



Street Art





Partner A

What is Graffiti?

Graffiti (singular: "a graffito") are writings or drawings that have been scribbled or painted (often illicitly) on a wall, a train or any other surface which can be seen by many people. Strictly speaking the term "graffiti" refers to written words only. They can range from very simple words, abbreviations or symbols (used by

5 gangs to mark their territory or to refer to their activities) to very elaborate representations of the artist's name or (social or political) messages, which incorporate stylized letters and a large range of colours and are called "a piece". Many (particularly skillful and experienced) "writers" focus on "wildstyle", which is a form of graffiti with interlocking letters which merge into each other and are

10 often difficult to decipher by non-graffiti artists. These graffiti may also include "characters" (i. e. representations of human beings, often caricatures, or animals) and acquire admiration as highly sophisticated pieces of art.

A "tag", on the other hand, is the most common and most basic style of graffiti often carried out with a marker pen instead of spray paint. It is the artist's

15 (stylized) signature and identifies him for other graffiti crews (and for the police...). Sometimes another graffiti artist "goes over" a piece with a "throw-up" or "bombing" (i. e. he covers it very quickly with just two or three colours); this often happens when there is rivalry between individual writers or crews. Occasionally only parts of a piece which are considered to be of minor quality, are gone over

20 in an attempt to improve it. If this is done by a "toy" (= an incompetent and inexperienced writer) it is an offence of the code of honour.

In most cases spray paint in aerosol cans is used for graffiti. In the early 1980s stencil graffiti became popular. Shapes, letters and designs are cut out in a stiff material such as cardboard and then put on a wall. This method is popular

25 amongst graffiti artists because it requires very little time which is important for artists who write illegally.

Graffiti writing became associated with the punk rock movement and hip hop culture in the 1980s. Many punk night clubs even became famous for their graffiti as famous bands stencilled their names and logos on the walls. However,

30 graffiti can also express social and political messages. Brazilian graffiti artists for instance criticize social inequality, and the Berlin Wall was known for hundreds of political graffiti.





Partner A

Worksheet: What is Graffiti?

1. Read the text and try to become an **expert on graffiti**. Your partner will ask you the questions below and you should be able to answer them. Write down important key words from the text and add information which is not in the text if you are already an expert on graffiti.

a) What is a "graffito"?

b) Which different forms of graffiti can be found?

c) What is a "tag", a "piece", a "character"?

d) Why are graffiti sometimes "gone over"?

e) Why do people write graffiti?

2. You want to know the following things. Ask your partner and write down the most important bits of information. Don't hesitate to ask your partner if the information is not absolutely clear.

a) What is "street art"?

b) Street art and graffiti – is this the same thing?

c) Where and when did street art originate?

d) What is often the purpose behind street art?

e) Who is Banksy? What is important about him?



Roleplay: Graffiti = Street Art?

Try to identify with the person described on your role card and think about the following questions:

- a) What do you think about graffiti in general?
- b) What do you think of this graffiti or work of street art?



Your group must decide on what should be done with this “work of art” and the “artist”. Try to find convincing arguments for your standpoint.

You are a **social education worker/street worker**. You are in charge of young people (aged 12–16 years) in the outskirts of a middle-sized town.

You work for the **administration of a middle-sized town**. You are responsible for public buildings.

You are an **art teacher** at a local sixth-form college. You regularly take your pupils to art galleries because you want them to know modern art.

You are a 17-year-old **pupil**.

You are an old-age **pensioner** and 69 years old. Whenever you do your shopping you walk past an old factory building with lots of graffiti on the wall.