

BREAKING BARRIERS

BASQUIAT THE ARTIST WHO CHALLENGED AMERICA



To what extent has Jean-Michel Basquiat's art challenged racial and social issues in American culture?

Objectif final : être capable de parler de l'art de Jean-Michel Basquiat et de son héritage dans un contexte plus contemporain.

CECRL Monologue suivi – décrire l'expérience B2 peut développer une argumentation claire, peut faire une présentation ou une description claire et détaillée de en soulignant les points importants et les détails.

Intermediate tasks [distance learning]

IT 1) EE ⇨ Read the introduction to a virtual exhibition about Black Lives Matter street art in *The Guardian* entitled: "Color is not a crime" and write the rest of the article by linking BLM street art with Basquiat's art. Choose a work of art by Basquiat to illustrate the article and explain your choice (argue). **And/or IT 2) POI** ⇨ Take part in a radio debate: what makes Basquiat's art still powerful today? SB 1^è fiches Strategies: p. 223

Final task POC: You work for Chrissie's, an auction and private sales company. You are asked to do the voice over for this video in order to advertise a painting by Basquiat for sale. It was painted in 1983, at the same time as *Defacement*. Promote Basquiat's untitled art piece. Include elements about his technique, his message and his life. <https://youtu.be/jY8B6auzWRc>



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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lexique : étendre le vocabulaire : <i>opinion + art</i>• Grammaire : les modaux, les adverbess• Phonologie : American accent | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Argumenter, exprimer son accord, son désaccord• PEAC : Présenter un mouvement artistique + Demander et donner son avis sur une œuvre• TICE : ajouter une narration sur Movie Maker ou Audacity ou Vocaroo. |
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• Step 1

SUPPORT	Video <i>How Art Can Change Society</i> with art historian Sarah Lewis https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fSmAsbbzcB0 Neo Expressionist exhibition slideshow https://view.genial.ly/606c4a6c7f9d910d7c168a86/presentation-stains-presentation + The Artful Learner methodology sheet: Neo-Expressionism + General vocabulary toolbox.
OBJ. CULT	Introduction to the idea of Art and Power: can art be powerful enough to change society?
OBJ. LING	EO, CO, IO. <i>SB Boost your skills</i> : Demander son avis à qq, donner son avis sur une œuvre.
DEM. PEDA/ ACT DE L'ELEVE	⇒ Do you think that art can be powerful enough to change society? Brainstorming. ⇒ Watch the video three times. Take notes. Recap: <i>honor one person's expression and pay tribute to that, how much it can shift things in us. Frederick Douglas Civil War: it wouldn't be combat that would get America to have a new vision of itself but pictures. slip in the back door by rational thought and see the world differently. How many movements have begun in the world when one person's work, one song, one impactful aesthetic experience shifted things entirely for a leader, for a group of people. Armstrong = if there's genius in this black man then segregation must be wrong. so many examples where really aesthetic force more than rational argument alone has been what has shifted and turned the tide in the face of massive injustice. I think of the arts as far more than just a respite from life, a kind of a luxury I see it as a galvanic force really that undergirds some of our most impactful changes and movements in this country and in this world.</i> VOC undergird: to support something by forming a strong base for it: ⇒ Look at the slideshow. Choose the art piece you think is the most powerful in the selection. Using the methodology reminder from <i>SB</i> , be ready to explain why it appeals to you and to ask your mate about his/her choice.
HW	Read your methodology sheet <i>The Artful Learner – Neo Expressionism</i> , and use the worksheet “Describe Basquiat’s art” https://view.genial.ly/606c92bf83b6600d1c1c7ad0/presentation-basic-dark-presentation

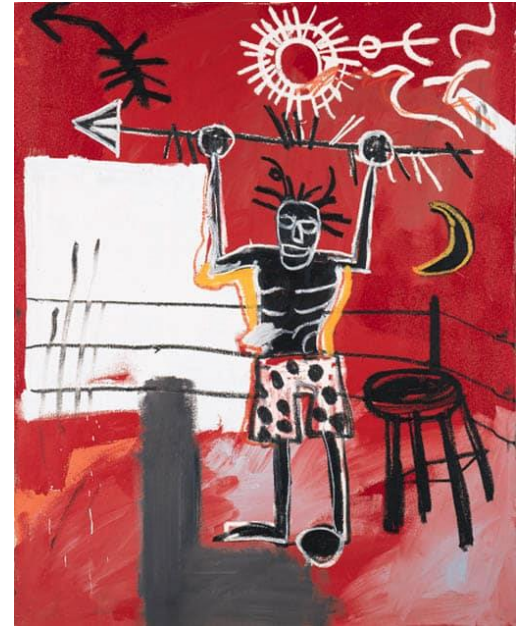
• Step 2

SUPPORT	<i>The Artist who broke barriers</i> article + boxing Basquiat selection
OBJ. CULT	Empowering African Americans through artistic representations.
OBJ. LING	EO, CE.
DEM. PEDA/ ACT DE L'ELEVE	⇒ Recap: Neo Expressionism and Basquiat’s art. Pay attention to the colours, the titles and the symbols/characters/objects that are represented. What recurring symbols and/or themes have you noticed in these paintings? (<i>crown, boxers, body parts, writings, skulls, fighters, African-Americans...</i>) + <i>vivid colours, some works are untitled but the subject matter is still visible = figurative art.</i> ⇒ Read the article <i>The Artist who broke barriers</i> and understand the text. A) Pick the words and phrases that show Basquiat’s influence as an artist. B) What elements suggest that Basquiat’s art is still fashionable today ? (<i>painting most expensive American artwork of all time ll. 35-36 + timelessness</i>) C) Focus on the symbol of boxing: pick all the references to boxing in the text and explain what this recurring theme conveys about Basquiat’s art at large. ⇒ Look at the selection of paintings and photos linked to Basquiat and boxing. In your own words – but based on what you learnt from the article – explain what makes them powerful.
HW	Read your extract from the “Race, power, money: the art of Jean-Michel Basquiat” article. Sum it up (5 lines, in your notebook).

Jean-Michel Basquiat – The Artist Who Broke Barriers

When looking at Jean-Michel Basquiat's [The Ring](#) (1981), one can't help but see a revelation, a self-portrait of sorts ushering in a new era for black artists the world over.

There, standing in a bold, red boxing ring is a polka-dot-shorts-wearing athlete holding a spear high above his wild-haired head. The image of boxing alone naturally leads one to conjure up images of struggle, challenge, resistance, and undoubtedly victory and strength. Without question, these would become the unmistakable touchstones of Basquiat's work. They defined him not only as a breaker of cultural and professional barriers but as the first contemporary black art star.



Jean-Michel Basquiat became a shining star in the art world of the '70's and '80's Neo-Expressionist movement. He has long since been endowed with the crown he so often depicted in his work, taking his rightful place as self-proclaimed king of the art world. It was no surprise then, that once Basquiat had been given his long overdue retrospective at Bilbao Guggenheim's galleries that Martin Luther King's *Have A Dream* could be heard resoundingly over the speakers.

A by-product of both the Harlem Renaissance¹ and the civil rights movement, Basquiat's work bleeds history. It carries with it a myriad of African American experiences and inevitably transformed the way the art world interpreted African American art as a whole. Basquiat was challenging western histories by depicting saints and kings as black. Furthermore, his heroes were not only black, but they were also majestic, strong, and poetic, proving that his artistic lineage stemmed from beyond any geographical confines. His art broadened the field. It converged elements of African-American, African and Aztec influences paired with classical themes and contemporary heroes like musicians and athletes. He was honoring black men and women from all parts of the world who had shaped the greater black collective. Basquiat highlighted a multitude of influential black heroes that, like him, changed the way people perceive black contributions to history. His art bled these truths, coursing new blood into African American art. His paintings read like blues songs, just as colorful, and equally as important to black history. As Italian artist Francesco Clemente so aptly put it, "Jean-Michel's crown has three peaks, for his three royal lineages: the poet, the musician, the great boxing champion." It was this multi-faceted talent that made Basquiat the timeless artist he has become. His work is seemingly unphased by time, transcending it even while remaining as relevant today as ever. (...)

In 2017, Japanese billionaire Yusaku Maezawa bought a single work for \$110 million (*Untitled*, 1982), making the searing expressionist painting the most expensive American artwork of all time.

It goes without saying that Basquiat's vast body of work is timeless, not only as African American art but as world art. It's hard to downplay such a champion of both African American history and art history, and why would one want to? Basquiat was certainly no featherweight in the art ring. He was undoubtedly a full-fledged heavyweight, and in the words of the late, great Muhammad Ali, perhaps even "King of the world."

<https://www.artlife.com/jean-michel-basquiat-broke-barriers/>

¹ The Harlem Renaissance was an intellectual and cultural revival of African American music, dance, art, fashion, literature, theater and politics centered in Harlem, New York City, spanning the 1920s and 1930s.

- **Step 3**

SUPPORT	<i>Race, power, money: the art of Jean-Michel Basquiat</i> article from The Guardian + Video Art & Power: <i>Defacement, denouncing Police Brutality</i> https://youtu.be/phiaCywDsac + worksheet
OBJ. CULT	Getting to know more about JM Basquiat + the painting <i>Defacement</i>
OBJ. LING	CE, EO, CO.
DEM. PEDA/ ACT DE L'ÉLEVE	<p>⇒ Recap the information in your extract for your mates. Take notes when a different extract is presented, in order to gather more information about Basquiat's art and life.</p> <p>#1 <i>a graffiti artist, part of the duo SAMO, short for same old shit, who bombed the doors and walls of the Lower East Side with enigmatic phrases</i> Ambiguous life: <i>a street kid, true, a teen runaway who had slept on benches in Tompkins Square Park, but he was also a handsome privileged boy from a Park Slope brownstone who had gone to private school, + frequenting museums since he was a toddler + the importance of writing in his work (last paragraph)</i></p> <p>#2 <i>mutability of language, the way it twists and turns according to the power status of the speaker. Everything he did was an attack on racism + Defacement + Success vs racism: Basquiat was becoming more successful, more wealthy and famous. And yet he still couldn't reliably hail a cab in the street. It was lonely, he was lonely, the only black man in the room, his prodigy status like that of a toy.</i></p> <p>#3 Commercialisation of Basquiat's art Who did he paint for? ⇒ <i>I think I make it for myself, but ultimately for the world + Car crash + Gray's anatomy = obsession with body + making his mark on the skin of New York itself (SAMO graffiti).</i></p> <p>⇒ Watch the video. Use the worksheet.</p>
HW	<i>Be ready to explain what you know about the making of Defacement and to analyse the painting. This will be assessed.</i>

- **Step 4 Intermediate task**

SUPPORT	"Colour is not a crime" documentary from The Guardian (slideshow)
OBJ. CULT	Finding a continuum in the power of art and street art to denounce racism in the US.
OBJ. LING	EO, EE.
DEM. PEDA/ ACT DE L'ÉLEVE	<p>⇒ Recap: explain what you know about the making of Defacement and to analyse the painting (POC).</p> <p>⇒ Intermediate task: <i>Read the introduction to a virtual exhibition about Black Lives Matter street art in The Guardian entitled: "Color is not a crime" and write the rest of the article by linking BLM street art with Basquiat's art. Choose a work of art by Basquiat to illustrate the article and explain your choice (argue).</i></p>
HW	<i>Finish the intermediate task if you need more time to reach your goal.</i>

- **Step 5**

SUPPORT	Video: Basquiat exhibit at Boston Museum of Fine Arts, First of its kind https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CiCtn42Z8p8 + Paintings: <i>La Hara, Irony of a Negro Policeman, Obnoxious Liberals + Crimee + Warrior</i> .
OBJ. CULT	Basquiat exhibition.
OBJ. LING	CO, CE, EE.
DEM.	⇒ Watch the video. Take notes, share notes, recap.
PEDA/ ACT DE L'ELEVE	⇒ Read the introduction label to one of Basquiat's exhibition. What is highlighted here? ⇒ In pairs, using the vocabulary toolbox given to you, prepare an object label for one of the paintings in the exhibition, including a brief introduction to the piece and the themes it deals with: <i>La Hara – Irony of a Negro Policeman – Obnoxious Liberals – Crimee – Warrior</i> .
HW	<i>Be ready to present "your" painting to the rest of the group, highlighting the subject matter, colours and symbols used for Basquiat to convey his message.</i>

- **Step 6**

SUPPORT	Paintings: <i>La Hara, Irony of a Negro Policeman, Obnoxious Liberals + Crimee + Warrior</i> + General vocabulary toolbox + Video final task: https://youtu.be/jY8B6auzWRc
OBJ. LING	EO, IO, EE.
DEM.	⇒ Present your painting to the group. They should ask questions about it.
PEDA/ ACT DE L'ELEVE	⇒ Watch the video that you need to do the voice over for. ⇒ Prepare your ideas and the outline for your final task. What elements and references will you include? You may do this in pairs.
HW	<i>Upload the video with your own soundtrack/voice over for your teacher!</i>

- **Step 7: Final task deadline**

- **Step 8:** Recap what was great and what needs improving in the final task.