



Who is Banksy?

Banksy is a street artist whose identity remains unknown. He rose to prominence in the late 1990s for stencilled pieces of graffiti that are intended make a political or social point.

You may have seen images of Banksy's graffiti art. One of his most famous stencils is 'Girl with Balloon', which shows a young girl letting go of a heart-shaped balloon. Many see it as a reflection of children's loss of innocence and people's lack of respect for love.

Banksy furthered his reputation when he tricked everybody at a London art auction. In 2018, a framed copy of 'Girl with Balloon' was sold for £1 million to an anonymous phone bidder. Seconds afterwards, a mechanism hidden in its frame shredded it! The shredding stopped half way through the image, leaving half of it whole and half in strips. This piece of art was given a new name: 'Love is in the Bin' – and it's believed to be worth at least 50 per cent more now than when it was undamaged.



Art or vandalism?

Despite the prices paid for his work, many people believe Banksy's art is simple criminal damage because graffiti is illegal. Many also suggest that allowing it to remain in public spaces sets a bad example for other graffiti artists. Some simply think that his comments aren't effective.

Banksy facts – or are they?

Some information about Banksy can be worked out from his art and some details have been given in interviews.

1. Banksy was born in Bristol in 1974, and was the son of a photocopier engineer.
2. When he started creating graffiti art, he was part of the DryBreadZ Crew, a Bristol-based gang.
3. At that point, his work was mainly done freehand. It was only in the late 1990s that his use of stencils in his work developed. They allow complex images to be created quickly – which is important when they're a crime!

4. Banksy says his work was inspired by 3D, a member of the band Massive Attack.
5. He is often compared to French masters of street art, Blek le Rat and Jef Aerosol – but some say he stole their ideas.
6. Banksy has compiled a book called *Wall and Piece*. It contains images of his works, and also some of his thoughts and ideas.
7. He paid an odd tribute to Monet's 'Water Lilies' by adding an old shopping trolley and rubbish to the painting.
8. Banksy does not sell his work through commercial art galleries.
9. In 2004, he printed spoof £10 notes. The Queen was replaced by Princess Diana's face and they said 'Banksy of England' instead of 'Bank of England'.
10. In 2007, Banksy won the 'Greatest Living Briton – The Arts' prize. Naturally, he didn't collect the prize in person.

People have used these clues to come up with theories about who Banksy really is. The person most commonly believed to be Banksy is Robin Gunningham, an artist who was born in Bristol in 1973. Pictures never show Banksy's face but some contain other details that people believe resemble him. Gunningham also moved to London around 2000, which is when Banksy's artwork started appearing there.

Some of Banksy's work and where to find it – if you can!

- 'Season's Greetings': side of two garages, Port Talbot, Wales
- 'The Mild, Mild West': side of building, Stokes Croft, Bristol
- 'Rage, Flower Thrower': side of a garage, Bethlehem, Palestine
- 'The Grim Reaper': side of a moored boat, Bristol
- 'Washing Zebra Stripes': shattered brick wall, Timbuktu, Mali
- 'Gangsta Rat': Moorfield Eye Hospital, London
- 'There is Always Hope': wall of brick steps, South Bank, London

⊙ MULTIPLE CHOICE

Circle the correct answer to the following question.

What is the title of the Banksy art piece that can be found on the side of a moored boat?

Season's Greetings

Rage, Flower Thrower

Gangsta Rat

The Grim Reaper

123 SEQUENCING

Look at *Banksy*. Number the statements from 1 to 4 to show the order they occur in the text.

Many see it as a reflection of children's loss of innocence and people's lack of respect for love.	
Seconds afterwards, a mechanism hidden in its frame shredded it!	
This piece of art was given a new name: 'Love is in the Bin' – and it's believed to be worth at least 50 per cent more now than when it was undamaged.	
The Queen was replaced by Princess Diana's face and they said 'Banksy of England' instead of 'Bank of England'.	

🔍 FIND AND COPY

These questions are about *Banksy*.

Look at the paragraph beginning 'At that point'. Find and copy a word that suggests Banksy's early work was done without stencils.

Look at the paragraph beginning 'You may have seen images'. Find and copy a word that suggests that Banksy thinks children are exposed to too much nowadays.

🖋️ UNDERLINE OR HIGHLIGHT

Read the paragraph below and then follow the instructions.

People have used these clues to come up with theories about who Banksy really is. The person most commonly believed to be Banksy is Robin Gunningham, an artist who was born in Bristol in 1973. Pictures never show Banksy's face but some contain other details that people believe resemble him.

Underline or highlight a word that means similar to something.

Underline or highlight a word that means ideas that hope to explain a problem.