

Deepening Understanding

UKS2 Narrative Text

A Work of Art? by Laura Curtis



'Have you seen his latest piece?' I heard the whispers before I had even seen it on the screen in Miss Jones' classroom. His latest display of art or, as some might say, his latest scrawl of graffiti. Of course I had seen it - I had admired it the very moment I knew it had suddenly materialised upon the wall.

'He's nothing more than a mere vandal in my opinion,' Scarlett remarked, brandishing her nose in the air with that almighty flick of the hair she did when she thought she was right about something. I ignored her. But not before I heard her sniff self-righteously. Her other trademark. I rolled my eyes and turned away.

Scarlett clearly did not appreciate Banksy and all that he stood for, but I certainly did. This most mysterious, elusive of artists had always intrigued me ever since I had glimpsed his first mural on a wall whilst we were on holiday in London. I could imagine every detail...the red heart-shaped balloon, which seemed to pulsate with a life force of its very own, in stark contrast to the black

and white of the lone young girl. I pictured her arm stretching outwards towards the dangling string. Gazing onwards, I had always pondered the meaning - was she trying to catch the balloon or was it floating away? I knew the title of the piece: 'There is Always Hope'. Yes, I believed that too.

In my head, I could imagine the beauty of his signature black and white strokes and shades of meaning. The subtle tones of grey - sometimes with a splash of colour - were all masterfully applied upon the brickwork to create something altogether sublime and stunning. I could gaze at his pieces for hours, absorbing the darkness of the shadows, the truth in the white. The images seemed to speak to me; for me, it was true that a picture could tell a thousand words.

What was it that he wanted to say? What message was he trying to give to us, to society, to the world at large...to me through his art?

In my mind's eye, I pictured more of his artworks. When I first discovered his talent, I remember feeling amazed at his prolific nature - his work could be found adorning walls all over the world from 'Rage, Flower Thrower' in Jerusalem to the 'Child Soldier' piece in Los Angeles, from 'Washing Zebra Stripes' in Timbuktu to the 'Security Guard with a Pink Balloon Dog' in Ontario. The realms of his studio and his imagination seemed endless.

My research had led me to hours of being held transfixed by his indoor artworks; they truly were a fusion of tradition and modernity as quaint countryside scenes were juxtaposed with graffiti, as nature mingled with war, as right stood against wrong. Not just that, there were his sculptures and they were something else. Two thousand years of human imagination, skilfully conjured to life by hands of long dead artists, were redesigned by Banksy with the addition of an accessory, a touch of his thought, a flash of his creativity.



His most recent piece had me transfixed as soon as I saw it; the image of a child in the snow at Christmas appeared one night in Port Talbot in Wales on the most unremarkable of places - a garage wall. I knew that hundreds had flocked to gaze at this piece of artwork which made it all the more alluring given the mystery behind the hands who created it.

In Banksy's work, irony, symbolism, humour and poignancy filtered through every flick of the brush, every daub of paint, every smudge of a thumb, every touch in the clay.

'It's just graffiti, a mess of spray paint on a wall. It's nothing special.' Scarlett's words made me focus away from the camera images in my head to her face.

With a small smile, I cocked my head, turned away saying nothing. She was entitled to her opinion and I was entitled to mine. I loved his art and for me that was all that mattered.

