

1. Graffiti

Fifteen years ago, on August 12th, 1988, celebrity graffiti artist Jean-Michel Basquiat died from a heroin overdose. Despite the emergence recently of hip-hop graffiti artists leaving their tags (signatures) all over New York, graffiti itself has been around for a long time.

Level

Upper Intermediate and above

How to use the lesson

Optional lead in: If you have any examples of graffiti, either written or drawn, take them into class and ask your students where they think the pictures/writing came from and who they think was responsible for it. Discuss the positive or negative impact your students think graffiti has on their immediate environment.

An alternative would be to pre-teach (or focus on after reading) the wealth of vocabulary and collocations there are in Worksheet A. Some to focus on are: *vandals, conjures up, decked out in, clutching, evolved into, scribbling, hieroglyphics, runes, mystical, stretching from, catacombs, taboo, anonymous, pseudonym, marked growth, excavation, slogan, detachment, elusive, thrive in, public conveniences.*

1. Give each of your students a copy of Worksheet A and tell them that the page has been vandalized and you need their help to repair the text.
2. Divide the class into pairs and ask your students to work together to 'repair' the word which has been damaged in each line. (There are 16 damaged lines in total).
3. Check answers in open class.

Answers to Worksheet A

The damaged words are: *kids, recently, word, read, buildings, alphabet, more, non-official, first, document, sight, found, people, throughout, which, been*

4. Tell your students you have taken some examples of popular written graffiti from the walls of some public conveniences (public toilets) and written them down. However, they are chopped in half and they have to put them back together again. Make it clear that the two halves will always be connected in some way (*indecisive-not sure, reincarnation-comeback, accident-on purpose, etc.*) and they should always look for the element that links them. You might also want to mention that 13 and 14 are two common proverbs which have been adapted by the graffiti artist.

5. Check answers in open class.

Answers to Worksheet B

1 c, 2 d, 3 a, 4 f, 5 b, 6 g, 7 h, 8 k, 9 m, 10 e, 11 i, 12 n, 13 l, 14 j

2. Related Websites

Send your students to these websites, or just take a look yourself.

<http://server2040.virtualave.net/facinating/files/graffiti.html>

Lots of graffiti here

<http://www.quinion.com/words/qa/qa-kill.htm>

Who was Kilroy? Find out here

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/A508277>

Gives us a longer version of the above

<http://www.artchive.com/artchive/B/basquiat.html>

Who was Basquiat and what did he do?

<http://www.at149st.com/>

Yo! Check out da NYC crews, man.