned

Teachers check whether your SBA portfolio covers all four areas – that's how they give marks.

What should each page include? (Writing + Drawing + Pasted items)

General principle: Each page should have a mix of writing, drawing, and pasted items.

Bad example (low score):

- Pasting a large image that takes up 1/3 of the page – teacher said this was just "taking up space" with no meaning (*it's ok if you write over it*).
- Drawing random "decorative" things just to make the page look pretty. 😞😞😞

Good example (high score):

- Small, relevant pasted images placed neatly to the side.
- Write your thoughts, feelings, and how it inspired your work.
- One page may have no drawing at all – just writing and pasting items is fine.

The 4 assessment areas – In Detail**#1: Inspiration & Research**

- Write how your initial inspiration guided your direction.
- Show the connection between your inspiration and your final idea.
- Example: If your theme is "elderly people"...
 - Why did you choose a clock as a symbol?
 - What did you see in a documentary / article?
 - Cut and paste relevant images, then write your thoughts.

Use personal experience:

- Write about your own life examples that relate to the theme.
- How did that experience inspire your artwork?

If you watch a video / talk:

- Write down key quotes.
- Explain how it inspired your imagery, expression, or materials.

#2: Artist References (Artists & Artworks)

- Introduce the artist – their style, techniques.
- But don't spend too long copying facts (that's not your own work).
- Main focus (write more here):
 - What skills and techniques did you learn from this artist?
 - How did you apply what you learned to your own work?

Include a copy / study:

- Do a small copy of one of their works.
- Or recreate a detail / section of their work.

Examples of artists: This YouTuber chose 3 artists who work with pen drawing (same medium as their own final piece).

#3: Experimentation

Type	Example
Different media	Pen on white paper vs. white pen on black paper
Different techniques	3 ways to draw tree bark
Different compositions	Vertical split vs. horizontal split vs. diagonal / rotating layout

How to present experiments:

- Show side-by-side comparisons.
- Write your observations after testing.
- Compare pros and cons of each method.
- Explain which one you chose and why.

Example from this YouTuber:

- Drew a tree using 3 different strokes / shading methods.
- Compared the results.
- Selected one for the final piece.

Bonus tip: You can even experiment with composition layouts – not just drawing techniques.

#4: Reflection & Evaluation

- Take photos of your work-in-progress – especially parts you are unhappy with.
- Don't erase or paint over immediately – take a photo first for your SBA.
- Show before vs. after comparisons.
- Write:
 - What problem did you discover?
 - How did you improve it?
 - What changes did you make?

Also include:

- Challenges and difficulties you faced.
- What you learned from solving them.
- Short reflections – not a long story, just key learning points.

Example from this YouTuber:

- Experimented with using dots / stippling to create a "flying" effect.
- Wrote a short reflection on that experiment.

- ◆ For Part A, candidates must write their answers in the answer book which will be collected 45 minutes after the start of the examination. **(about 10 mins for each paragraph)**
- ◆ For Part B, candidates must draw on the appropriate side of the white cartridge paper or Xuanzhi provided by the HKEAA. Candidates who draw on unauthorised stationery other than the cartridge paper or Xuanzhi provided by the HKEAA will result in their scripts not being accepted. Normally zero marks will be given to the part/paper concerned.
- ◆ Candidates must not write their names or identification document numbers on the cartridge paper or bond paper.
- ◆ For Paper 1, candidates must not cover the cartridge paper using any paper or materials which are approximately A2-size. Answers on these papers or materials will not be marked. (NOT applicable to Paper 2) 😊 LOL
- ◆ Candidates must not cut the cartridge paper in any way. Candidates who are found to have not used the cartridge paper provided or to have cut the paper will receive a mark penalty.
- ◆ Candidates who are found to have used the 'Materials NOT Allowed' as described below will receive a mark penalty. Candidates who bring dangerous materials and smoking devices will be disqualified from the examination.

- ◆ Materials NOT Allowed: English and Chinese dictionaries (including excerpts from dictionaries), slow drying materials (e.g. oil paint), retarder, dangerous materials (e.g. aerosol paints, air-brushes, aerosol fixatives, etc.) and burning and smoking devices.
- ◆ Materials Allowed 👍: Paper 1 Painting materials and instruments (e.g. pencils, paint brushes, colours, palettes, drawing boards, clips, pins, erasers, adhesive tapes, paper, etc.), **small quantity of materials for collage, and reference materials** (e.g. books, magazines, art dictionaries, etc.). Paper 2 Design materials, drawing instruments and aids (e.g. pencils, paint brushes, colours, palettes, rulers, drawing boards, clips, pins, compasses, eraser, colour paper/adhesive paper, ready-made transfer letters, stencil devices, etc.), materials for cutting, sticking and collage materials, reference materials (e.g. books, type specimen books, magazines, scrap books, art dictionaries, etc.).
- ◆ Candidates are reminded that reference materials should be used for reference only.
- ◆ During the examination, invigilation staff may examine the materials which candidates have brought into the examination centre. ◆ Cutting boards are not provided at the examination centres.