

# **B B C BITESIZE**

In art and design, tone refers to how light or dark something is. Tones range from pure white to total black and everything in between. Each colour can have an almost infinite range of tones.

When light falls on a three dimensional object, tones are created. The face - or sides - that light hits directly will be the brightest. The bright areas are called highlights.

The object blocks light, so the face away from the light source will be in darkness. The dark area is called shadow.

Other parts of the object will be coloured in a range of tones between these two extremes.

Tone is often used to create the illusion of form, making a set of shapes in an artwork appear as a three-dimensional form - just like in *House By The Railroad*, by Edward Hopper. Bright white highlights walls and columns that appear to face into the sun. Dark tones show shadow from out of the sunlight, like under the porch and most of all in the almost black rooms through the windows.

Tone can also show distance and create a sense of depth in artwork. The foreground in *The Angelus*, Jean-Francois Millet, features the darkest tones with the two figures almost silhouetted against the sky. Progressively lighter tones create objects in the distance and immediately give a sense of depth.

Millet's use of tone also creates the atmosphere of the painting. Lots of subtle tonal variation creates a natural calm feel.

In *Saint Jerome Writing*, Caravaggio used a limited number of tones to create a dramatic mood. This contrast between very dark and very light tones is called *chiaroscuro*, from the Italian words for light and dark. The heavy dark background makes the skull and bald head stand out in striking contrast.

Tones don't have to be used in a natural, realistic way. Black and white tones, or monotone, can create a stylised image. Francis Wolff's monotone photograph of John Coltrane creates a serious or even sombre mood.

To create the cover for Coltrane's *Blue Train* album, the photo was changed to a duotone or two-colour image. The blue and green are harmonious and suggest a calm and thoughtful atmosphere.

How tone is used can create a stylised or realistic piece of art. Light and dark tones can create the illusion of form.

Progressive tones can create depth. And it's the range and contrast of tones used that will give a composition its atmosphere.