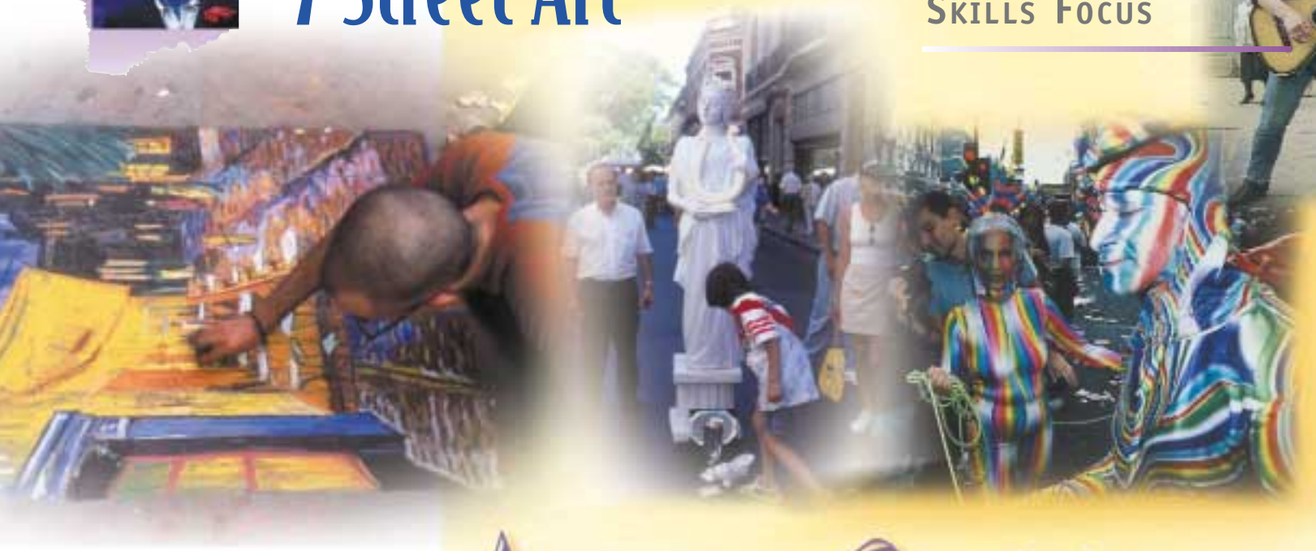
7 Street Art



Skills Focus

Before you start

1 Read the Key Words. Which sort of street art do you prefer? Tell the class.

Key Words

advertising billboards, buskers, clowns, drama groups, fireworks, graffiti, musicians, open-air concerts, 'live statues', pavement artists, sculptures, statues

2 Listen to some music. What style of music is it?

- rock and roll • jazz
- hip-hop/rap • folk

Which of these things do you associate with this music?

- young or middle-aged people?
- Europe or America?
- black or white culture?
- rural or urban culture?

Reading

3 Read the article and check your answers to Exercise 2.

American Graffiti

UNTIL RELATIVELY RECENTLY, GRAFFITI WAS CONSIDERED TO BE AN EXAMPLE OF ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR, THE WORK OF VANDALS. NOWADAYS, MANY OF THOSE 'VANDALS' ARE TREATED AS RESPECTED ARTISTS, AND SOME OF THEM HAVE MADE IT IN THE WORLD OF BUSINESS. SUE CLARKE REPORTS.

1 New Yorkers used to see the graffiti on the walls of poor neighbourhoods and subway trains as something menacing and an example of urban decay. The scrawled names and slogans were seen as unsightly and aggressive, the work of vandals seeking to express their identities or even make a political point. Up to the 1970s, most New Yorkers hated graffiti, considering it as an eyesore that was illegal and punishable by fines.

2 Since those days, graffiti has changed a lot and it is not only found in the subway and the poor ghetto areas of the city. Nowadays, it has the status of 'street art' and you get graffiti in places where you wouldn't expect to – in advertisements, on clothes, on toys, and even on the Wall Street Journal's official website! In the early 1980s, there was a real craze for graffiti art and the sophisticated Manhattan art world had displays of street art in its galleries. The trend was short-lived – until the arrival of hip-hop music in the late 80s.

3 In her book, *Subway Art*, Martha Cooper says: "Graffiti came back with hip-hop music and people are now appreciating it for its style, which they couldn't back then, because they couldn't get beyond the vandalism thing." Hip-hop was originally black ghetto music, sung by young Afro-Americans from the poor, run-down districts of American cities. When it suddenly got to the top of the American music charts, hip-hop culture was spread, bringing graffiti with it.

4 Today companies are starting to realise the appeal of graffiti in advertising. Kel Rodriguez, who used to spray New York subway trains, was the artist chosen to design the Wall Street Journal's website and it is obviously done in graffiti-style. "Some of that graffiti feeling, that energy, sort of got in there," Rodriguez explained.

5 Many of this new wave of artists give lectures on developments in their art. Lee Quinones is having a lot of success in Europe and feels that European galleries and museums are more open to his art form. "They want to support an artist as he develops," comments Quinones, who can get up to $10,000 for his paintings. Indeed, the Groninger Museum in Holland is one of the few museums in the world that displays and recognises graffiti as an art form.

6 Another artist, Blade, has his own website devoted only to the world of graffiti. This website has a 'merchandise page' where Blade sells things with his own original designs all over the world – everything from baseball caps to yo-yos! Leonard McGurr, a street artist for 25 years, went from painting subway trains to designing and marketing graffiti-inspired clothes for young people. "Graffiti has been a story of survival," he says. "There's a way to benefit from your work without spoiling public property."

4 Read the Strategies.

Reading Strategies:
Matching headings and paragraphs

- Read each paragraph carefully. Underline 3–5 of the most important words.
- Be careful – the first sentence in a paragraph often introduces the main idea – but not always!
- Read the headings and match them with the paragraphs. They often contain a word or a synonym of a word from the paragraph.
- Check that the extra heading does not match any of the paragraphs.

Use the Strategies to match the headings below with paragraphs 1–6. There is one extra heading.

a) Spoiled Cities
b) Transatlantic Success
c) Wall Street Art!
d) Ghetto Culture
e) Tasteless Comics
f) Graffiti Products
g) Big Change

5 Find synonyms in the text for these words and expressions. Paragraph numbers are in brackets.

1 threatening (1)
2 ugly (1)
3 fad (2)
4 classy (2)
5 damage to property (3)
6 depressed area (3)
7 receptive (5)
8 acknowledges (5)
9 products (6)
10 advertising and selling (6)

6 Answer these questions about the text. Use words from Exercise 5.

1 Why did New Yorkers consider graffiti the work of vandals?
2 Why did graffiti artists suddenly become respectable in New York?
3 What influence did music have on the popularity of graffiti artists?
4 In what way does Europe take graffiti art more seriously than the USA?
5 How do some graffiti artists make money?

Vocabulary: Common Verbs with Different Meanings

7 Find these expressions in the text. Then match the verbs in italics (1–8) with their meanings (a–h).

1 *make it* in business (line 00)
2 *make* a point (00)
3 *have* a display (00)
4 *get* graffiti (00)
5 *get beyond* something (00)
6 *get to* the top (00)
7 *get in* somewhere (00)
8 *get* up to $10,000 (00)

a) put on
b) find
c) succeed
d) enter
e) see further than
f) demonstrate
g) receive
h) reach

8 Match the verbs *make, get* and *have* with the words below. Add your own examples.

a dream, an effect,, fed up, an influence, in touch, a look, lost, a mess, a mistake, money, a phone call, promotion

9 Use the words in Exercise 8 to write as many sentences as you can in five minutes.

Example
I made a lot of mistakes in my last English essay.

Work in groups. Take turns to read out your sentences.

Lexicon, page 000

Comparing Cultures

What 'street art' do you see or hear in your town or area? give examples.