



Children get it!

You'll need to use your imagination to understand the work that artists do, and this sheet is here to help you get that imagination up and running.

Contemporary art is weird

Sometimes, artworks can seem really strange. That's because they are!

Often an artist is trying to make a familiar thing seem odd. Or, they are showing us something we are just not used to seeing at all.

They do this because it is important to see the world from different points of view.

Here are some ways of making things different. **Do the artworks in the exhibition you're looking at do any of the following?**

(You could circle some of these or add your own)

show you a secret

let you hear or see something that is usually silent or invisible

change the colour of something

make a small thing big

show two things you wouldn't usually think about together

hide something

change the material something is made from

look at something from high up or low down

make a big thing small



How does the way an artist has changed something make you look at it differently?

Feelings matter

Artworks can surround you, affect your mood and change the way you move. They often use your senses.

Does an artwork or exhibition make you feel any of these things?

like you want to dance

tiny

curious

like an explorer

a bit scared

confused

like a stranger

happy

part of the artwork

confident

What else?



Why do you think the artist wants you to feel that way?

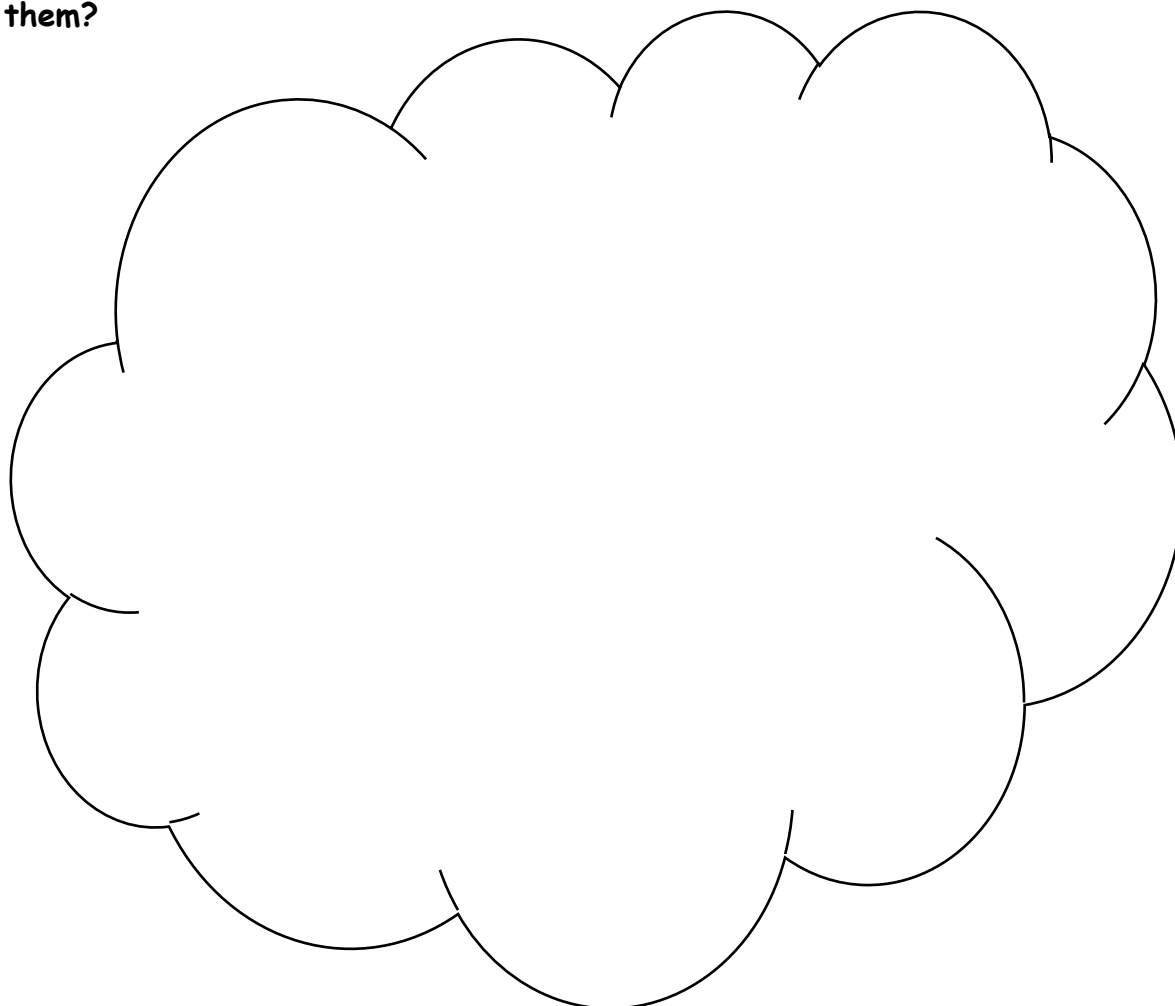
We often get used to certain things making us feel a certain way. So, changing how we feel about something can be an important way for an artist to help us understand it differently.

Examples:

If we are made to feel like a stranger, maybe it could help us to understand what someone might feel when they come to a new place for the first time.

If we are made to feel confident, it might be the artist's way of making us stronger in the face of something that usually scares us.

Write or draw your feelings in the MOOD CLOUD. Why you think you have them?





What does it remind you of?

One way to start working out what an artwork is about is to think about things that it reminds you of. Does it look like:

part of a machine

a costume

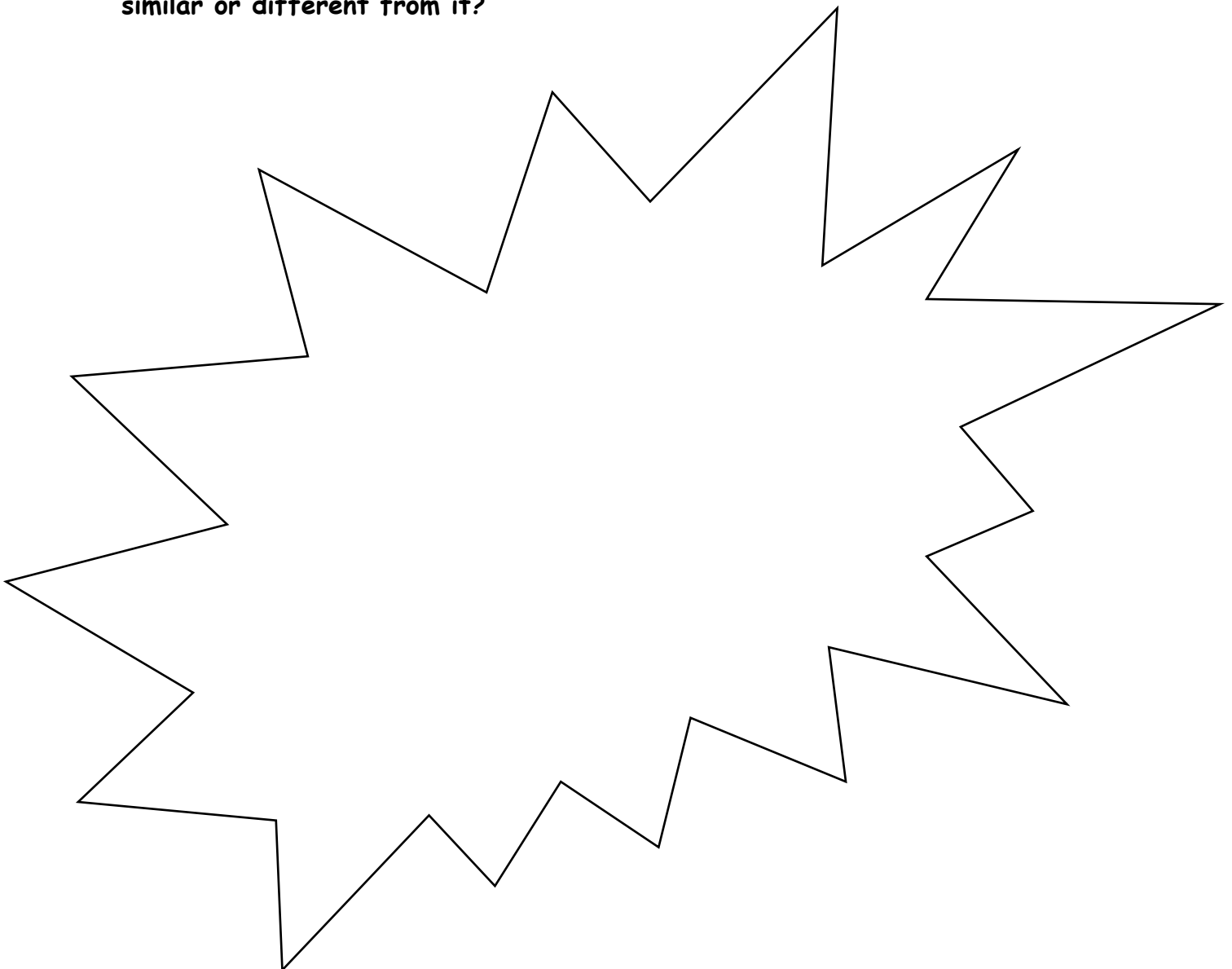
a garden space

something from millions of years ago

something you saw on the news

something in nature

Use the IDEAS EXPLOSION to write or draw your own connections. What does the thing this artwork reminds you of usually do? How is the artwork similar or different from it?





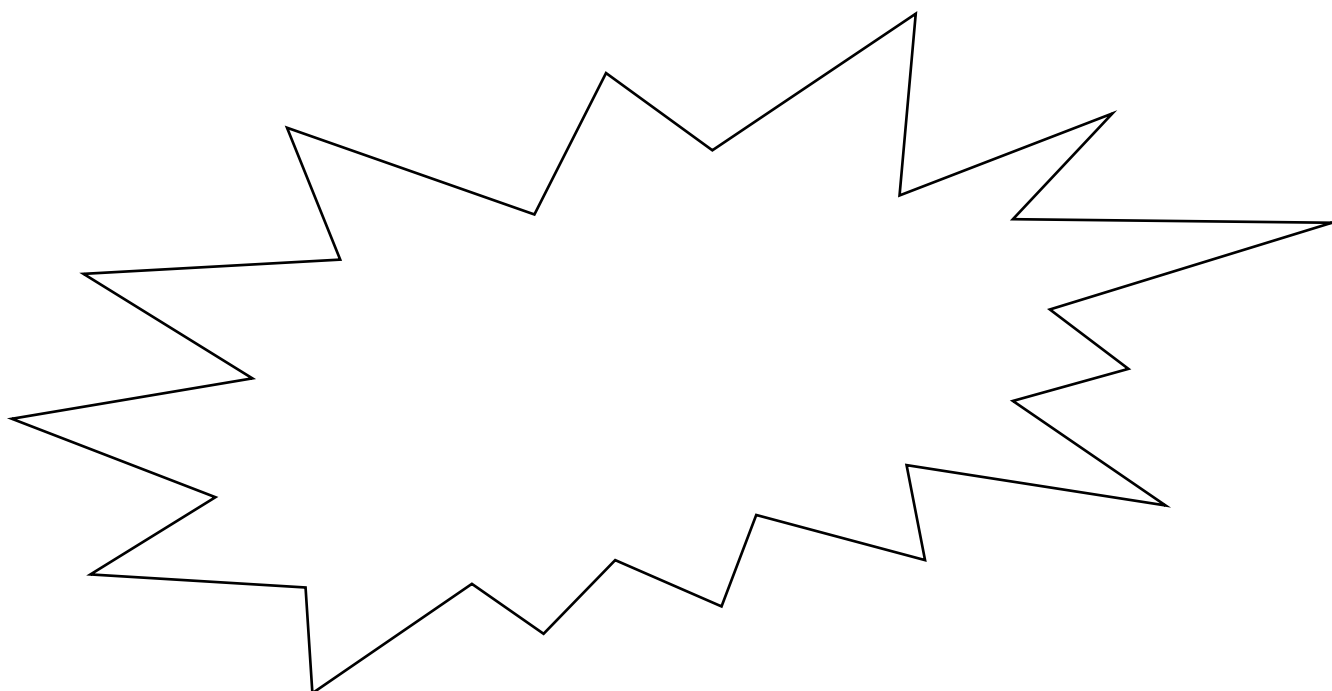
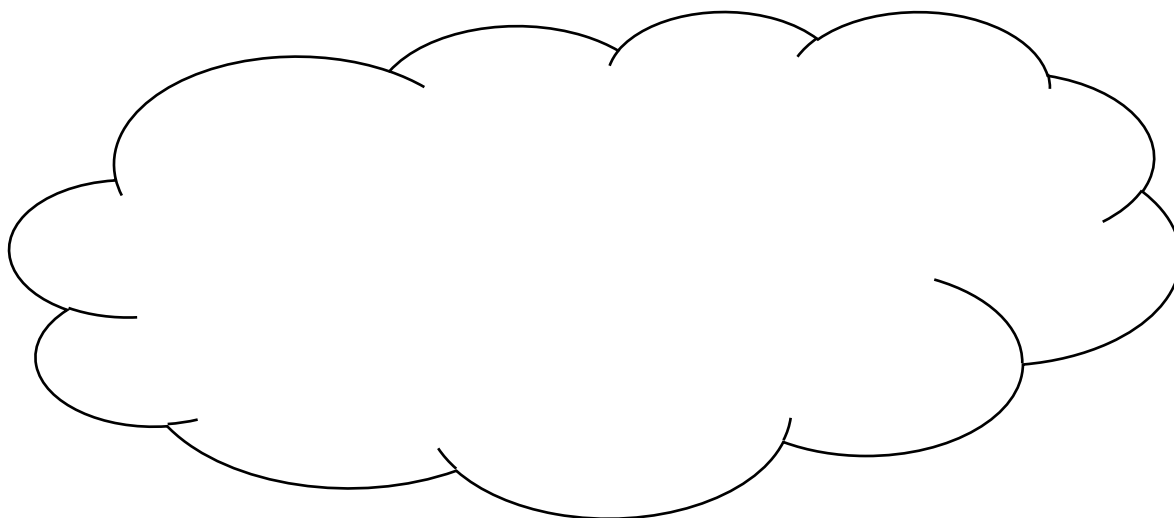
Forms matter

You can also think about its form (which means the shape of it, the things it is made of, its materials, colour and surface).

Is it smooth or sharp? Is it solid or wobbly? Is it bright or dull? It is noisy or quiet? Does it fill the room or is it shown in a precious cabinet?

Then, if it is strong, do you think it protects things? Or, if it is hard to find your way around, does it hide things? Why might it do these things?

Use the MOOD CLOUD to write or draw some of the things you feel about the form, then use IDEAS EXPLOSION to think about how this could tell you what the artwork might be doing.





Other clues...

At this point, look around for any extra information. Can you find a title for the artwork or is there information on the wall that might help you?

Also, think about the clues in the artwork. Is it telling you something? Does it include information about a particular topic? **Use this NOTE PAD to write down any clues you find:**

So, what is it about?

You are already a good way along in figuring out what you think an artwork is about. Because, you now know how it makes you feel, what it reminds you of, what it might do and might have also found a few extra clues.

So, try writing out a sentence like this:

This artwork makes me feel _____ about _____ because it _____.

You might get something like:

This artwork makes me feel curious about plants because they are shown under ultra-violet light, like bees see them.



This artwork makes me feel safe about distant places because it is full of gentle shapes and friendly music.

Write your sentence or sentences in the STATEMENT BOX:

Why is it important?

The last question is about thinking about what the artist might want this artwork to achieve.

Can you think of reasons why they might want you to think in a particular way about a particular thing?

Sometimes, when you are looking at good artworks there isn't a simple answer to this question. You might just feel that it has left you with a lot to think about.



It can also be useful to remind yourself of important things happening in the world, and whether this artwork might be saying something about them. Here are some examples that you might want to discuss more with someone.

climate
change

Black Lives
Matter

something in the
news

democracy

equality

We hope you have enjoyed exploring our gallery, and remember - next time you come back it will be filled with completely different artworks. See you then!