

Graffiti

Key Stage 3

Aim of this lesson	To explore the meaning and use of graffiti as a form of criminal damage and vandalism, particularly in relation to the public transport network.
Learning objective	By the end of this lesson pupils should understand: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The origins of graffiti. - How, why and where it is used. - How graffiti is received by the community. - The impact and consequences it can have on the public transport network. - Repercussions for offenders. - Prevention methods
National curriculum	See links to the national curriculum document.
Context	Graffiti remains a key concern and priority for public transport executives and operators not only in the West Midlands but across the UK. In addition to financial implications and service disruption, vandalism and graffiti strongly influence people's perception of crime and personal safety.

<p>Introduction</p>	<p>The term graffiti originates from an Italian word meaning: words, pictures or symbols that are etched painted or otherwise physically marked onto property.</p> <p>Research task: ask your class to research the origins and emergence of graffiti. This exercise can be done independently or in groups, at home or in the classroom and there is flexibility in terms of how you wish to present or receive the information found by your students.</p> <p>This is an interesting introduction to the topic and a great opportunity to develop student's research skills. You should encourage you're students to use visual aids to support their findings; there is also the opportunity to include case studies and films to illustrate their research.</p> <p>Here are a few comments on the origins and emergence of graffiti:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graffiti is often considered to be a new social problem; however research suggests that graffiti dates back to the Roman Empire. • Graffiti as we recognise it now emerged from New York and the Hip Hop culture in the 1970s. • "Taki 183" is recognised as the founder of modern graffiti, his simple signature ('TAG') captured the attention of the New York Times in 1971. • Graffiti can be considered a 'social scene.'
<p>Activity one</p>	<p>Graffiti: art or criminal damage?</p> <p>Debate topic: should graffiti be considered an art form or criminal damage?</p>

	<p>Divide you class into small groups or larger teams and give them one of the following arguments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Graffiti is a form of criminal damage. 2. Graffiti is an art form. <p>They should prepare points to support their argument and be ready to feed back to the class.</p> <p>Their arguments could include things like:</p> <p>Graffiti is an art form because it is displayed in art galleries and people are willing to pay a lot of money for it. Banksy is an excellent example of this.</p> <p>Graffiti is a form of criminal damage, all graffiti is a destructive act against property. It becomes criminal if the property belongs to someone else.</p> <p>A key message to deliver throughout this activity is that graffiti in itself is neither an art form nor criminal damage. It is in fact the circumstances in which graffiti is used that make it so.</p>
<p>Activity two</p>	<p>“No real harm is done if I TAG a bus”</p> <p>True or False?</p>

The act and lasting presence of graffiti has a range of consequences:

- Strongly influences people's perception of crime and personal safety.
- Cost of cleaning, repairing and replacing damaged vehicles and infrastructure.
- Investing in design and security to prevent and deter criminal damage and graffiti. This includes an increased use of CCTV, operators and security staff.
- Delays and cancellations to services.
- Loss of revenue.

The act of graffiti can also carry a range of risks and potential harms, particularly when being carried out on the public transport network. For example on the railway, offenders could be hit by a train, electrocuted or fall from a height and/ or onto the tracks.

"Tag! You're Nicked" is a Birmingham Community Safety Partnership and Sideways Theatre production. Based on a real life case, this short film highlights the criminal process from arrest to conviction and the consequences of committing criminal damage by graffiti. The interviews highlight the views of transport operators, policing teams and community watch groups.

This video also highlights the financial cost of graffiti on the public transport network:

- Birmingham City Council spends £600,000 per year on cleaning up graffiti.
- Because of graffiti each year £1.4 million on buses and £87,000 on bus shelters, this figure does not take into account the disruption to services, staffing costs and resources needed to clean up.
- Chief Superintendent Malcolm Coall said "I think people forget this is a crime and the cost to society is immense."

<p>Activity three</p>	<p>Ask your students to design an initiative to reduce the number of incidents of graffiti on the West Midlands public transport network. In turn this should reduce the financial cost and consequences caused by the act and presence of graffiti.</p> <p>Starting this activity with a class discussion is likely to prompt ideas and creativity. Students in response to this brief can either choose an initiative which focuses on legal sites, community murals and gaining permission or alternatively restrictions, detection, punishment and rapid removal. The key to this activity is thinking about who is affected by graffiti and how, we want to prevent incidents from happening in order to reduce this harm.</p> <p>Students may find it useful to research the sort of methods already in place to prevent graffiti on the public transport network. Also students could look at their local bus, train and metro station and think about how it could be improved with the use of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural deterrents, landscaping, shrubs and vines. • Installation of lighting as a form of natural surveillance. • Fences, controlled exits, entrances and barriers to restrict access. • Protective coating to prevent graffiti or aid its removal. <p>Other initiatives could include media campaigns, leaflets, graffiti removal response plans, community engagement projects and punishments for offenders.</p>
<p>Lesson Summary</p>	<p>By the end of this lesson students should have a good understanding of the origins and controversy surrounding graffiti. They should also be aware that when used in the wrong way or context it can cause severe disruption, cost implications and compromise the public's feeling of safety. However, important work can and is being done to reduce offences and harm caused by this form of criminal damage.</p>