

**Neil:** Hello and welcome to 6 Minute English, the programme in which we discuss something that's been in the news and teach you some vocabulary on the way. I'm Neil and with me today is Jen. Hi Jen.

**Jen:** Hi Neil.

**Neil:** Now Jennifer, I want to ask you about your favourite painting. Can you tell me what it is and what do you like about it?

**Jen:** Well, my favourite painting is by Pablo Picasso and it is called Guernica. It's a mural about the Spanish Civil War. It depicts a bombing attack on a town, but I like it because there's lots going on and it really makes you think about what happened on that day.

**Neil:** Yes, it's one of the world's most famous paintings... How would you feel if someone went up to it with a black marker pen and wrote their name on it?

**Jen:** I'd be horrified!

**Neil:** Well, that's exactly what happened to another painting at the Tate Modern gallery in London. We'll hear more about this story after our all-important quiz question. You seem to be very knowledgeable about art, Jen, so here's your question. The highest price ever paid for a painting was for Paul Cezanne's 'The Card Players'. How much did it cost? Was it:

- a) \$120m
- b) \$250m
- c) \$500m

**Jen:** Goodness. I have no idea so I will go bang in the middle. I will say b) \$250m.

**Neil:** Well, we'll find out at the end of the end of the programme. Now, back to our story. An extraordinary thing happened at London's Tate Modern gallery.

**Jen:** A man walked up to a painting by Mark Rothko, took out a marker pen and wrote on it.

**Neil:** Listen to this part of a report from the BBC's arts correspondent, Will Gompertz. What word does he use to describe the action of damaging the painting?

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*Mark Rothko's 1958 large painting 'Black on Maroon' is a fine example of the late American artist's **sombre**, thoughtful, abstract art. It was **defaced** by a man called Vladimir Umanets who considers his actions to be neither illegal, or destructive.*

**Neil:** He said that the painting was **defaced**. It means spoilt, usually by writing on it. What kind of painting was it, Jen?

**Jen:** The reporter described it as **sombre**. That means dark and serious.

**Neil:** Well, this sounds like a dark and serious act, but, in fact, the person who did it thinks it improves the painting!

**Jen:** Yes, strange as it might sound, the man who wrote his name on the painting, Vladimir Umanets, claims that his act was itself an artistic one.

**Neil:** Listen to this interview with the man himself. How does he feel about his actions?

### **Insert**

*I'm glad that I did it, obviously. I'm really... from one side I'm really happy, you know. I really can have a good laugh, you know, from it and.... But from another side I'm sad because people still can't see what it's all about, you know, and how beautiful it is, actually, and simple – what we are doing, you know.*

**Neil:** He's glad he did it, isn't he, Jen?

**Jen:** Yes, he says that he's happy because you can have a laugh, but he's also sad because people don't understand why he did it and why he thinks it's beautiful. Actually... why does he think it's beautiful?

**Neil:** Good question! He is the founder of a **movement** he calls Yellowism. According to Umanets, "Art allows us to take what somebody's done and put a new message on it." The message he wrote on the Rothko painting was "A potential Piece of Yellowism." He takes **inspiration** from the **surrealist** artist Marcel Duchamp.

**Jen:** In 1917, Duchamp bought a **urinal**, which is a kind of toilet for men, wrote his name on it and declared it a work of art. But is what Umanets did the same? Listen to the final part of a report from the BBC's Will Gompertz. What do the experts think?

## **Insert**

*That, according to many commentators, is not the same as walking up to a much-loved painting in an art gallery and **scrawling** on it with a black marker pen, which they consider not to be the work of an artist, but an act of vandalism.*

**Neil:** The reporter says that commentators think it is not an artistic statement but rather an act of **vandalism**. Now, how about you, Jen? Do you think you could be a Yellowist? Could you walk up to Guernica and write on it with a black pen?

**Jen:** Absolutely not! The idea makes me feel ill, actually!

**Neil:** Yes, I have to say the story shocked me too. I've seen that painting by Rothko many times and it's difficult to imagine that someone could do such a thing. But perhaps we just don't understand him and in 100 years' time people will be saying what a masterpiece it is!

Now, time for the answer to our quiz. The highest price ever paid for a painting was for Paul Cezanne's 'The Card Players'. I wanted to know how much it cost? Was it:

- a) \$120m
- b) \$250m
- c) \$500m

**Jen:** Well, I guessed b) \$250m.

**Neil:** And... well I knew you were an art expert because you were right!

**Jen:** Ah, brilliant!

**Neil:** Time now for a recap of some of the vocabulary we heard today.

**Jen:** defaced, sombre, movement, inspiration, surrealist, urinal, vandalism.

**Neil:** Thanks for joining us. Make sure to listen to some more 6 Minute English at [bbclearningenglish.com](http://bbclearningenglish.com). And don't forget to check out our Facebook page. Simply go to Facebook and in the search box type BBC Learning English. You'll find lots of other learners and conversation and links to our other programmes.

## Vocabulary and definitions

<b>defaced</b>	wrote over and ruined
<b>sombre</b>	dark and serious
<b>movement</b>	group of artists who produce work based on a common philosophy
<b>inspiration</b>	being excited by something enough to try yourself
<b>surrealist</b>	art based on the unconscious mind
<b>urinal</b>	a type of toilet for men
<b>vandalism</b>	deliberately destroying objects

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