

Street art

Language

Word-building; cleft sentences; vocabulary related to art and crime

Level

Intermediate to Upper-intermediate (equivalent to CEF level B2–C1)

Comment

This lesson is about street art and graffiti.

How to use the lesson

- 1 Draw some examples of graffiti on the board and invite some students to add their own. When there is plenty of graffiti on the board, ask the students if they know the name for this – and write the word *graffiti* at the top of the board. Ask them to discuss if they think graffiti can also be art. In feedback, ask them if they think their ‘graffiti board’ is artistic. If you wish, you could also point out any examples of ‘tags’ – a simple kind of graffiti consisting of signs or symbols which identify a particular person.
- 2 Give out the worksheet. Students read the text to complete exercise 1. Encourage them to read quickly to improve their skimming skills. In feedback, consider asking students to summarise the main points of each paragraph.
- 3 Exercise 2 gives detailed reading practice. Encourage students to underline in the text where they found the answer, so that in feedback, they can explain their answers.
- 4 Exercise 3 focuses on vocabulary which exists in different forms. Ask students to find the words in the text and complete the table with the different forms. Practise the pronunciation of the different forms, paying attention to the shifting stress, eg in *decorate* / *decorative* / *decoration*. You could also point out the alternative spellings (especially in US English): *specialise* / *specialize* and the difference in meaning between *distinct* (separate or clear) and *distinctive* (special).
- 5 Exercise 4 focuses on an area of grammar that may be new to your students. Cleft sentences are one of the many ways of adding emphasis to an English sentence. Examples of cleft sentences are, *It’s me he’s looking for* (instead of *He’s looking for me*) and *That’s my chair you’re sitting in* (instead of *You’re sitting in my chair*). This exercise focuses on cleft sentences beginning with *What*. Go through the example with students and, if they are struggling, do the exercise as a whole class.
- 6 Exercise 5 helps students to consolidate the grammar they’ve studied in exercise 4. Allow them to work in pairs or small groups to share their ideas. Point out that *tagger* in sentence 5 is someone who does very simple, repetitive graffiti (tags). You can also point out that they could sometimes continue the sentence with a noun, eg *the high cost of cleaning up graffiti* for sentence 1; or they could continue with *the way or the fact that* and then add a clause, eg *the fact that graffiti can be so valuable*. When students read out their sentences, encourage them to stress the key words, eg *most* in sentence 1, because the purpose of cleft sentences is extra emphasis.
- 7 Exercise 6 gives students further practice on the topic. Ask them to discuss the questions in small groups. In feedback, you could extend students’ ideas on the topic. For instance, they could discuss what they could do as a class about the problem.
- 8 For homework, you could ask students to take photos of examples of graffiti in their neighbourhood to discuss in the next lesson. They could choose a real or imaginary person or institution (Banksy / the local Mayor / the director of a gallery, etc) and write a letter or email with comments and suggestions.

Answer key

1

1 para 3 2 para 1 3 para 2

2

- 1 F (it is a *leading art gallery*, not a specialist gallery)
- 2 T
- 3 F (*buildings which feature Banksy's images have been known to double in value* – the text does not state that this is his reason for placing his graffiti there)
- 4 T
- 5 F (*they are usually hurried and untidy symbols or letters that do no more than identify the person who made them*)
- 6 F (*the risk is to the taggers themselves as they trespass on dangerous areas*)
- 7 F (some of his work has been removed)
- 8 T

3

verb	nouns	adjective
decorate	decoration	decorative
specialise	specialisation	specialised
injure	injury	injured
invest	investment	invested
offend	offender	offending / offensive
distinguish	distinction	distinct / distinctive
opt	option	optional
educate	education	educational

4

- 1 *What concerns critics is not just the ugliness of much graffiti, but the enormous sums required to clean up the mess. (Ordinary sentence: Critics are concerned not just about the ugliness ...)*
- 2 *What this approach fails to do, however is to distinguish between street art and graffiti. (Ordinary sentence: This approach, however, fails to distinguish ...)*
- 5 Students complete sentences with their own ideas. Examples:
 - 1 ... the number of CCTV cameras on London buses.
 - 2 ... why he doesn't like to be seen.
 - 3 ... why people pay money to see graffiti, which they can see for nothing on the streets!
 - 4 ... employ more staff to look after them.
 - 5 ... clean up the mess they've made.
 - 6 ... impresses me about great street artists is the way they make their art public without earning any money for it.

Related websites

The following websites might be useful, for either yourself or your students.

- <http://www.moca.org/> (Museum of Contemporary Arts, Los Angeles)
- <http://www.moca.org/museum/exhibitiondetail.php?&id=443> (Art in the Streets Exhibition)
- <http://www.aboutsaopaulo.com/capital-city/masp.html> (Museum of Arts of São Paulo)
- <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/8635639.stm> (video clip about Murals DC Project)
- <http://lab-art.co/> (Lab Art Gallery)
- <http://www.boilerhouseart.co.uk/> (Boiler Room Gallery)