

Sample Lesson #2

Graffiti and Street Art

In the past, street artists and graffitiists were mostly thought of as vandals. Recently, however, some have gained widespread reputations as accomplished artists. Collectors have paid large sums of money to acquire their work. Street art does more than decorate public places. It allows artists to comment about important issues such as pollution, corruption, and inequality. Many street artists want to condemn these social ills, and their work shows it.

Street artistry is an offshoot of graffiti. However, the two art forms differ somewhat. For example, street artists are often formally trained, whereas most graffitiists are not professional artists. A graffitiist works quickly and can usually complete a piece in just one night. A street artist may spend weeks on a project, such as a poster, which he may mount onsite using wheat paste or other means. Street art sculptures may be chained to buildings or utility poles. Like graffitiists, street artists often use their work to protest things that are wrong in society.

“Above” is the name of a well-known American street artist who has been painting on the sides of public buildings since he was 15 years old. He began by painting “Above” in block letters but soon switched to just an up-arrow. Above has used his art to condemn diamond mining, unemployment, and poverty. Banksy is another well-known street artist. His works have been protected, painted over, bought, sold, and stolen. Museums have even purchased sections of walls or fences he painted. When British-born Banksy came to the United States, New Yorkers prowled the streets, hoping to catch him in action or spot a work before it was painted over or taken down.

The street art movement is not just for men. Women, too, are making a name for themselves. Magda Sayeg is considered the mother of yarnbombing. Her type of street art includes woven art projects and knitting around tree trunks, busses, signs, or parking meters. Faith47, a female South African street artist, has worked in cities all over the world. Her Johannesburg series of murals features broken down and abandoned cars. Each mural is a symbol of waste and the byproducts of progress.

Like Magda and Faith47, many street artists travel from town to town and from country to country. They decorate public buildings and parks. They criticize things that are wrong through their own particular brands of street art. And today, street artists are gaining much wider acceptance, despite the fact that they still face steep penalties and risk arrest for creating their art on other people’s property.



Superhero captured by
a graffiti artist

- RI.6.2 1. What is the text mostly about?
- A) women artists who have made a name for themselves
 - B) why people do or do not value street art and graffiti
 - C) information and examples of two specific types of art
 - D) how vandals became accomplished artists
- RI.6.6 2. What is the author's opinion of street art and graffiti?
- A) These art forms are mostly for women.
 - B) These art forms are interesting and often valuable.
 - C) These art forms are historical but no longer significant.
 - D) These art forms are criminal and destructive.
- RI.6.6 3. What evidence from the text supports your answer to the item above?
- A) Museums have even purchased sections of walls or fences he painted.
 - B) Street art does more than decorate public places.
 - C) Collectors have paid large sums of money to acquire their work.
 - D) all of these
- RI.6.1 4. Why do street artists face steep penalties and the risk of arrest?
- A) Not everyone accepts their work as art.
 - B) They use their work to protest things that are wrong in society.
 - C) Painting on other people's property is an act of vandalism.
 - D) all of these
- L.6.4 5. Which sentence uses *movement* in the same way as in paragraph four?
- A) Mari detected the movement of tiny worms wriggling through the soil.
 - B) Brandon joined a movement to amend the state's constitution.
- RI.6.3 6. Read each detail and decide what type of artist it describes. Write G for *graffitist*, S for *street artist*, B for *both*, or N for *neither*.
- _____ have often been thought of as vandals
 - _____ can usually complete a piece in just one night
 - _____ their work is valued by everyone in society
 - _____ use their work to protest things that are wrong
 - _____ create sculptures that may be chained to buildings