

Banksy

Classroom Activities

Language focus

GRAMMAR:	question formation
SKILLS PRACTICE:	reading comprehension, speaking

Before the activity

Students watch *Banksy* Vodcast at home or in the classroom. Each pair of students will need one copy of Worksheets 1a and 1b. If the conversation extension is used, each student in the class will need a copy of Worksheet 2.

Procedure

- 1 Elicit from the class what things they can remember about the artist Banksy from the Vodcast, plus any other information they might know about him.
- 2 Organise the class into pairs and give each pair a copy of Worksheet 1a and Worksheet 1b. Student A should look at Worksheet 1a and Student B should look at Worksheet 1b. Tell them that they should not show their worksheets to each other.
- 3 The students read through their worksheets alone, and either by deduction or from prior knowledge, try to complete the spaces. When they have completed as much as they can, the students in each pair take it in turns to ask a question in order to fill in any remaining spaces on their worksheet. For example, in paragraph 2, Student A asks, *Where has his work appeared?* Student B answers, and then asks, *What themes often appear in his work?* When each pair has completed all the spaces by asking and answering, they can check their answers by comparing their worksheets.

Optional extension activity

Organise the class into groups of four to seven students. Give each student a copy of Worksheet 2. The students read the quotations, deciding for each one the extent to which they agree or disagree by marking a point on the scale. They then discuss their reasons with the rest of their group. Alternatively, if your class is not too large, you could use the worksheet to lead a whole-class discussion.

Worksheet 1a

When was Banksy born?

He was born in ...

Student A

Banksy is the **pseudonym**¹ of a graffiti artist, political activist, film director and painter. Despite being internationally famous, he has managed to keep his identity a secret. It is generally believed that he was born in _____ and grew up in Bristol, a large city in the West of England. Recently, _____ claimed to reveal the true identity of the artist. This claim has not been proved or disproved.

Banksy's graffiti (or 'street art') is **subversive**² and humorous, and has appeared on _____ in cities around the world. Political themes appear often in his work, and it has a distinctive visual style. Much of it is created using **stencils**³ and colour is used very little, with many of the works being mostly or entirely _____. Banksy's works often include **slogans**⁴, usually with an anti-war, anti-capitalist or **anti-establishment**⁵ message.

The earliest known street art by Banksy dates from around 1992, and works using his famous stencil technique began appearing from 2000. In addition to street art, Banksy has also created _____ and other moveable works of art which have been exhibited in galleries, beginning in 2002 with an exhibition in Los Angeles entitled 'Existencilism'. Since then, his works have been sold for high prices at **auctions**⁶, with some selling for more than _____.

For a 2003 exhibition, Banksy painted on animals. The **RSPCA**⁷ was consulted and confirmed that the animals were not being mistreated. Nevertheless, there were protests from **animal rights activists**⁸. In 2004, he printed several hundred **spoof**⁹ British £10 notes. The picture of the Queen's head was replaced with the head of Diana, Princess of Wales's head and "Bank of England" was changed to "_____." Somebody threw them into a crowd at London's Notting Hill Carnival that year, and some of the people who picked them up tried to spend them in local shops. These notes now sell for around £200 each and a _____ sold for £24,000.

Banksy's first film, *Exit Through the Gift Shop*, is about street artists in Los Angeles. Banksy appears in the film, but his face and voice are disguised. It was released in 2010 and was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Documentary.

Glossary

- 1 **pseudonym**: an invented name, especially for an author or artist
- 2 **subversive**: wanting to change the political system
- 3 **stencil**: a piece of card or metal with holes cut in it, used to make an image
- 4 **slogan**: a short memorable phrase, often with a political message
- 5 **anti-establishment**: against the current political and financial system
- 6 **auction**: selling something to the person who offers the most money
- 7 **RSPCA**: The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals; the leading organisation in Britain for protecting animals
- 8 **animal rights activists**: people who protest against what they believe is the mistreatment of animals
- 9 **spoof**: something which at first glance seems to be the real thing, but is actually a humorous parody



Worksheet 1b

Where did Banksy grow up?

He grew up in ...

Student B

Banksy is the **pseudonym**¹ of a graffiti artist, political activist, film director, and painter. Despite being internationally famous, he has managed to keep his identity a secret. It is generally believed that he was born in the early 1970s and grew up in _____. Over the years, a British newspaper claimed to reveal the true identity of the artist. This claim has not been proved or disproved. Banksy's graffiti (or '_____') is **subversive**² and humorous, and has appeared on walls and bridges in cities around the world. _____ themes appear often in his work, and it has a distinctive visual style. Much of it is created using **stencils**³ and colour is used very little, with many of the works being mostly or entirely in black and white. Banksy's works often include **slogans**⁴, usually with an anti-war, anti-capitalist or **anti-establishment**⁵ message.

The earliest known street art by Banksy dates from around _____, and works using his famous stencil technique began appearing from 2000. In addition to street art, Banksy has also created oil paintings and other moveable works of art which have been exhibited in galleries, beginning in 2002 with an exhibition in Los Angeles entitled '_____'. Since then, his works have been sold for high prices at **auctions**⁶, with some selling for more than £100,000.

For a 2003 exhibition, Banksy painted on animals. The **RSPCA**⁷ was consulted and confirmed that the animals were not being mistreated. Nevertheless, there were protests from animal rights **activists**⁸. In 2004, he printed several hundred **spoof**⁹ British _____. The picture of the Queen's head was replaced with the head of Diana, Princess of Wales's head and "Bank of England" was changed to "Banksy of England". Somebody threw them into a crowd at London's Notting Hill Carnival that year, and some of the people who picked them up tried to _____. These notes now sell for around £200 each and a signed sheet of ten uncut notes sold for £24,000.

Banksy's first film, *Exit Through the Gift Shop*, is about street artists in Los Angeles. Banksy appears in the film, but his face and voice are disguised. It was released in 2010 and was nominated for the _____.

Glossary

- 1 **pseudonym**: an invented name, especially for an author or artist
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Worksheet 2

Discussion questions

Read the following quotations. How do you feel about each one? Mark a point on the Agree/Disagree line. Discuss your reasons.

“When you go to an art gallery you are simply a tourist looking at the trophy cabinet of a few millionaires.”

Banksy



“We can’t do anything to change the world until capitalism crumbles. In the meantime we should all go shopping to console ourselves.”

Banksy



“Banksy’s street art glorifies what is essentially vandalism.”

Keep Britain Tidy, a British environmental organisation



“His work looks dazzlingly clever to idiots.”

Charlie Brooker, writing in The Guardian, a British newspaper



“Maybe he has to show his face now and show what kind of guy he is.”

Blek le Rat, well-known French street artist

