**Theme 5: Art controversies**

**COURSE TEXT and WORKSHEET (required to be completed and submitted)**

**Name and parallel group (A or B): ………………………………………………………………………..**

*Before you read*

**Warm-up questions**

Is art a controversial issue? Are artistic controversies related to politics?

Do different social classes have different interpretations for artworks?

What is the role of religion in interpreting artworks?

**Skimming the text**

Read the text’s title (headings and subheadings) and

 Write some of the text’s keywords in the following blanks.

……………… ……………… ……………… ………………

 Write the names of some important people and places given in the

reading passage.

…………….… ……………… ……………… ………………

 Read the first sentences of each paragraph. What do you think the

reading is probably about?

………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………

**Group work (classroom task)**

Discuss the following terms in groups and compare your answers with

your partners.

 Controversy  Anti-art

 Aniconism  Capitalism

 Originality  Bourgeois ideology

*Part Ι. Reading*

**Art controversies**

[1] In determining what you believe ‘art’ is, you first need to understand a bit

about art controversies throughout history. There are many ethical issues

that arise in determining what is or is not art. Not only that, but you need to

read about what art critics have to say about art today: Does government

have a right to judge the artworks? Does today's art reflect society's morals?

etc.. As time has moved on and contemporary art has moved with it,

controversy has somehow always managed to keep up. Going back to the

beginning of art historical study cases can be found of both individual artists

and groups who have rocked the artistic with their innovative contributions

to the art of the day. The 20th century was no exception.

[2] Art has long been controversial, that is to say disliked by some viewers,

for a wide variety of reasons, though most pre-modern controversies are

dimly recorded, or completely lost to a modern view. ‘Aniconism’ is a

general dislike of either all figurative images, or often just religious ones,

and has been a thread in many major religions. It has been a crucial factor

in the history of Islamic art, where depictions of ‘Muhammad’ remain

especially controversial. Much art has been disliked purely because it

depicted or otherwise stood for unpopular rulers, parties or other groups.

[3] Artistic conventions have often been conservative and taken very seriously

by art critics. The iconographic content of art could cause controversy, as

with late medieval depictions of the new motif of *the Swoon of the Virgin* in

scenes of the *Crucifixion of Jesus*. The *Last Judgment* by *Michelangelo* was

controversial for various reasons, including breaches of decorum through

nudity and the Apollo-like pose of Christ.

[4] The content of much formal art through history was dictated by the

patron or commissioner rather than just the artist, but with the advent of

‘Romanticism’, and economic changes in the production of art, the artists'

vision became the usual determinant of the content of his art, increasing

the incidence of controversies, though often reducing their significance.

Strong incentives for perceived originality and publicity also encouraged

artists to generate controversy.

[5] The gradual abandonment of ‘Naturalism and the depiction of realistic

representations of the visual appearance of subjects in the 19th and 20th

centuries led to a controversy lasting for over a century. In the twentieth

century, Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* (1937) used cubist techniques with

monochromatic oils, to depict the harrowing consequences of a

contemporary bombing of a small, ancient Basque town. *Andres Serrano*'s

*Piss Christ* (1989) is a photograph of a crucifix, sacred to the Christian

religion and representing Christ's sacrifice and final suffering, submerged

in a glass of the artist's own urine. The resulting uproar led to comments in

the United States Senate about public funding of the arts.

[6] Anti-art is a loosely-used term applied to an array of concepts and

attitudes that reject prior definitions of art and question art in general. Antiart

tends to conduct this questioning and rejection from the vantage point of

art. The term is associated with the Dada movement and is generally

accepted as attributable to *Marcel Duchamp* pre-World War I around 1914,

when he began to use found objects as art. It was used to describe

revolutionary forms of art.

**"Le rire" (1887) by Eugène Bataille.**

[7] Anti-art is also a tendency in the theoretical understanding of art and

‘Fine Art’. The philosopher *Roger Taylor* puts forward that art is a

bourgeois ideology that has its origins with capitalism in *Art, an Enemy of*

*the People*. Holding a strong anti-essentialist position he stated also that

art has not always existed and is not universal but peculiar to Europe.

*Part ΙΙ. Word study: Pronunciations, definitions and examples*

***Translate (in writing) and learn the following vocabulary:***

**Advent (n.) /**ˈædvent/

The arrival of a notable person, thing, or event.

*By the* ***advent*** *of 20th century, human life became modernized.*

**Aniconism** (n.) /ənika:nizəm/

The practice or belief in avoiding or shunning images of divine beings,

prophets or other respected religious figures.

***Aniconism*** *is a considerable issue in Islamic movies.*

**Consequence (n.) /**ˈkansikuwəns/

A result or effect of an action or condition.

*If you break the law you should wait for its* ***consequences****.*

**Conservative (adj.) /**kənˈsərvətiv/

Holding to traditional attitudes and values and cautious about change or

innovation, typically in politics or religion.

*He is one of the greatest figures of* ***conservative*** *party.*

**Crucifix (n.) /**ˈkru:səfiks/

A representation of a cross with a figure of Jesus Christ on it.

*He wears a silver* ***crucifix****, a symbol of newly acquired beliefs.*

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**Decorum (n.) /**diˈka:rəm/

Behavior in keeping with good taste and propriety.

*The way you handle the problem is an index of the quality, wisdom and*

***decorum.***

**Dimly (adv.) /**ˈdimli/

(1) In a dim indistinct manner. (2) (Of a light, color, or illuminated object)

not shining brightly or clearly.

*Yet many college instructors are* ***dimly*** *familiar with the course books.*

**Fund (v.) /**fənd/

Provide with money for a particular purpose.

*Now there will be more money to* ***fund*** *the fight against the enemies.*

**Harrowing (adj.)** /ˈhærouiŋ/

Extremely distressing, agonizing.

*The work was challenging, even* ***harrowing*** *at times, but the rewards were*

*ample.*

**Incentive (n.) /**inˈsentiv/

A thing that motivates or encourages one to do something.

*Explain your* ***incentive*** *for frightening your teacher.*

**Nudity (n.) /**ˈnu:dəti:/

(1) The state or fact of being naked. (2) Bareness.

*I do not recommend this movie due to the* ***nudity*** *it carries.*

**Submerge (v.) /**səbˈməːdʒ/

Descend below the surface of an area of water.

*They do not want to be* ***submerged*** *in bitter memories.*

**Uproar (n.) /**ˈʌprɔː (r)/

A public expression of protest or outrage.

*This declaration has provoked* ***uproar*** *in every corner of the country.*

*Part ΙΙΙ. Exercises*

1. **Open questions (classroom task)**

Based on the text you have read, answer the following questions orally.

1- What does ‘aniconism’ mean?

2- What is the reading passage generally about?

3- Why has ‘art’ been always controversial?

4- What did ‘anti-art’ try to do?

5- Do you agree with Taylor that “art is a bourgeois ideology that has

its origins with capitalism”?

**B. Comprehension check**

Read each statement and decide whether it is true or false. Write “T”

before true statements and “F” before false ones.

…..... 1. The art of 20th century was not controversial unlike the classic art.

……. 2. Aniconism is a crucial factor in the history of Islamic art.

……. 3. All artworks have been controversial because it depicted or

otherwise stood for unpopular rulers, parties or other groups

through the history.

……. 4. The content of much formal art through history was dictated

by the patron or commissioner.

……. 5. Romanticism encouraged artists to generate controversy.

……. 6. Anti-art is against bourgeois ideology.

**C. Multiple choice questions**

Read the reading passage carefully and select the most appropriate

answer for each of the following multiple-choice test items.

1- Art controversy has remarkably increased during ‘Romanticism’ due

to …………….

A) the economic changes in the production of art.

B) artists' vision.

C) artist’s originality and publicity of the artworks.

D) All of the above.

2- ‘It’ in the first paragraph of the text refers to …………….

A) art. B) controversy .

C) time. D) movement.

3- ‘Uproar’ in paragraph 5 is closest in meaning to …………….

A) happiness. B) chaos.

C) fight. D) agreement.

4- Much art has been disliked because …………….

A) it has been expensive.

B) it has been controversial.

C) it depicted unpopular rulers and parties.

D) all the artworks have been popular.

5- The *Last Judgment* by Michelangelo was controversial for …………

A) including breaches of decorum.

B) nudity of Christ.

C) the Apollo-like pose of Christ.

D) All of the above.

**D. Word formation**

Fill in the blanks with the appropriate words from the following table.

Make necessary changes.

**Noun Verb Adjective Adverb**

consequence consequent consequently

conservation conserve conservative conservatively

harrow harrowing harrowingly

nudity nude nudely

1. You had to be more careful! These are the ……………… of you have

done.

2. Reformists and ……………… are two great political parties of the

country.

3. During the previous year, you have worked very hard. ………………,

you have enough money to pay your university tuition.

4. Unfortunately, some western directors try to attract the audience

through ……………… of the actors.

5. I have lost all my money, my cell phone and the keys. I cannot forget

that ……………… experience.

**E. Synonym finding**

Find a single word in the passage which means:

1 moral (para.1) ……………………..

2 new, original (para.1) …………………….

3 stand for (para.2) …………………….

4 vaguely (para.2) …………………….

5 supporter (para.4) ……………………..

6 arrival (para.4) ……………………..

7 motivation, reason (para.4) ……………………..

8 outcome, result (para.5) ……………………..

9 earlier, former (para.6) …………………….

10 philosophy (para.7) ……………………..

**F. Matching**

Match the words in column Ι with their appropriate equivalents in

column ΙΙ. Insert the letters in the parentheses provided. There are more

choices in column ΙΙ than required.

**column Ι column ΙΙ**

1 controversy (……) a. sink, soak

2 unpopular (……) b. collection, group

3 submerge (……) c. decorum

4 array (……) d. unusual

5 peculiar (……) e. disagreement

6 bareness (……) f. nudity

7 propriety (……) g. out of favor

h. Patron

**G. Cloze test (classroom task)**

There are some missing words in the following text. Find the best

choice for each blank and mark it in your book.

What makes a painting controversial? People would say something that

attacks our religious ….(1)….. can be controversial; some would argue,

anything that contains nude matter is controversial. Well, nothing of this is

wrong because people have different …..(2)…. related to such matters.

And paintings often become controversial when it goes against these

commonly accepted norms. Matters also ….(3)…. the time and era we are

living in. Then there is the painting style; art is a subjective assessment,

with different opinions from art critics and general viewers. An artist who

has an unusual style of painting can also …..(4)…. controversy in the art

world, arguing if the works created by that artist should be considered a

piece of art or not. So you see, people are so ….(5)…. with such matters

that there again can be controversy in deciding whether a painting is

controversial or not.

**1**. A) words B) concepts C) forms D) media

**2**. A) norms B) modes C) terms D) models

**3**. A) look for B) shut down C) stand out D) depend on

**4**. A) create B) find C) built D) pass

**5**. A) disappointed B) complicated C) formed D) puzzled

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