

# WHAT IS ART?

Watch the [video](#) "What is art?" by GCFLearnFree.org

## 1 WARM UP

Task 1: What do you think of when you hear the word "art"? Create a list of 10 words.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_



Answer the following questions.

- a) Do you have pieces of art in your house?
- b) Can you name any famous artists?
- c) Did you study art in school? Did you like it?



## 2 DO YOU GET IT?

**Task 1:** In the [video](#), some people say they just don't get art. What does that mean?

- It means they can't make art.
- It means they don't understand art.**
- It means they are interested in learning more about art.

**Task 2:** Now, sort the different ways to say "I get it" or "I don't get it"

I understand	That makes no sense	I get the idea
I couldn't tell you	Your guess is as good as mine	It's as clear as day

I get it	I don't get it
<p><b>I understand</b></p> <p><b>I get the idea</b></p> <p><b>It's as clear as day</b></p>	<p><b>I couldn't tell you</b></p> <p><b>That makes no sense</b></p> <p><b>Your guess is as good as mine</b></p>

**Task 3:** Read the facts about art and tell the class whether or not you get it:

- Today, the Mona Lisa is worth \$860 million.*
- Currently, the entrance fee to the Louvre museum in Paris is € 15.*
- In 2019, an Italian artist sold a banana stuck to a wall for \$ 120 000.*
- Some people believe that art should not be taught in schools.*



### 3 VIDEO VOCABULARY

Task 1: Complete the following sentences with vocabulary from the [video](#).

artsy      tough      stir      draw      jump      fan      tap

1. I am not a big **fan** of abstract art.
2. Whenever someone mentions Paris, my mind **jumps** to the Mona Lisa.
3. I know a lot of **artsy** people, but I do not consider myself to be a part of them.
4. There are a lot of art works that **stir** my emotions.
5. Sometimes, I find it hard to **draw** meaning from paintings and works of art.
6. I believe that art is important, since it allows people to really **tap** into their emotions.
7. In the modern world of today, it is **tough** to be an artist.

Task 2: Discuss each one, and say if they are true or false for you. Explain your answers.



## 4 VIDEO DISCUSSION

**Task 1:** Read and then discuss the quotes from the [video](#).

***“Songs you like, movies you watch, poems, theatre, even a quilt that your grandmother made - all of that and more is art.”***

- Do you agree that movies, songs, poems etc are all art?
- Do you think some types of art are more important than others?

***“Three different people can experience the same piece of art and have wildly different reactions to it.”***

- Have you ever liked a piece of art, song or movie that a friend didn't like?
- What can influence people to have such different opinions of art?

***“Art gives us the opportunity to tell stories and record history.”***

- What do you think this quote means?
- Can you give any real-life examples of this?

***“Everyone has the potential to grow and learn from art.”***

- How can people grow from studying art?
- Have you ever learned something from art?

**Task 2:** Discuss the following questions based on the [video](#) as a class.

1. Where in our daily lives can we find art?
2. What is your definition of art?
3. Can someone's personal history affect their reaction to art? How?
4. What can you learn about a person from the type of art they enjoy?
5. Do you believe that art is just for artsy people and intellectuals?
6. Do you agree with the video that it might be worth understanding what your friends like about certain works of art?



## 5 ADJECTIVES: DESCRIBING ART

**Task 1:** Let's take a look at common adjectives that can be used to describe art.

dreamy	violent	vibrant	cheerful	skillful	dull
gloomy	lifeless	moving	lifelike	distorted	flat

**Task 2:** Put the adjectives in the correct box and discuss each word's meaning as a class.

Positive (+)	Negative (-)
Dreamy, vibrant, cheerful, skillful, moving, lifelike	Dull, violent, gloomy, lifeless, distorted, flat

**Task 3:** There are four styles of art in the box. Match them to the pictures below.

Still life	Abstract	Realistic	Landscape
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Still life



Abstract



Realistic




Landscape


**Task 4:** Use the adjectives from task 1 to express how you feel about each picture.





## 6 LET'S DEBATE

**Task:** Study the statements, then decide if you agree or disagree with them. Use the language in the table at the bottom of the page to help structure your answer.

**John**  
 Artificial intelligence-generated art can be just as valuable and meaningful as art created by humans.

**Oli**  
 Public funding for art is a waste of taxpayer money and should be redirected to more practical areas.

**Beth**  
 Art education in schools is often ignored and is not valued, leading to a lack of appreciation and understanding of art.

**Amy**  
 Artists should be free to create without limitations or censorship from society or the government.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Express an opinion</b></p> <p>It seems to me that...</p> <p>I feel that...</p> <p>I'm absolutely convinced that...</p> <p>In my opinion,...</p> <p>I believe / suppose / feel (that)...</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Express disagreement</b></p> <p>I don't agree with you about...</p> <p>I can't accept your view that...</p> <p>I have a different opinion...</p> <p>I'm not sure if...</p> <p>I'm not convinced that...</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Express pro's and con's</b></p> <p>There are two sides to this point...</p> <p>On the one hand...,on the other hand...</p> <p>An argument for / against is...</p> <p>Some people think that...,others say that...</p> <p>The advantages / disadvantages are...</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Summarise</b></p> <p>So, in conclusion...</p> <p>To summarise..</p> <p>Overall, it is clear that...</p> <p>As a result..</p> <p>The bottom line is...</p>

## 7 EXPRESSIONS RELATED TO ART

**Task 1: Complete the following idioms related to art by choosing the correct option.**

1. He is no oil sculpture / painting, but he has a really attractive personality.
2. After spending thousands of dollars on a Banksy painting, she realised that she had been tricked by a con performer / artist.
3. South Africa has just opened a state of the building / art museum where you can see different African modern art.
4. I love moving into a new house and having a blank canvas / paper to make my own.
5. I tried to describe that fantastic sunset, and then she just showed them a photo. You know it's true—a picture paints a thousand words / sentences.

**Task 2: Match the idioms to the correct definitions.**

- a. someone or something is not particularly attractive. **1**
- b. a person who tricks others for personal gain or profit. **2**
- c. an empty surface that can be used for artistic expression or creativity. **4**
- d. to describe the most advanced level of technology, design, or development. **3**
- e. to suggest that a single image can convey a complex or profound message. **5**



**Task 3: Now answer the following questions:**

1. Have you ever been tricked by a **con artist**?
2. Does your country have any **state of the art** public places?
3. When starting a new project, do you like to have a **blank canvas** or do you prefer to have some foundation?
4. Do you believe a picture paints a thousand words, or do you usually prefer to explain your point visually?
5. Who or what comes to mind when you think of someone who is "**no oil painting**"?





# HOMework

Read the [article](#) "Vincent Van Gogh Biography?" by vangoghgallery.com.

## 1 WRITING TASK

**Task:** Write separate or a story using the expressions from exercise 7. Have fun!

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## 2 DESCRIBING ART

**Task:** Find a painting that you like and use the adjectives in exercise 5 to write a detailed description of the art work. Explain why you love this painting so much.

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### 3 VINCENT VAN GOGH: BIOGRAPHY

**Task:** Read the adapted [article](#) below, then complete the exercises on the next page.

Vincent van Gogh, one of the most well-known artists, for whom colour was the main symbol of expression, was born in Groot-Zundert, Holland, in 1853.

The son of a pastor, brought up in a religious and cultured atmosphere, Vincent was highly emotional, lacked self-confidence and struggled with his identity and direction. He believed that his true calling was to preach the gospel; however, it took years for him to discover his calling as an artist. Between 1860 and 1880, when he finally decided to become an artist, van Gogh had already experienced two unsuitable and unhappy romances and had worked unsuccessfully as a clerk in a bookstore, an art salesman, and a preacher in the Borinage.

He remained in Belgium to study art, determined to give happiness by creating beauty. The works of his early Dutch period are sombre-toned, sharply lit, genre paintings of which the most famous is "The Potato Eaters". In that year, van Gogh went to Antwerp where he discovered the works of Rubens and purchased many Japanese prints.

In 1886, he went to Paris to join his brother Théo, the manager of Goupil's gallery. Having met other painters, he tried to imitate their techniques; he began to lighten his very dark palette. Unable to successfully copy the style, he developed his own more bold and unconventional style. In 1888, Van Gogh decided to go south to Arles where he hoped his friends would join him and help found a school of art. At The Yellow House, van Gogh hoped like-minded artists could create together.

Gauguin did join him but with disastrous results. Van Gogh's nervous temperament made him a difficult companion and night-long discussions combined with painting all day undermined his health.

Near the end of 1888, an incident led Gauguin to ultimately leave Arles. Van Gogh chased him with an open razor, was stopped by Gauguin, but ended up cutting a portion of his own earlobe off. Van Gogh then began to alternate between fits of madness and sanity and was sent to the asylum in Saint-Remy for treatment.

In May of 1890, after a couple of years at the asylum, he seemed much better and went to live in Auvers-sur-Oise under the watchful eye of Dr. Gachet. Two months later, he died from what is believed to have been a self-inflicted gunshot wound. During his brief career, he did not experience much success, he sold only one painting, lived in poverty, malnourished and overworked. The money he had was supplied by his brother, Theo, and was used primarily for art supplies, coffee and cigarettes.

In spite of his lack of success during his lifetime, van Gogh's legacy lives on having left a lasting impact on the world of art. Van Gogh is now viewed as one of the most influential artists having helped lay the foundations of modern art.

**Task 1: Study the words and phrases from the article below. Research the definitions.**

1. Van Gogh's early Dutch period consisted of brightly coloured genre paintings. **F**
2. Van Gogh was inspired by the works of Rubens and collected Japanese prints. **T**
3. He moved to Paris in 1886 to join his brother, who managed Goupil's gallery. **T**
4. Van Gogh successfully imitated the style of other painters in Paris. **F**
5. Van Gogh's mental health deteriorated after an incident with Gauguin, resulting in the cutting off of a portion of his earlobe. **T**
6. Van Gogh spent the rest of his life in an asylum in Saint-Remy for treatment. **T**

**Task 2: Make a summary of the event in Vincent's life by using the table below:**

Dates	1853	1870	1886	1888	1890
Events	Vincent was born in Holland on March 30th.	<p>He discovered his calling for art.</p> <p>He had worked as a clerk, salesman and preacher.</p> <p>He had two unsuccessful relationships.</p>	<p>He went to Paris to join his brother.</p> <p>He met several other artists and was inspired by them.</p>	<p>He went to art school in the south of France.</p> <p>He cut part of his own ear with a razor.</p>	<p>He spent time in an asylum.</p> <p>Vincent's death was this year due to a gunshot wound.</p>

**Task 3: On a separate piece of paper, write detailed answers to the following questions.**

- a. How did Vincent van Gogh's upbringing shape his journey as an artist?
- b. What were some of the major influences on van Gogh's artistic style?
- c. How did van Gogh's mental health struggles affect his art and relationships?
- d. What do you think about the relationship between van Gogh and Gauguin? How did it impact both artists' lives and work?
- e. How do you think his art continues to influence people today?

