

All

SEMINAR 2 The Fine Arts

Quotes about the Fine Arts

Task 1 – Read the quotes, discuss your views with your partner, and then present their opinion to the class.

1 "Art may imitate life, but life imitates TV." Ani Difranco, American contemporary artist

2 "People discuss my art and pretend¹ to understand as if it were necessary to understand, when it's simply necessary to love." Claude Monet (1840-1926), French Impressionist painter

3 "The artist who aims at perfection in everything achieves it in nothing." Eugene Delacroix (1798-1863) French classical painter

4 "The enemy of art is the absence of limitations." Orson Welles (1915-1985), American filmmaker

5 "An artist is not a special kind of person, but every person is a special kind of artist." Ananda Coomaraswamy (1877-1947), Sri Lankan patriot, art historian, orientalist

6 "What garlic is to food, insanity² is to art." Anonymous

7 "What strikes me is the fact that in our society, art has become something which is only related to objects, and not to individuals, or to life." Michel Foucault (1926-1984), French cultural historian

8 "Whenever I hear the word culture, I reach for my gun." Hermann Goering (1893-1946), President of the Reichstag in Nazi Germany

Task 2 – Discussion Questions

1. What's your favourite style of art? What styles do you dislike?

2. When was the last time you went to an art gallery?

3. What do you have on your walls at home?

4. If you could afford it, what kind of art would you have in your home?

5. What are some of your favourite works of art?

Artwork Identification Quiz

Task 3 - Look at the titles below and match them to the descriptions of artworks.

1. Donatello, *David*, 1433
2. Leonardo da Vinci, *Mona Lisa*, 1503-1506
3. Diego da Silva y Velázquez, *Las Meninas*, 1656
4. Vincent Van Gogh, *Sunflowers*, 1888
5. Claude Monet, *Waterlily Pond*, 1899
6. Juan Gris, *Glasses, Newspaper and a Bottle of Wine*, 1913
7. Andy Warhol, *Marylin*, 1967
8. Christo (Javacheff): *The Reichstag Wrapped*, 1995

A) This is a massive sculptural work the environmental sculptor created by covering one of the landmarks of Berlin in woven nylon, secured by rope. The temporary transformation of the old parliament building into a work of art was an exciting new way of creating sculpture. By covering it in fabric, the artist drew people's attention to the sculptural details of the building, while also creating a majestic and mysterious object of beauty. It also served to emphasize the importance of preserving such a historical monument.

B) Brilliant and startling, this simple vase of flowers explodes with razor-sharp vibrancy. The brushstrokes have been laden with thick paint, which the author applied like a sculptor slapping clay on to a relief.³ The colours – shades of yellow and brown – and the technique express a beautiful world of hope and sunlight.

C) The artist has used sliced sections of newspaper to create this unusual interpretation of a still life.⁴ The objects have been taken whole and then fragmented, painted and glued back together again within the confines of parallel vertical planes in the Cubist technique. The importance of this work lies in its innovative method of portraying different sections of an object simultaneously, while rejecting the conventions of light and shade.

D) The painting is famous all over the world for the enigmatic smile of its subject and for being one of the few paintings by the most esteemed of the Renaissance masters. The identity of the sitter remains unknown, and some debate still rages over whether the figure is indeed a man or a woman, but the painting, with its haunting landscape, rises above this controversy in the quality of its execution.⁵ A traditional Renaissance portrait in composition, its beauty lies in the oil painting technique known as *sfumato*.

E) Shimmering and mingling colours and reflections, this landscape is airy and saturated with light. The author has achieved this effect by covering his canvas with individual brushstrokes of different colours, creating a rich mist of blues, reds, and greens that glint like light on the surface of the water.

F) The five-year old *Infanta* Margareta-Teresa stands in the centre of the canvas surrounded by her retinue of maids and dwarfs. The author depicted himself on the left of the canvas, painting a huge portrait of the King and Queen who can be seen reflected in the mirror directly behind the *Infanta's* head. The author is one of the greatest portraitists of all time and this work is considered the masterpiece of his final years.

G) The actress's face is presented as an impenetrable mask in bright luminous colours. Published in ten different colour combinations, using the impersonal screen-printing process, the multi-coloured surface portrays her image in a startlingly lurid manner. The author used a publicity still⁶ as the basis for this and other pictures of her, presenting us with a frozen image that reinforces the universal power of the most tragic of all Hollywood's personae.

H) This statue shows the young hero in a dreamy, contemplative mood after slaying Goliath, whose head lies at his feet. The flowing naturalism of the figure's pose, his shy demeanour, and the sensual surface texture of the bronze combine to bring the statue to life. This ability to instil human emotion in Classical statues was the author's greatest gift.

Before you read...

What was your experience of art education? To what extent should education include the arts?

Introduction to Art History: Perception Skills

1 The discipline of art history is dependent upon not only a process that often requires precise and eloquent writing, but equally precise and careful looking as well, a skill far less well-taught than anything else. Research suggests that even museum goers who characterized themselves as “regular” and “devoted” visitors and “art lovers” spent *on average* less than three seconds in front of any single art work. In addition, they were observed to spend *more* time reading the wall labels⁷ than looking at the art work. At the recent Art Institute of Chicago megashow *Van Gogh and Gauguin*, approximately 20% of visitors had difficulty determining the difference between the original paintings and large-scale posters with reproductions and text.

2 As museums increasingly⁸ keep their major paintings behind glass and viewers at a distance, as “audio tours” replace actual⁹ observation and passionate immersion in the artwork, these trends will only continue. When you go to look at objects in museums, remember, the museum is there to serve *you*. Remember that the art objects may be there to impress¹⁰ or instruct¹¹ you, but almost certainly those were not the original intentions¹² of the artist or the original uses of the work.

Things you can do to improve your observation experience:

3 *Get up close.* Surface, in a painting, work of sculpture, or even a building, contains the most direct sign of the artist; this layer is full of pain, doubt¹³, and assertiveness. You can get some idea of the artist’s relationship to the work by looking at the marks left by brush stroke, darkroom chemistry, the strike of the mallet against the chisel. Don’t be afraid of coming close to the object. Look up from below, look across the surface. Treat it as a topographical map. Look at the color *within* the brush strokes.

4 *See the whole.* Often we walk around an object, consuming it in parts, because there are people standing in the way. Be patient. Composition, structure, illusion: all these are meant to give an impact¹⁴ at a certain distance, but only once you see the work entire.

5 *Read the labels.* This is where you get the instructions and sometimes the patronizing¹⁵ tone. It’s worth noting that quality. To what level is the label directed? But don’t let that tone affect you — take the information and go.

6 *Look at the larger collection.* At most museums, art objects have been carefully arranged in their rooms to reflect important ideas, to stimulate comparisons, to clarify historical periods or contrast them. Be sure to notice.

7 *Question everything!* You are neither a passive observer nor an expert. Your greatest tool is your ability to ask questions of the objects, the setting, the museum. Why those frames? Why that date? Why oil and not tempera? Other people around you might be full of interesting ideas. And don’t forget the guards.

8 *Admit to it: It’s exhausting!* Two rooms, a couple of buildings, are about all you can really do. Indulge yourself. These are guilty pleasures. Let your responses¹⁶ come, question them, study them, take responsibility for them. They’re yours. They *aren’t* the artwork’s, or the artist’s. Don’t confuse response, especially personal response, with “reality.” But don’t deny¹⁷, ignore, or reject¹⁸ those responses. They’re part of the intended or unintended reactions that artworks provoke. Consider this an adventure! It is.

Task 4 – Find the underlined words in the article to match the descriptions below:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. enjoy, but feel guilty (bad): _____ | 10. subject: _____ |
| 2. perceiving, taking in: _____ | 11. to negate: _____ |
| 3. tiring: _____ | 12. exact: _____ |
| 4. to show: _____ | 13. the use of the paint brush: _____ |
| 5. complete interest, total experience: _____ | 14. environment: _____ |
| 6. strong effect: _____ | 15. more and more: _____ |
| 7. refuse: _____ | 16. materials for developing photos: _____ |
| 8. pedantic: _____ | 17. reactions, feelings: _____ |
| 9. actions involved in making sculpture: _____ | 18. expressive: _____ |

Discussion Questions

1. Does the author like museums?
2. Who did the author write this article for?
3. What is a neglected¹⁹ skill in the study of art history?
4. Would you like to study with this professor?
5. Has the study of art been inspiring for you? How?

Group Work – Task 5 – you will receive some images (pictures)...

1. Describe the paintings in not more than three sentences each.
2. Choose one of the paintings and describe it in detail.
3. Choose two of the paintings and **compare** them (emphasise the similarities).
4. Choose two of the paintings and **contrast** them (emphasise the differences).

A note about writing style: When you are writing a paper, an **opening sentence of comparison** should state that the two subjects are similar enough to be compared, but can also mention some differences! An **opening sentence of contrast** should state how the two subjects are different, but can also mention some similarities!

For comparing/contrasting, the methods below can be used:

1. **BLOCK FORMAT** – first describe one image completely, then the second one in relation to the first.
2. **SEPARATING FORMAT** – take individual features or qualities relating to both images and compare/contrast them.

COMPARING

X is like Y
X is similar to Y
X is comparable to Y
X is as ... as Y
X resembles Y in many ways
X parallels Y in some ways

CONTRASTING

X is unlike Y
X is different from Y
X differs from Y to some extent in that...
Unlike X, Y is
In contrast to X, Y is
Compared to X, Y is ... (In comparison to X, Y is)

X is exactly→ precisely→ very much→ (quite) a lot → rather→ somewhat→ a little → slightly→ scarcely→ hardly→ only just→ not at all **like Y**.

X is exactly→ precisely→ just→ virtually→ practically→ more or less→ almost→ nearly→ about **the same as Y**.

X is not exactly→ entirely→ quite **the same as / like Y**. **X is totally**→ completely→ entirely→ quite **different from Y**.

X is not quite as... as Y.

X and Y are different / dissimilar in every way / respect.

Task 6 – Paragraph Closing Sentences

Each paragraph usually ends with a sentence that paraphrases the main idea of the paragraph, often leading the reader to the next paragraph. Look at the two students' paragraphs about art subsidisation²⁰ and the six sentences below. Which of the sentences do you feel best complete their paragraphs?

Paragraph A:

When it comes to the arts, there is a clear case for subsidy.²⁰ The arts have nothing to do with making money. They exist in order to express certain essential truths about human beings by means of new kinds of poetry, music, painting, and so on. However, these new kinds of art may not be popular, and thus there may be little support by the general public for them, and so artists cannot rely on selling their work to provide them with an income. In fact, history shows that many artists have not been properly appreciated while they were alive. For example, Mozart, whose works are so popular nowadays, lived close to poverty for most of his life.

Paragraph B:

There are no grounds²¹ for subsidising the arts. The arts are not like food, education, or health, which are part of the basic necessities of life, and which should therefore be subsidised if necessary. On the contrary, most of us live our lives quite happily without paying any attention to the arts. They appeal²² only to a small minority and are a luxury, rather than an essential. Furthermore, those who value the arts can usually afford to pay the costs involved. The large corporations that buy the paintings of artists such as Van Gogh for millions of dollars are a case in point.

Possible closing sentences:

1. Thus²³, in order to ensure²⁴ their survival, it is essential for the arts to be subsidised.
2. Companies which are capable of making such large payments should do much more to sponsor the arts.
3. If he had been subsidised, Mozart would not have been so poor.
4. In addition, if the arts are subsidised, then they are also likely²⁵ to be controlled by the government.
5. Only essentials which cannot otherwise be paid for should be subsidised, and the arts should therefore be left to pay their own way.
6. When the arts have to make money, they are no longer fulfilling²⁶ their true purpose, but instead become a branch of commerce.

Excerpt from M. Waters, A. Waters, Study Task in English, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p.110.

Discussion point

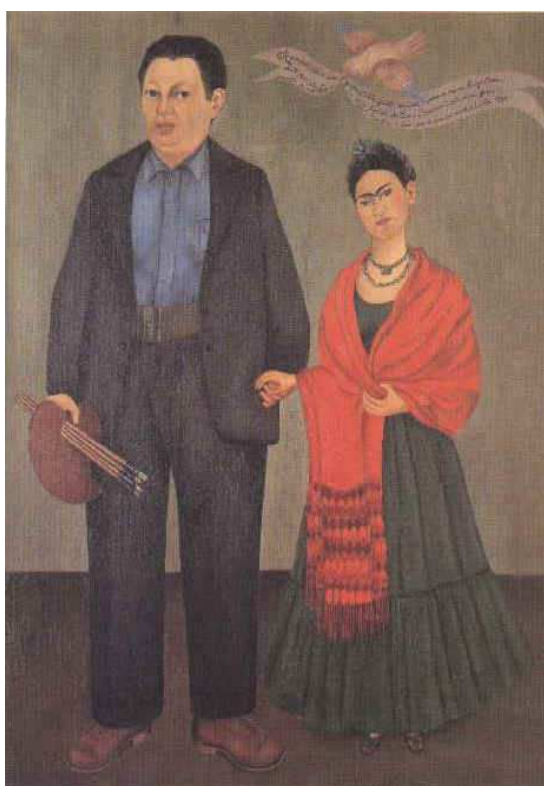
Which of the two approaches to art subsidisation above do you support?

Task 7 – Examining the Self Portrait: Frida Kahlo

How would you describe these three paintings by Mexican artist Frida Kahlo? Work with a partner and discuss what you think might be the story behind each picture.



Roots, 1943



Frida and Diego Rivera, 1931



Self portrait with cropped hair, 1940

Task 8 – Read the following summary of Frida Kahlo's life story and discuss any aspects of her life that you can see depicted in the three paintings above.

One of the most noteworthy²⁷ artists of the 20th Century, Frida Kahlo was born in Coyoacán, Mexico in 1907; however, she claimed her birthdate as 1910, the year of the Mexican Revolution, saying that she and modern Mexico had been born together. A mixture of Surrealism and folk art, with a lot of introspection, her paintings are fascinating glimpses into Mexican life during the first half of the century. The subjects she chose reveal²⁸ the dichotomy of her own life: the self-portraits show both her physical and emotional pain; the still lifes⁴ show the sensual joy of life which she also experienced.

When she was six years old, she contracted polio and spent nine months confined to her room. When she was 18, she was seriously injured in an accident between a streetcar and a bus. Over the years, she underwent 32 major operations and suffered enormous pain for the rest of her life. Even though she had no formal training, this situation made her into the artist that she was. Because she had to spend much of her time "bored as hell in bed", she started painting.

She married the famous muralist Diego Rivera when she was twenty. He was forty-two and had already been married twice. She told a journalist, "When I was seventeen, Diego began to fall in love with me. My father didn't like Diego, because he was a communist and it was like an elephant marrying a dove." They had a stormy relationship. Her husband was often unfaithful and even had an affair with Frida's younger sister. Frida also had extra-marital affairs, including one with Leon Trotsky, when the Russian leader was exiled from the Soviet Union.

In January 1939, she travelled to Paris where the Louvre purchased one of her self-portraits. On her return to Mexico, Frida and Diego began divorce proceedings; Frida was devastated and stopped wearing the traditional Mexican dresses that Diego loved so much. Ironically, she painted some of her most powerful works during their separation. The couple remarried in December 1940. Frida was never able to have children. She said, "My painting carries within it the message of pain." When asked why she painted herself so often, she replied, "Because I am all alone." She died in July 1954 barely two weeks after taking part in a communist demonstration.

Task 9 – Listen carefully to three people discussing the paintings. How is the text below different from what they are actually saying?

A: So this is her friend – Diego Rivera. She can't have fallen in love with him for his books, can she?

B: No, I suppose he must have been very rich or very intelligent.

C: Actually, he was both very intelligent and very rich. At first, Frida's mother was against her marrying Diego, because he was a communist, but she finally agreed to it because she couldn't pay her daughter's medical expenses anymore. Frida must have paid a fortune on doctors and operations over the years.

B: Oh, yes, what a miserable life – first polio and then that awful accident. It's surprising she produced so many paintings, isn't it?

A: Yes, she must have been a really brave woman.

B: But the marriage didn't work out too well, did it?

C: Well, it had its problems.

B: She painted this one with the cropped hair while they were apart, didn't she?

C: Yes, that's right.

B: She really looks like a man here. In fact, she looks as if she's got a moustache! And why was she wearing a man's suit?

A: I thought it might have had something to do with women's rights. You know, she cut off her hair to symbolize equality or something.

C: No, the reason she cut off her hair and put on a man's suit is because Diego Rivera loved her long hair and also loved the customary women's Mexican dresses she used to wear. She did it to hurt him.

B: And why did they divorce?

C: Nobody really knows. Diego must have found out about Frida's affair with Leon Trotsky, or it could have been Frida who was unhappy about Diego's affair with an American film star. What we are certain about is that Frida was very unhappy about the divorce.

A: But they were back together by the time she painted "Roots".

C: Yes, they remarried a year after they separated. She painted this one when her health was beginning to worsen. She must have been in a lot of pain.

B: I find this one rather depressing. The rocks she's lying on don't look very comfortable. I suppose they symbolize her pain.

C: Probably, but actually, if you look at the expression on her face, she is quite calm. I think the green leaves imply hope. In spite of everything, she was a very positive person. The last painting she did was called "Viva la vida – Long Live Life".

How did their interpretations of the paintings compare with yours?

Adapted from: Sue Kay & Vaughan Jones, Inside Out Upper Intermediate Student's Book, Macmillan Heinemann, Oxford, 2001, Unit 10, and <http://www.theminx.com/issue11/frida.htm> viewed on 18.3.2003.

Grammar – Comparatives – Superlatives – Task 10 – Fill in the blanks with *as* or *like*.

1. The Rococo painter Boucher, _____ Watteau, was influenced by Rubens.
2. Florentine painters did not have such great feeling for colour _____ most Venetians had.
3. Religious painting is not _____ popular _____ it used to be.
4. _____ Bosch before him, Breugel could evoke a surrealist-allegorical scene in his work.
5. František Kupka became a pioneer of a new style called *Orphism*, _____ Kandinsky.
6. *El Prado* is _____ famous _____ *Uffizi*.
7. Abstract art doesn't seek to represent the world around us _____ realism does.
8. Some artists, such _____ Mozart, lived close to poverty for most of their lives.
9. Art is not a life necessity, just _____ any other luxury.
10. _____ an art lover, I don't miss any exhibition in my town.

Task 11 – Complete the sentences using a superlative (-est or most/least) or a comparative (-er or more/less).

1. The *Venus of Milo* is _____ sculpture in The Louvre. (well-known)
2. Ryman's *Courier II* is _____ painting I've ever seen; it's not a painting at all. (funny)
3. Renoir differed a lot from Monet with a much _____ range of subject matter and a _____ response to things seen. (wide, great)
4. _____ the painting, _____ the price will be. (famous, high)
5. Some artists find that to produce a piece of art is _____ part of their work; to sell is _____ problem. (little, difficult)
6. "Shockingly mad, _____ than ever, quite mad," wrote Horace Walpole in 1785, having seen a picture by Henry Fuseli. (mad)
7. In the painting *Anatomy Lesson of Dr Tulp* (by Rembrandt), the Amsterdam surgeons are _____ than the dissected corpse²⁹ before them. (little interesting)
8. _____ and _____ genius of the 18th century was Francisco Goya. (long-lived, influential)
9. Impressionism is often _____ to understand than expressionism. (easy)
10. This year the art gallery had _____ visitors than last year. (few)
11. We managed to buy that painting _____ than we had expected. (cheaply)
12. He is not in _____ interested in fine arts. (little)

Vocabulary

1. *to pretend	předstírat
2. insanity	šílenství
3. slapping clay on relief (slang)	tvarování reliéfu z hlíny
4. still life; still lifes (plural)	zátiší
5. execution	provedení
6. publicity still (photograph)	propagační fotografie
7. *label	štítek
8. *increasingly	více a více
9. *actual	skutečný
10. *to impress	udělat dojem
11. *to instruct	poučit
12. *intention	záměr
13. *doubt	pochybnost, pochybovat
14. *impact	vliv, dopad, účinek
15. *patronizing	urážlivě shovívavý
16. *response	reakce
17. *to deny	popřít
18. *to reject	odmítnout
19. *to be neglected	být opomíjen
20. *subsidy, to subsidize	dotace, dotovat
21. *grounds for	důvody pro
22. *to appeal	dělat dobrý dojem na, líbit se komu
23. *thus	a tak, tudíž
24. *to ensure	zajistit
25. *is likely to be	pravděpodobně bude
26. *to fulfil	plnit
27. *noteworthy (important)	pozoruhodný
28. *to reveal	odhalit, zobrazit, vyjevit
29. dissected corpse	rozpitvaná mrtvola

Word bank

1. art gallery	umělecká galerie
2. art lover	milovník umění
3. oil painting	olejomalba
4. canvas	plátno
5. landscape	krajinka
6. still life	zátiší
7. picture frame	rám obrazu
8. artistic	umělecký
9. sculpture	socha
10. statue	socha
11. sculptor	sochař
12. collection of modern art	sbírka moderního umění
13. contemporary art	současné umění
14. painting techniques	techniky malby
15. artistry (skill)	umělecké mistrovství, umění (schopnost)
16. work of art	umělecké dílo