

LESSON H

Pre-lesson Student worksheet



BBC

CULTURE

Graffiti: street art or vandalism?

Bristol: UK capital of street art

If you want to see art, it's normal to go to an art exhibition in a gallery. There you'll find paintings, landscapes and sketches. But wouldn't it be more fun to see these works in the street? Well, there's a city in the UK whose biggest tourist attraction is street art: Bristol!

There are historical reasons for this fame. The city was badly bombed in World War II, leaving large areas that were empty and required new buildings. Many of these new constructions were put up in a hurry and the buildings quickly became abandoned. The concrete walls were perfect canvases for street art. Today you can find art everywhere – on bridges, in alleys and on the main streets in the city centre. The whole place seems like a giant outdoor gallery!

If you're able to stay for a while, book onto one of Bristol's popular street art walking tours. Experts will tell you about the artists who have decorated the city's streets. The most famous of them is Banksy, with his stencilled graffiti designs. He is celebrated all over the world for his funny and, at times, controversial murals but nobody knows his real identity. Most of his early work was removed by the local council but there is one famous work that survives. It shows a man hanging from a painted window on the side of a large wall.

Of course, some people call Banksy's creations street art and others call it graffiti. What's the difference? Well, the debate is open. Some people say that graffiti is destructive and political, while street art is constructive and creative. But others say that the only difference is that graffiti includes letters – people's 'tags' or special signatures. Whatever you think, a lot of these works are now worth large sums of money at auctions. Is that a good thing or are people just paying for acts of vandalism?



GLOSSARY

abandoned (adj) if a building is abandoned, no one lives in it

canvas (n) a surface on which an artist paints

stencilled (adj) painted using a piece of metal, plastic, etc. into which shapes have been cut

controversial (adj) causing disagreement or discussion

mural (n) wall painting

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EXPLORE

1 In pairs, discuss the questions.

- 1 What can you see in the photo? What do you think is the message?
- 2 Is it graffiti or street art? Why? What do you think is the difference?
- 3 Do you think street art can be worth money? Why? / Why not?
- 4 Is there a lot of graffiti/street art where you live? Is it often removed?

2 Read the article and choose the correct option.

- 1 The writer believes that it's *normal* / *unusual* to see art in the street.
- 2 Street art became popular in Bristol because there were many *abandoned buildings* / *street artists* there.
- 3 *Not many* / *A lot of* people know about the city's art tours.
- 4 Banksy's art *is* / *isn't* well-known.
- 5 There is *not much* / *a lot of* Banksy's art on the streets of Bristol today.
- 6 People *agree* / *disagree* about the difference between graffiti and street art.

EXPLORE MORE

3 In pairs, discuss the questions.

- 1 Is there any interesting graffiti or street art where you live?
- 2 What would you prefer to look at – street art or graffiti? Why?