
Graffiti

WORKSHEET A

Is graffiti art, or is it just vandalism? Most people would probably say that the answer depends on various factors – but would perhaps disagree about which are the most important.

How important, for example, is permission? Is graffiti always a bad thing if no one has given permission for it to appear? Is it worse to put graffiti on private property than on public property, such as a wall belonging to the local council? If a building is going to be demolished, does that make it alright to cover it in graffiti? Can graffiti be justified by the skill needed to create it? For example, if a graffiti artist paints an elaborate multicoloured image on the wall of a building, is it more justifiable than when someone just scrawls their signature or ‘tag’? Can passionate beliefs be a justification? For example, when someone with strong political opinions paints a political message on a wall, is it more justifiable than painting something that has no message at all?

There can be no disagreement, however, about the fact that graffiti has been around for a very long time. For example, in the remains of the Roman city of Pompeii (near the modern-day city of Naples in Italy), which was buried when a nearby volcano erupted in AD79, there are many examples of first-century graffiti, some of it of the rather simple variety that some twenty-first century children or teenagers might create (‘Lucius painted this’, ‘Rufus loves Cornelia’, ‘Epaphra, you are bald!’).

Local authorities around the world have tried to deal with graffiti in many different ways. Sometimes they create authorised graffiti areas, with walls on which people are allowed to write or paint whatever they want, in the hope that the amount of graffiti elsewhere will decrease. Sometimes they crack down on it – in 1995 in New York City, for example, it was made illegal to sell aerosol spray paint to anyone under the age of eighteen.

The city council in Bristol in western England had an original idea when, in 2009, it decided to let local people vote on the subject of graffiti. They agreed that most graffiti tags were ugly and should be removed, but if local people decided that some other examples of graffiti were ‘public art’, they would be left in place as long as the owner of the building in question agreed.

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WORKSHEET B

Exercise 1

Here are some simple definitions for words that appear in the text on Worksheet A. Find the words they refer to and fill in the gaps.

1. If the authorities **_____ k d _____ o _** (phrasal verb) something, they become less tolerant and start being more strict about it.
2. **d _____ h** (verb): destroy (often used in the case of buildings)
3. **_____ nd _____ sm** (noun) the act of deliberately damaging or destroying things (often public property) that don't belong to you
4. **_____ no** (noun): a mountain that can sometimes force hot gas, rocks, ash, and lava into the air through a hole at the top
5. **j _ s _____** (verb): to show that there is a good reason for something (especially something that other people think is wrong)
6. **s _____ w _** (verb): to write something carelessly or in a hurry
7. The person or thing **i _ q _____** (phrase) is the one that you are talking about at the present time.
8. An **_ e _____ l** (adjective) can contains liquid (such as deodorant or paint) that is kept under high pressure so that it can be forced out in very small drops.
9. **_____ ll** (noun): the ability to do something well
10. **_____ b _____ ate** (adjective): very detailed and complicated
11. **c _____ i _** (noun): the elected officials who govern a local area, such as a city
12. **a _ _ h _____ e** (verb): to give official permission for something

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WORKSHEET C

Exercise 2

The text from Worksheet A has been copied below, but contains some mistakes. Twenty of the words in bold are incorrect, and five are correct. Decide which are incorrect, and correct them.

Is graffiti art, or is it just (1) **sandalism**? Most people would probably say that the answer depends (2) **of** various (3) **factors** – but would perhaps disagree about which are the most important.

How important, for example, is permission? Is graffiti always a bad thing if no one has given permission for it to (4) **pear**? Is it worse to put graffiti on private property than on public property, such as a wall belonging (5) **to** the local council? If a building is going to be (6) **demolish**, does that make it alright to cover it in graffiti? Can graffiti be (7) **justify** by the (8) **kill** needed to create it? For example, if a graffiti artist paints an elaborate (8) **multicoloured** image (9) **in** the wall of a building, is it more justifiable than when someone just scrawls their (10) **nature** or ‘tag’? Can (11) **passion** beliefs be a (12) **justify**? For example, when someone with (13) **strong** political opinions paints a political message on a wall, is it more justifiable than painting something that has no message at all?

There can be no disagreement, however, about the fact that graffiti has been (14) **round** for a very long time. For example, in the (15) **mains** of the Roman city of Pompeii (near the modern-day city of Naples in Italy), which was buried when a nearby volcano (16) **rupted** in AD79, there are many examples of first-century graffiti, some of it of the rather simple variety that some twenty-first century children or teenagers might create (‘Lucius painted this’, ‘Rufus loves Cornelia’, ‘Epaphra, you are (17) **pald!**’).

Local (18) **authorities** around the world have tried to (19) **deal** graffiti in many different ways. Sometimes they create authorised graffiti areas, with walls on which people are allowed to write or paint whatever they want, in the hope that the amount of graffiti (20) **elsewhy** will decrease. Sometimes they crack down on it – in 1995 in New York City, for example, it was made illegal to sell aerosol (21) **spray** paint to anyone under the age of eighteen.

The city council in Bristol in western England had an original idea when, in 2009, it decided to let local people vote on the subject of graffiti. There was (22) **agree** that most graffiti tags were ugly and should be (23) **moved**, but if local people decided that some other examples of graffiti were ‘public art’, they would be (24) **left** in place as long as the (25) **own** of the building in question agreed.