

ART VOCABULARY

Vocabulary, collocations and expressions for discussing art

B2 FIRST

C1 ADVANCED

PRINTABLE PRACTICE

This worksheet will help you:

- recognise and use essential vocabulary connected with art and exhibitions;
- build natural collocations for describing works of art;
- distinguish commonly confused words such as exhibit and exhibition;
- express interpretations and personal reactions at B2-C1 level;
- prepare for Cambridge-style speaking and writing tasks.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Antri Parto • My Lingua Academy

1 Build Your Art Vocabulary

A. Match words 1-10 with definitions a-j.

1. masterpiece	a. the material or method used to create art
2. mural	b. an organised public display of art
3. curator	c. the part of a picture nearest the viewer
4. landscape	d. an outstanding work of exceptional skill
5. medium	e. the arrangement of elements within an image
6. sketch	f. a quick, simple drawing
7. emerging artist	g. a large picture painted directly on a wall
8. exhibition	h. an artist beginning to gain recognition
9. foreground	i. a person who selects and organises an exhibition
10. composition	j. a picture of natural scenery

Answers: 1 ____ 2 ____ 3 ____ 4 ____ 5 ____ 6 ____ 7 ____ 8 ____ 9 ____ 10 ____

B. Complete the sentences with words from the box. Change the form if necessary.

canvas • portrait • sculpture • still life • artwork • subject

- The central _____ of the painting is a woman holding a book.
- The museum displays contemporary _____ by artists from across Europe.
- The artist used a very large _____ for the coastal scene.
- A marble _____ stands in the centre of the courtyard.
- The photographer is best known for her intimate _____ of musicians.
- The painting is a _____ featuring fruit, flowers and a glass vase.

2 Natural Collocations

A. Complete each collocation using a verb from the box.

capture • commission • convey • curate • display • evoke • fund • preserve

1. _____ a portrait
2. _____ a mood
3. _____ an exhibition
4. _____ artwork
5. _____ cultural heritage
6. _____ the arts
7. _____ emotion
8. _____ a message

B. Use the completed collocations to finish the sentences. Use the correct form.

1. Free museums help to _____ for future generations.
2. The family _____ to celebrate their grandparents' anniversary.
3. Last year, the critic _____ devoted to women in photography.
4. The photographer's use of pale light _____ of an early winter morning.
5. Public institutions often _____ by providing grants and studio space.
6. The powerful image _____ about the effects of war.

C. Write two original sentences using collocations from this page.

3 Describe Art Precisely

A. Replace the underlined general adjective with a more precise word from the box.

atmospheric • lifelike • moving • striking • thought-provoking •
unconventional • vibrant • disturbing

1. The portrait is very noticeable and impressive. _____
2. The figures are so realistic that they seem ready to move. _____
3. The installation makes visitors think seriously about consumerism.

4. The documentary photographs had a strong emotional effect on me.

5. The artist uses bright, energetic colours. _____
6. The empty street creates a strong sense of mood. _____
7. Some visitors found the images uncomfortably shocking. _____
8. Her use of broken machinery is highly non-traditional. _____

B. Complete the mini-review with suitable words from Exercise A. More than one answer may be possible.

The exhibition is small, but it leaves a powerful impression. The first room contains (1) _____ portraits painted in rich, (2) _____ colours. The second is darker and more (3) _____. Its images of abandoned buildings are slightly (4) _____, but they also raise (5) _____ questions about the way cities change. The artist's (6) _____ use of discarded objects will not appeal to everyone, yet the exhibition is difficult to forget.

C. Choose one adjective from the box. Explain why a particular work of art could be described in this way.

4 Choose the Right Word

Circle the correct option. Then explain the difference between the words in each pair to a partner.

1. The gallery is holding an exhibit / exhibition of contemporary photography.
2. The most valuable exhibit / exhibition is a fifteenth-century vase.
3. The picture depicts / evokes workers waiting at a railway station.
4. The scent of oil paint depicts / evokes memories of my school days.
5. The actor's portrait / portrayal of the painter was convincing.
6. The museum owns a formal portrait / portrayal of the writer.
7. The building contains examples of classic / classical sculpture.
8. This novel is regarded as a modern classic / classical.
9. The painter uses watercolour as her main media / medium.
10. Film and photography are important artistic media / mediums.

5 Art Idioms and Figurative Expressions

Complete the sentences with one word.

1. The article paints a vivid _____ of life in the nineteenth century.
2. The cultural centre contains state-of-the-_____ equipment.
3. A fresh start can feel like a blank _____.
4. I have explained the basic problem, so you should get the _____.
5. Good teachers master the _____ of making difficult ideas clear.
6. I support artistic freedom, but I draw the _____ at deliberate cruelty.

6 Interpret and Respond

Useful structure: Identify the work → describe its composition → comment on technique → interpret its message → give your reaction.

A. Put the phrases into the correct category.

At first glance, ... • The foreground is dominated by ... • The artist has used ... • It could be interpreted as ... • What strikes me most is ... • On closer inspection, ... • The work conveys a sense of ... • I am particularly drawn to ... • The central figure appears to ... • The artist may be drawing attention to ...

DESCRIPTION	INTERPRETATION	PERSONAL REACTION

B. Imagine a painting of three people waiting at a rainy railway station. A bright red suitcase stands in the foreground. Write a 90-120 word description and interpretation.

7 Reading: When Is Street Art Really Art?

For many years, street art was treated mainly as a public nuisance. Local authorities spent considerable sums removing images from walls, while property owners complained about damage to their buildings. Today, however, attitudes are changing. Works by internationally recognised street artists attract visitors, appear in prestigious galleries and sometimes sell for extraordinary prices.

Supporters argue that street art makes creativity accessible. Unlike art displayed in a museum, it can be encountered by anyone walking through a neighbourhood. A successful mural may transform a neglected wall, strengthen a community's identity and convey a powerful social message. It can also give emerging artists a way to exhibit their work without depending on traditional galleries.

Nevertheless, an important distinction remains. A carefully commissioned mural is not the same as painting on private property without permission. Even an imaginative work may create expense or distress for the owner of the building. Critics therefore argue that artistic freedom cannot automatically justify damage. They support public art but draw the line at work produced illegally.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the debate is the way context affects value. An image on a city wall may initially be dismissed as vandalism, yet a visually similar piece displayed in a gallery may receive critical acclaim. This raises a thought-provoking question: does artistic value belong to the work itself, or is it created by the reputation of the artist and the place in which we see it?

A. Choose the best answer.

1. The first paragraph mainly describes: A methods used by street artists B changing attitudes towards street art C the cost of gallery exhibitions
2. According to supporters, street art is accessible because: A it is free to buy B it is always easy to understand C people encounter it in public spaces
3. The writer distinguishes commissioned murals from unauthorised work mainly because of: A artistic quality B permission and possible damage C the artist's age
4. The final paragraph questions whether artistic value is influenced by: A context and reputation B the size of a work C the materials used

7 Reading: Continued

B. Find words or phrases in the text that mean:

1. something annoying or harmful to the public (paragraph 1): _____
2. respected and admired (paragraph 1): _____
3. improve completely the appearance or character of something (paragraph 2):

4. communicate an important idea (paragraph 2): _____
5. set a limit (paragraph 3): _____
6. praised by professional reviewers (paragraph 4): _____

C. Answer in complete sentences.

1. Give two possible benefits of street art mentioned in the text.

2. Why might a property owner object even to an imaginative work?

3. Do you agree that context changes the way people value art? Why or why not?

8 Cambridge Speaking Practice

B2 First - Collaborative Task: Discuss each option together. Evaluate its advantages and disadvantages before reaching a decision.

A town wants to encourage more residents to take an interest in art. How effective might these ideas be?

free museum days	street-art festival
art classes in schools	open studios with local artists
public sculpture trail	online exhibition

Now decide which idea would have the greatest long-term effect.

Useful language:

One advantage would be ... • That might appeal particularly to ... • I see your point, although ... • Compared with ..., this would ... • Shall we agree that ...?

C1 Advanced - Discussion

- 1. To what extent should governments be responsible for funding the arts?
- 2. Should national museums return important objects to their countries of origin?
- 3. Is technical skill essential for a work to be considered art?
- 4. How has digital technology changed the role of the artist?

Language challenge: During your discussion, use at least five expressions from the worksheet.

9 Cambridge Writing Practice

C1 Advanced essay task • Write 220-260 words in an appropriate style.

Your class has listened to a discussion about how governments should support culture. You have made the notes below.

Ways governments could support culture:

- make museums free
- fund art education
- provide grants for emerging artists

Some opinions expressed:

"Culture should be accessible to everyone."

"Schools have more urgent priorities."

"New artists need opportunities, not only money."

Write an essay discussing two of the ways in your notes. Explain which way would be more effective, giving reasons to support your opinion.

Planning notes

Option 1 + main argument	
Option 2 + main argument	
Which is more effective? Why?	

Useful language: make art accessible • preserve cultural heritage • fund the arts • support emerging artists • have a lasting effect • public funding

Answer Key

1 Build Your Art Vocabulary

A. 1 d; 2 g; 3 i; 4 j; 5 a; 6 f; 7 h; 8 b; 9 c; 10 e.

B. 1 subject; 2 artwork; 3 canvas; 4 sculpture; 5 portraits; 6 still life.

2 Natural Collocations

A. 1 commission; 2 capture; 3 curate; 4 display; 5 preserve; 6 fund; 7 evoke; 8 convey.

B. Suggested answers: 1 preserve cultural heritage; 2 commissioned a portrait; 3 curated an exhibition; 4 captures the mood; 5 fund the arts; 6 conveys a message.

3 Describe Art Precisely

A. 1 striking; 2 lifelike; 3 thought-provoking; 4 moving; 5 vibrant; 6 atmospheric; 7 disturbing; 8 unconventional.

B. Suggested answers: 1 striking/lifelike; 2 vibrant; 3 atmospheric; 4 disturbing; 5 thought-provoking; 6 unconventional.

4 Choose the Right Word

1 exhibition; 2 exhibit; 3 depicts; 4 evokes; 5 portrayal; 6 portrait; 7 classical; 8 classic; 9 medium; 10 media.

5 Art Idioms

1 picture; 2 art; 3 canvas; 4 picture; 5 art; 6 line.

6 Interpret and Respond

Description: At first glance; The foreground is dominated by; On closer inspection; The central figure appears to. Interpretation: The artist has used; It could be interpreted as; The work conveys a sense of; The artist may be drawing attention to. Personal reaction: What strikes me most is; I am particularly drawn to. Some phrases may reasonably fit more than one category.

Answer Key: Continued

7 Reading

A. 1 B; 2 C; 3 B; 4 A.

B. 1 public nuisance; 2 prestigious; 3 transform; 4 convey a powerful social message; 5 draw the line; 6 receive critical acclaim.

C. Suggested answers:

1. It can make creativity accessible, transform neglected spaces, strengthen community identity, convey social messages and give emerging artists a way to show their work. Any two are acceptable.

2. The work may have been produced without permission and may cause expense, damage or distress.

3. Personal response. The answer should be supported with a clear reason or example.

Teacher's note: The extended description, discussion and writing tasks are open-ended. Assess them for relevance, organisation, range and accuracy of language, and appropriate use of vocabulary from the worksheet.

Suggested assessment checklist

Criterion	Can do	Needs practice
Uses precise art vocabulary	■	■
Uses natural collocations	■	■
Interprets rather than only describes	■	■
Supports opinions with reasons	■	■
Uses linking language effectively	■	■

Vocabulary and Expressions Related to Art
B2-C1 English • Cambridge exam practice