



ADVANCED GCE
CRITICAL THINKING
Unit 4: Critical Reasoning

F494/RB

RESOURCE BOOKLET

Tuesday 20 January 2009
Morning

Duration: 1 hour 45 minutes



INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

- You should spend about 10 minutes reading the article by Germaine Greer and use it to answer Section B.

INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES

- This document consists of **4** pages. Any blank pages are indicated.

Background Information

Banksy

Well known political graffiti artist.



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Loyalists, Republicans and Northern Ireland

Loyalists are 'loyal' to the idea of Northern Ireland being part of the UK. Republicans want Northern Ireland to be part of the Irish Republic. There was a long and violent dispute between these two groups.

West Bank Barrier

420 miles of concrete wall and fencing up to 8m high, which is a focal point of disputes between Israel and Palestine.

Lascaux

A part of France where caves have been found with clear, detailed wall paintings of animals.



Western Arnhem Land

A part of Australia with a long tradition of rock painting. Some paintings show animals which have been extinct for over 25,000 years.

Germaine Greer

Instead of spending a fortune getting rid of graffiti, why don't we just give it marks out of 10?

Thirty-five years ago I bought a dilapidated house in North Kensington, London, partly because it sported a magnificent graffito¹. When the house was done up, the graffito disappeared. 1

For months I thought about restoring my graffito; but eventually I realised that for the owner of a house to scribble on it is just pathetic. You've got to be working full-tilt, hanging head downward off a motorway bridge with your mates holding you by the feet, writing ... what? Probably your tag² in blocky letters with contrasting trim. 2

Nearly all graffiti are just annoying, but you have to put up with the millions of naff ones if you want the occasional brilliant one. A great graffito is not simply an arresting design; it is a once-in-a-lifetime coincidence of work, place and space. Would anyone now dare to sandblast the murals of loyalists and republicans from the walls of Belfast? Now old IRA wall painting are being touched up and recycled with messages in Arabic signifying solidarity for the Palestinians. And Banksy has done his best work on the West Bank Barrier. 3

Most aerosol art, like most other art, is feeble and bad. If bad art was a crime, some of our most respected citizens would have been banged up years ago. Wall art, whether brilliant or ordinary, is a crime so serious that it is to be treated with zero tolerance: fortunes are spent in tackling the graffiti scourge; in Berlin low-flying aircraft are used to scan the streets with infra-red cameras to catch the spray painters at work. Oceans of highly toxic solvents are being sluiced over walls and hoardings to wash the paint into the sewers and eventually into the water table. Ridiculous proposals are coming from all quarters: possession of spray paint and selling of spray paint will become crimes; taggers will have their driving licences withdrawn and be fined huge amounts on the spot. In England two young men known in art as Krek and Mers, who haven't done a graffito in two years, have been sent to prison for 12 months and 15 months respectively – though one of them was due to start an art course at university and his mother had offered to pay for the damage. 4

Graffiti cost Londoners £100m a year, and the country as a whole more than a billion, we are told; what is actually costing is not the art, which is free, but its destruction. The engine driving the colossal expenditure is Encams, mastermind of the Keep Britain Tidy Campaign, which implores us not to drop litter or chewing gum, dump cars or rubbish, make lots of noise, or leave our dogs' mess on the pavement. Major mess-makers they leave well alone. 5

Apparently graffiti and fly-posting can fill people with a feeling of unease or fear, because they associate both with crime. As fear of crime is already way out of proportion to the actual incidence of crime, loathing of graffiti must be equally, if not more irrational. We should not pander to it. Walls don't look much better after their graffiti have been washed off than they did before. So we might as well stop washing graffiti off walls. In environmental terms, the washing-off makes a worse mess than the painting ever did. 6

The wall-painters themselves will paint over each others' work, especially if they consider it feeble. A far less costly option is for us all to make our own stencils giving the defacers marks out of ten, to remind the artists that there are people out there who have eyes to see, and as much right to say what they think as the artists. The work then becomes a layered dialogue between artists and public. Most tags deserve the single-word comment 'prat'. Whether at Lascaux 17,000 years ago or in Western Arnhem Land 50,000 years ago, art began on a wall. If the sandblasters had been around in either place, we would have lost a precious inheritance. 7

¹ Graffito: one piece of graffiti

² Tag: signature or symbol of graffiti artist

Extract from G. Greer, *Instead of spending a fortune getting rid of graffiti, why don't we just give it marks out of 10?*, 24 September 2007 © Guardian News & Media Ltd 2007



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