

Teaching materials

Analysis of the Artwork

Graffiti

by

Livia Collaert

Click on the title of the artwork above
to be directed straight to the online video
(hyperlink)

Questions:

1. The artistic approach to History

At school, you are probably more used to exploring topics related to the Second World War and the culture of remembrance mainly through historical sources in textbooks or through testimonies from people who lived during that period.

- Do you think there is particular value in complementing this traditional approach by engaging with history through the artistic work of a student your age, such as Livia?
- Does Livia's presentation raise our awareness, for example, of perspectives on history that are usually less taken into account, but that you consider important for understanding the meaning that history can have for our present time? Justify your point of view!
- What role can art play in the transmission of memory when those who experienced these events are no longer there to bear witness?
- How can a work created today by young people help to prevent such forms of violence from happening again?
- What difference do you see between "learning History" and "feeling memory" through a work of art?
- Can you name other artistic works that have made you reflect on history in a way that differs from history books? Why, in your opinion, can art allow us to see history from another angle?

2. Persevering, taking a step back or giving up?

Livia gives up their first idea of creating a tapestry of cables inside the sink because of a lack of patience and because the task made them angry.

When progress comes to a halt – or is too slow – in a task (at school or elsewhere), it is often difficult to know whether it is better to take a step back, give up, or on the contrary to persevere and push through the difficulty at all costs.

- Describe a significant situation from your own experience in which you were faced with this dilemma, explain how you eventually reacted and what the outcome was.

- Is perseverance always a virtue, or can it sometimes become an obstacle when one becomes stubborn? Explain how you distinguish between a difficulty that is worth pushing through and a situation in which giving up is an act of wisdom.
- In a society that often values performance and rapid success, do you think enough space is given to the right to make mistakes, to start again or to give up? Analyse how this pressure can influence our choices and our emotions.
- How can recognising one's limits help to work better with others – whether in a group, a team or a community?
- Give an example in which admitting an obstacle made it possible to open up another collective possibility.

3. The magic of chance

Sometimes, at the beginning of a creative project, it is difficult to know where to start and where the process will ultimately lead.

Livia abandons their first idea of creating a tapestry of cables inside the sink: lacking patience and feeling irritated, they throw the whole pile of cables into the sink. It is ultimately this act of frustration that triggers their inspiration: they imagine a place “where all waste is put”, which becomes the heart of their artwork Graffiti.

They experience here a phenomenon from which one can often benefit during creative processes: serendipity.

- Research what this term means!
- Later in the creation process of their work, Livia once again benefits from chance, which reveals a new path for deepening the message of their project. Identify this specific moment and explain how it transformed or enriched their work.
- In a society that values planning and control, how can serendipity remind us of the importance of letting go or of the unexpected? Research famous scientific inventions or discoveries in which serendipity played a decisive role, transforming an individual or collective situation!
- Have you ever experienced a moment when a mistake, an accident or an impulsive gesture – a little like Livia – ultimately allowed you to find a new idea or an unexpected solution? Describe this moment precisely and explain what it taught you about yourself or about your way of creating.
- How can being attentive to “accidental discoveries” help us to work better together, to cooperate or to find new solutions to social or environmental problems? Illustrate your idea with an imagined example.

4. Mirror-dreams: what the night reveals to us

This beginning of their work, born through serendipity – this place where all waste is put – brings to Livia the memory of a disturbing dream. The reconstruction of this dream becomes the common thread of their entire creative process.

- Summarise this dream in your own words and explain what, in your opinion, makes it so disturbing.
- After the dream, Livia writes a short story entitled Graffiti in an attempt to process and reflect on the story of this nightmare. It is only through this act of writing that they discover the symbolic meaning of their actions in the dream. Explain in your own words the meaning that Livia uncovers through writing.
- Have you ever had a dream – pleasant, strange or disturbing – that stayed with you long after you woke up? Describe this dream and explain why it left a lasting impression on you.

- Has writing down or telling a dream ever helped you to understand it better? Explain how putting your dream into words revealed another dimension of its meaning to you – or perhaps even a meaning you did not expect at all. Describe this change of perspective and what it allowed you to understand.
- We sometimes carry images of ourselves that we are not proud of. How do you react when a dream shows you a version of yourself that you do not recognise or that makes you feel uncomfortable?
- What do dreams represent for you: a message from the unconscious, a simple nocturnal fiction, a space of freedom, a warning, or perhaps something else? Justify your interpretation.

5. Between truth and rewriting: the memory of those who have disappeared

Through their dream, Livia realises that one can “degrade the image of someone who no longer exists”.

- Do you think that the memory of people who have died is fragile or malleable? Explain why.
- In which historical circumstances have the living transformed – intentionally or not – the memory of those who can no longer bear witness? Analyse a real, literary or imagined example.
- Do you think that damaged traces – such as an erased name – sometimes contain more symbolic depth than an intact inscription? Explain what this fragility reveals to you.

6. Graffiti, memory and responsibility

- By writing names in graffiti, Livia uses a form that is often perceived as rebellious or transgressive.
- In what way can this gesture be interpreted as a political or social act, and not only an artistic one? Develop your argument.
- In certain contexts, graffiti can be seen as degradation, in others as political or artistic expression. Do you interpret the graffiti in Livia’s dream more as an act of destruction, of protest or of communication? Why?
- Do you think that the gestures we make towards the dead (upkeep of graves, rituals, commemorations, graffiti, writings) can modify collective memory? Explain how these gestures influence the way a community remembers.
- From your point of view, can the act of “defiling someone’s memory” be considered a political gesture? Support your position with a real or imagined example.
- In many societies, graffiti are used to protest, to commemorate or to express invisible voices. How can art become a means of taking a stand in the world? Develop your analysis.
- In your experience, have you ever seen a place, a stone, a piece of graffiti, a symbol that seemed to tell an absent or distorted story? Describe what you felt and what this made you understand about memory.

7. Giving a name to forgetting

- How does the theme of “degrading the memory of a dead person” make Livia think of their visit to the Manfort Cemetery? Explain how they integrate this link into their work.
- Why do you think that writing or speaking someone’s name can be a way of restoring their dignity or respect? Describe a moment in your own life when a name had symbolic importance.
- When you see an erased name or an anonymous grave, what does it evoke for you – forgetting, injustice, silence, sadness, or perhaps another personal feeling? Analyse what this feeling reveals about your relationship to memory.

8. The guardians of memory

Who, in your opinion, bears the responsibility for preserving the memory of forced labourers? Develop how this responsibility could be shared – among the State, citizens, artists, schools, families, or others.

9. Maintaining or letting disappear: a social choice

Why do some societies carefully maintain places of memory, while others allow graves or names to deteriorate? Give a concrete example and explain the consequences of these choices.

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