Paintings

Topic: Famous paintings

Aims:
- To help students describe well-known paintings
- To develop students' listening and writing skills
- To expand students' vocabulary

Level: Intermediate B2

Introduction
What are the best five paintings in the world? In this lesson students read about well-known paintings and look at art vocabulary. They listen to a dictation to complete a text describing a painting. Students then write a short description of a picture they have seen. Students finish by making their own ‘top five’ lists.

Procedure

Lead in

- Ask students if they know any famous paintings? What do they think is the most famous painting in the world? If you have online facilities you could show this short YouTube video of the top 10 most expensive paintings: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IzA6z_ywG4o

Task 1: Famous paintings.
- Hand out Task 1. Students identify the artists in exercise A in pairs or as a class depending on your students’ art history knowledge.
- Tell the students that the pictures in exercise A are the best five paintings in the world according to a website found through Google. Ask if they have seen any of these paintings. In a gallery, on a poster, postcards…? Which do they like or dislike?
- Students should be able to do exercise B without seeing the paintings. You can find all the paintings on Wikipedia to show in class if you like: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page
- Students do exercise C individually then compare answers in pairs. Use dictionaries, if available, to check answers.

Answers Task 1:
A: 1 Leonardo da Vinci, 2 Edvard Munch, 3 Vincent Van Gogh, 4 Pablo Picasso, 5 Claude Monet
B: 2 Mona Lisa, 3 Poppies in a Field, 4 The Scream, 5 Guernica
C: 2 landscape, 3 Impressionists, 4 monochrome, 5 portrait, 6 cubist, 7 still life
Task 1: Famous paintings.

A) Look at the list of paintings. Can you complete the names of the artists who painted them?

1. Mona Lisa - L_______ d_______ V______
2. The Scream - E_______ M________
3. Sunflowers - V_______V_______ G_______
4. Guernica - P_______P_______
5. Poppies in a Field - C_______ M_______

B) Which painting? Write the name of the paintings from A in the correct place.

1 ______ Sunflowers ____ This still life painting of flowers in a vase is one of the artist’s most recognisable works.

2 _______________ The enigmatic smile of this portrait has captured the imagination of the world. It has been stolen twice and now it is displayed in the Louvre, Paris.

3 _______________ This landscape shows how the Impressionists depict the beauty and simplicity of nature.

4 _______________ This is an abstract painting that symbolises the anguish and pain of modern life.

5 _______________ This monochrome painting has become a reminder of the tragedies of war, an anti-war symbol, and an embodiment of peace. The painter is famous for his cubist style.

C) Match the underlined words in task B with the definitions.

1 Not realistic __abstract__

2 A picture showing an expanse of scenery. __________

3 Painters who used colour to capture the feeling of a scene rather than specific details. __________

4 Of one colour or shades of one colour __________

5 Picture of a person __________

6 A style of art that depicts objects as geometric shapes that are seen from many different angles at the same time __________

7 A picture of inanimate everyday objects __________

Task 2: Mystery painting.

• Hand out Task 2. Read the complete description to the class. Can the students say which painting from task one is described? (The Scream). Students listen again and complete the text with the correct words and phrases. If you want to
show the painting in class you’ll find it here:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Scream

Answers Task 2:
1 there is, 2 looks like, 3 background, 4 left-hand side, 5 there are, 6 seems to be

Tip: Do a quick grammar & vocabulary focus by asking students to explain the differences between:
foreground and background (at the front and back in the painting)
There is and there are (singular and plural / ‘there is’ is also used with uncountable nouns, e.g., there is some grass in the foreground)
Left-hand side and right-hand side (on the left and on the right)
Looks like and seems to be (very similar meanings but looks like is followed by a noun/noun phrase)

Task 2: Mystery painting.

Listen and complete the description with the words in the box

background left-hand side looks like seems to be there are there is

In the foreground 1 __________ a man standing on a bridge. He 2 __________ he is screaming. His face is expressing surprise and fear. His mouth is open in an ‘O’ shape, his eyes are wide open and his hands are on his bald head. In the 3 __________, on the 4 __________, 5 __________ two people walking towards him but they don’t look worried. The sky is blood red and beneath the bridge, a blue river 6 __________ flowing to the sea.

• Students write a short description of a painting or picture that they have seen (they could choose one from Task 1). Encourage them to use words and expressions from this lesson. They could do this in pairs and then read their ‘Mystery painting’ description to their classmates or they could write individually for homework.

Task 3: My top fives

• Ask students if they can remember the top five paintings. Use the top five paintings as a springboard to talk about other top 5s. Write holiday destinations on the board and ask for suggestions for the best, then second best, etc. holiday locations.
• Hand out Task 3. In pairs students make their own top five lists (they can invent a category for the final column, e.g., foods, sports people, politicians, actors). You could write your top five songs (or films etc.) on the board to demonstrate the activity. Put pairs into small groups to compare their lists.
• Ask a spokesperson from each group to tell the class how their lists were similar or different.
• As a follow-up the students could make ‘top five’ posters on one of the topics in Task 3 to display in the classroom.

Tip: Change the top five categories to match your students’ interests.
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