

# GCSE Art & Design: Resource Sheet 1

**A01 - Contextual understanding:** *Develop ideas through investigations, demonstrating critical understanding of sources.*  
Helpful definition: **Critical understanding** can mean understanding that is the result of making careful judgements.

## ***What's the purpose of this AO?***

In the same way that you develop writing abilities by studying novels, poems and other kinds of written material, the purpose of this AO requires that you study different visual sources to promote your art & design abilities.

This should help to:

- increase your knowledge and understanding of works of art & design produced in different times and places
- raise awareness of the methods and approaches used by artists and designers
- reflect on their intentions (why they produced their work) and purposes (what it was made for)
- enable close analysis of selected works of art and design.

This can:

- provide starting points for generating creative ideas and inform further development
- start a search for connections between contextual sources and your own work
- allow comparisons and contrasts to be made
- prompt research and development of more refined approaches.

## ***What sources should be explored?***

These can be artefacts, images and other visual and written references. There are lots of examples that you can access on the internet and through TV programmes, but the best sources are found in museums, galleries, craft and design workshops and even specialist shops. Whenever possible, try to explore sources at first hand because this will make it easier to make authentic personal observations in developing your critical skills.

## ***What are critical skills?***

These are sometimes mistakenly thought to be about making negative observations. Critical skills are used to ask the right questions and probe deeply to find answers. It also means considering different kinds of information, such as those that are biographical, descriptive and evaluative, in order to reach well informed judgements. These skills are also developed in other subjects, such as in your language lessons and by asking and responding to higher order questions.

**Tip:** Practise your critical skills by reviewing the work of a past student, trying to arrive at fair and balanced judgements, giving reasons for your decisions. Apply to your own work what you learn from doing this.

## ***Achieving your best in this AO***

This is best shown by:

- thoughtfully using images and words together to demonstrate that you have understood, in some depth, relevant works of art and design
- investigating **why** and **how** they were produced
- analysing selected examples, using methods such as *Content, Form, Process and Mood*
- making evident why you chose to study selected examples and how they inform your own approach.