

TED , Mia Nacamulli , Kelly Wall

TED-Ed Lessons Worth Sharing, Series The Artist's Palette: A Brief History of Graffiti

Online (2016)

TAGS: [Graffiti](#) [Plutarch](#) [Pompeii](#) [Rome](#) [Vandals](#)



We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

| General information | |
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| <i>Title of the work</i> | TED-Ed Lessons Worth Sharing, Series The Artist's Palette: A Brief History of Graffiti |
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| <i>Running time</i> | 4:31 min |
| <i>Official Website</i> | ed.ted.com (accessed: August 20, 2018) |
| <i>Available Online</i> | youtube.com (accessed: August 20, 2018) |
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Joanna Kłos, "Entry on: TED-Ed Lessons Worth Sharing, Series The Artist's Palette: A Brief History of Graffiti by TED , Mia Nacamulli, Kelly Wall", peer-reviewed by Elżbieta Olechowska and Lisa Maurice. *Our Mythical Childhood Survey* (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: <http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/78>. Entry version as of December 26, 2024.

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Creators



TED (Company)

Logo retrieved from [Wikipedia](#), public domain (accessed: December 8, 2021).

[TED: Technology, Entertainment, Design](#) (accessed: July 6, 2018) is a media organization focused on "ideas worth spreading", which organizes conferences and creates online talks for free distribution. One of its initiatives is TED-Ed (ed.ted.com), an online platform hosting short interactive lessons. Each lesson consists of four sections:

- *Watch* - animated educational video (available also on YouTube);
- *Think* - a short quiz about the video's content;
- *Dig Deeper* - a concise text on where to search for more information on the topic (providing mainly hyperlinks to educational websites rather than "traditional" bibliographical references);
- *Discuss* - a forum with two types of discussions: Guided (i.e. created by the educators), and Free (i.e. created by the viewers).

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Mia Nacamulli

Mia Nacamulli is a writer and educator who graduated in film/video studies; since 2015 she has worked as a script writer and editor for TED Conferences.

Source:

LinkedIn [profile](#) (accessed: March 30, 2017).

Bio prepared by Joanna Kłos, University of Warsaw,
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Kelly Wall

Kelly Wall is a history teacher with 8-year experience at The Bush School, University of Michigan, and an educator working in innovative learning environments. She describes herself as a “researcher, instructional coach, outreach coordinator, curriculum designer, or educator.” She has given dozens of public speeches on the topic of education and history published at [her Seelio website](#) (accessed March 30, 2017). Currently she also works as a Research Assistant in *The Big History Project*, a free educational social studies learning platform for middle and high school students.

[Profile](#) at LinkedIn (accessed March 30, 2017).

[Profile](#) at seelio.com (accessed March 30, 2017).

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Additional information

Summary

Graffiti in the form of spray paintings, tags, and murals is present almost everywhere across contemporary cities: on bridges, walls, subway cars. It is useful for expressing identity, artistic and political preferences – on the other hand, it is still controversial as it questions certain rules of social life. In a brief outline of the history of graffiti a female narrator claims that in ancient Rome graffiti was widely accepted, and Romans used walls for daily communication; Mayas used drawings for the same purpose. Then the functions of graffiti in ancient Pompeii are discussed: graffiti was a medium for spells, emotional expression, political campaigning, expressing support for favourite gladiators. There were voices against graffiti – the narrator cites Plutarch's opinion (from *De curiositate*, without mentioning the title) calling graffiti "ridiculous and pointless."

Next, the tribe of Vandals who destroyed Rome is introduced as eponymous for "vandalism," the term dating from the time of French Revolution. In the 20th century graffiti developed into an extremely popular form of illegal art, sometimes with a propaganda twist, as during WW2 or at the Berlin Wall. Today the status of graffiti is ambiguous, on one hand the traditions from 1960s–80s are not totally gone and many artists still remain underground; on the other, graffiti became part of mainstream, as it is often produced legally and inspires other, more "traditional" genres of art.

The section "Think" contains 8 questions (ancient culture is present in two); "Dig Deeper" contains 3 paragraphs referring to the resources of both historical and current knowledge about graffiti in different countries – an article from "Smithsonian.com" about Pompeian walls is also linked; "Discuss" contains one guided discussion: "What does the future of graffiti look like?" with 35 answers so far, and 2 open discussions.

As at March 30, 2017 the video had been viewed 258427 times; it gained 4127 "thumbs up" and 439 comments on YouTube.

Analysis

The video serves as a didactic tool, which makes young people learn about ancient graffiti as a phenomenon which has its equivalents in other cultures, but remains relevant for its own time and space.



Antiquity is presented here as a fundamental stage in developing the cultural concept of spontaneous sharing one's thoughts or expressing aesthetic ideas on the public urban surfaces - this concept is constantly renewed by representatives of each generation living in today's cities all over the world.

Classical, Mythological,
Traditional Motifs,
Characters, and
Concepts

[Graffiti Plutarch Pompeii Rome Vandals](#)

Other Motifs, Figures,
and Concepts Relevant
for Children and Youth
Culture

[Heritage History Invention](#)

Further Reading

Ohlson, K., [Reading the Writing on Pompeii's Walls](#), available at Smithsonian.com, July 26, 010 (accessed: August 20, 2018).

[The Big History](#) project website (accessed: August 20, 2018).

