

Lesson: *Is performance art really art?*

This is a quick, easy, English lesson plan that will inspire your students. It'll also give them opportunities to improve their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. This lesson comes with Teacher's Notes, a Resource Sheet, a PDF of the lesson, and an audio file. Simply follow the lesson ideas for a fantastic class that'll really motivate your students.

1 Warm-up

Film descriptions

In pairs, students play a game. They take turns describing one of the films on the Resource Sheet. Their partner has to name it. Or, you could write the film titles on the board. Students take turns describing one of them. Other students listen and identify the film.

2 Lesson activities

Go through the activities for the lesson on the sheet **at the end of this document**: the Pre-reading, Reading I and Reading II activities. You could do this lesson as a *listening* activity. In order to do this, tell your students to turn over the sheet so they can't see the text as they do the exercises.

If your students' listening level is low, stop the recording after each paragraph and check their understanding.

After finishing that, and if you've done this as a listening activity (not a reading), let your students read the text as you play the recording again. This is good for developing their listening skills as they can see the connection between the written and spoken language.

3 Follow-up activities

Retell it!

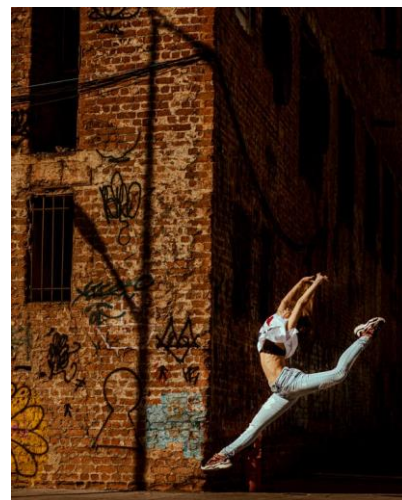
Assign a paragraph (or two, etc.) to each student. Students have a minute or two to try to remember the text. When they're ready, students try to recount the information, using as much of the language as possible. Or, ask for volunteers to retell the information, using as much of the original language as possible (or even by heart if they can).

Debate it!

Hold a debate! Divide the class into two. Half the class believes that performance art is a valid form of art; the other half doesn't think it should be considered an art form. In their groups (or in pairs or smaller groups), students prepare arguments either in favour of or against the proposal (even if they don't agree with it personally). When they're ready, allow representatives from each group to stand up and present their arguments.

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When both sides have finished, open up the debate so anyone can make comments, respond to previous points, etc. At the end (after a few minutes), hold a vote and see which idea is the most popular. Tell students they can vote either way and that they don't have to vote according to their initial group and the stance that they were representing.

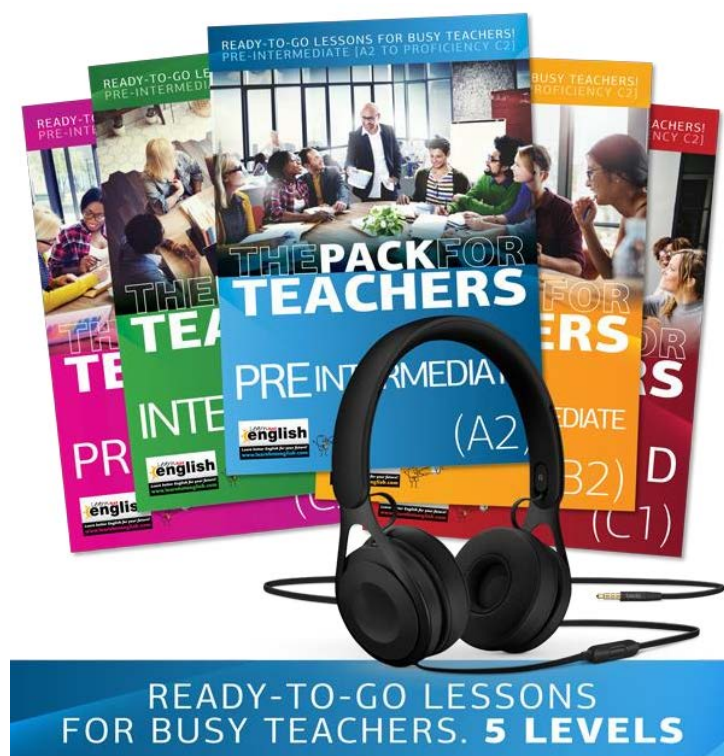
Invention & presentation

Students think of an idea for a work of performance art. Then, they give a one- or two-minute presentation on it, explaining what it is, what it's called, what it consists of, what it represents, etc. When they're ready, ask for volunteers to give their presentations (using notes, not reading it out word-for-word). Other students vote on the most interesting ones.



Dialogue

In pairs, students write up notes for a dialogue between a reporter and someone involved in one of the works of art from this lesson. Tell your students to make the dialogue as funny, silly or serious as they like. When they're ready, ask for volunteers to read or act out their dialogues (from memory or by using notes, not reading it out word-for-word). Other students listen and vote on the best ones, or ask and answer questions.



Resource Sheet: works of art

Look at the works of art below. *Which one/s do you like? Why? What genre of art do they belong to? What do you know about the work or the artist? Can you describe the paintings? What's in them? What colours are used?*



Water Garden by Claude Monet 1900



Two Sisters by Pierre-Auguste Renoir 1881



The Triumph of Galatea by Raphael c.1511



Netherlandish Proverbs by Pieter Bruegel 1559



Napoleon Crossing the Alps by Jacques-Louis David 1803



Dance Class by Hilaire Germain Edgar Degas 1872



Death and Life by Gustav Klimt c.1910



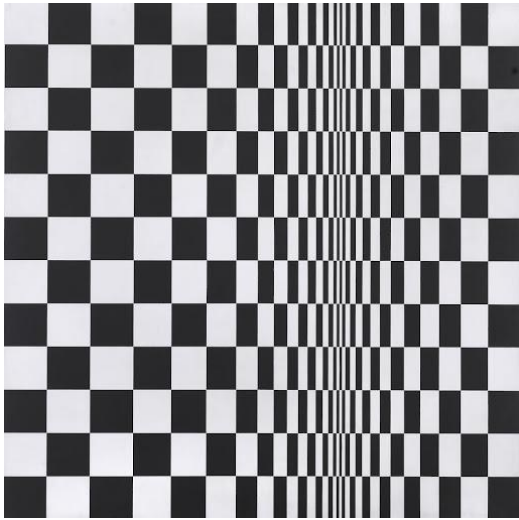
Starry Night by Vincent van Gogh 1889



The Lunch on the Grass by Edouard Manet 1863



Color Study by Wassily Kandinsky 1913



Movement in Squares by Bridget Riley 1961



Marilyn Monroe by Andy Warhol 1967

Objective To improve your reading and listening skills.

Think about it What type of art do you like? Are there any styles you don't like? Why? Have you ever seen or heard of a work of performance art? What did it involve?

Exams This reading and listening activity will help prepare you for English exams such as FCE, IELTS and TOEFL.

IS PERFORMANCE ART REALLY ART?

I'M A WORK OF ART!



A work of art is something that can be admired forever. A work of **performance art** only lasts as long as... the performance. As Erik Hokanson (the **curator** of Grace Exhibition Space) once said, "It's the *action* that's the art, not so much the physical result." Documentation of the performance (such as a photo or a video) may survive, but that's all. Here are five examples of performance art.



1 I Like America and America Likes Me

For his 1974 work *I Like America and America Likes Me*, artist Joseph Beuys spent three days in a gallery **wrapped** in **felt** and accompanied by a wild **coyote**.



2 Shoot

As part of his 1971 performance piece, *Shoot*, US artist Chris Burden asked a friend to shoot him in the arm. The following year, he performed *Deadman*. This involved lying under a **tarpaulin** on a **busy highway**. He was **illuminated** by **flares** as the night-time traffic **roared** by.

3 Still and Chew / Art and Culture in London

John Latham's performance *Still and Chew / Art and Culture in London* took place in 1966. Latham was a part-time



teacher at the time, and during one class, he invited his art students to **chew**

pages of a library copy of Clement Greenberg's book *Art and Culture*. The **pulp** was then dissolved and distilled and **sealed** in **glass vials**. When the library asked for their book back, Latham tried to give them one of the glass vials. The library rejected it. As a result of the exhibition, Latham became known as "The Man Who Ate Art and Culture".



4 I I

As part of his 2011 performance piece *I I*, artist Ryan McNamara and collaborator Sam Roeck **buried** themselves in the ground. With just their faces showing, they sang love **duets**, such as "Tonight" from *West Side Story* and Dolly Parton numbers. Fifteen minutes into the three-hour performance, a drunken visitor accidentally kicked one of the artists in the head, and **stumbled** back into the other one. The artists carried on, **undeterred**.

5 The Artist is Present

In 2010, the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York City presented artist Marina Abramović's performance piece *The Artist is Present*. As part of this, Marina sat in the museum's **atrium** every day from the opening of the museum to its closing. Onlookers could take turns sitting

opposite her for as long as they wanted, becoming part of the artwork themselves. The performance lasted 736 hours and 30 minutes, and attracted celebrities such as Björk and James Franco.

But the big question is, what's the significance of these works of performance art? ✨

GLOSSARY

- performance art** *n* a theatrical work of art involving dance, music, acting, painting, etc.
- a curator** *n* the person who is in charge of the objects or works of art in a museum
- to wrap** *vb* if you "wrap" something around you, you put it around you
- felt** *n* a soft material made from wool
- a coyote** *n* a wild animal that lives in North America. It's like a small wolf
- a tarpaulin** *n* a waterproof canvas fabric used to cover and protect things
- busy** *adj* if a road (for example) is "busy", there are a lot of cars on it
- a highway** *n* US a large road with lots of lanes (lines of traffic). "Motorway" in British English
- illuminated** *adj* if something is "illuminated", it has lights shining on it
- a flare** *n* a small portable device that produces a very bright flame (burning light). It's often used as a signal
- to roar** *by exp* if traffic "roars by", it makes a lot of noise as it passes. Lions "roar" when they're angry, etc.
- to chew** *vb* to use your teeth to break up food into smaller pieces so that it's easier to eat
- pulp** *n* if something is reduced to a "pulp", it's crushed / smashed / beaten until it is smooth and wet
- to seal** *vb* if you "seal" something, you put it in a container and stop any air going in or out of the container
- a glass vial** *n* a small bottle made of glass often used for perfume
- to bury** *vb* if something is "buried", it's in a hole in the ground
- a duet** *n* a piece of music that's played or sung by two people
- to stumble back** *phr vb* if you "stumble", you put one foot on the other and almost fall. If you "stumble back" you do this as you're walking backwards
- undeterred** *adj* if a person is "undeterred", they continue doing something, even though it's difficult or others are trying to stop them
- an atrium** *n* an open area of a building (usually in the entrance) which extends through several floors up to the roof. It often has glass panel in the ceiling so lots of light can enter

Answers on page 44

1 Pre-reading

Look at the titles of the works of performance art. What do you think they involve?

2 Reading I

Read the article once to compare your ideas from the Pre-reading activity. Which work sounds the most interesting? What do they mean?

3 Reading II

Read the article again. Then, write the name of a work of art (just the abbreviated forms) next to each statement. This work of art involved...

1. ...destroying a copy of a book.
2. ...sitting in a museum for more than 700 hours.
3. ...staying in a gallery with a wild animal.
4. ...being buried in the ground for three hours.
5. ...lying on a busy road at night.