

Exploration: Temple of Flora

In this activity sheet students will:

- use the Zoom & Pan interactive device to look closely at Robert Thornton's world famous botanical illustrations
- explore the author's artistic motivation behind *Temple of Flora*
- observe and describe features of the artwork
- develop a practical understanding of foreground/background, colour labelling and identification as well as artistic collaboration.

Answers to question time

1. To show how and where plants and flowers live.
2. Some background images include: volcano, birds, trees, mountains, buildings and ships.
3. To make the flowers the main attraction of the picture, and to emphasise background and foreground perspective. This approach also allowed Thornton to include more aspects of the flowers' habitats.
4. Leaf green, Desert white, Sea blue, Egg-yolk yellow, Rose red, Shell orange.
5. Open answer.
6. Open answer.
7. (a) Temple: a building reserved for a highly-valued function (Australian Heritage Dictionary).
(b) Flora: the plants of a particular region or period, listed by species and considered as a whole (Dictionary.com).
8. Because Thornton thought the book was itself a record of how highly he valued these drawings of flora.
9. Roses have thorns: Thornton.

Additional Activities

Field activity

Explain to students that the pictures in *The Temple of Flora* took a very long time to finish and sometimes more than one artist worked on the picture. For example, one artist would be an expert in painting landscapes and backgrounds and the other artist an expert in painting the flowers.

- Ask students to get into pairs and choose an object that they both want to draw. They must decide who will paint the background and who will paint the object in the foreground. They can swap roles later.
- Discuss with them the different ways they can create this picture. Here are some possible combinations:

Object Artist	Background Artist
Paint	Collage
Textas or crayons	Watercolour paints
Coloured pencils	Grey-lead pencil
Collage	Black outlines only

- Remind students to draw the things in the background a lot smaller and to use darker colours. Refer back to Thornton's flowers where the object is clearly the main attraction of the picture.

Sources consulted

Coleman, Julie, 2000, *Temple of Flora: Book of the Month*, Special Collections, University of Glasgow.
<http://special.lib.gla.ac.uk/exhibns/month/apr2000.html>

Grigson, Geoffrey, 1951, *The Temple of Flora, with Plates Faithfully Reproduced from the Original Engravings and the Work Described*, Collins, London.

Thornton, Robert, Introduction by Ronald King, 1981, *The Temple of Flora*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London.

