

A journey into mysterious art

Exercise 1: Look at these famous paintings and answer the questions below.

1. Do you know the artists?
2. Have you ever tried painting or drawing before?
3. Which one/ones do you like the most and why?
4. If yes, what did you draw/paint?



1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____



4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____

Exercise 2. Reading comprehension A. Read the article about a famous surrealist painter – René Magritte.

René Magritte was a Belgian artist who lived from 1898 to 1967. He was famous for his unique style of surrealism, which means he painted things that were not real or were impossible in real life. Magritte was a quiet and private person who liked to keep to himself. He didn't like to talk about his paintings or explain their meanings. Instead, he wanted people to come up with their own interpretations.



One of Magritte's most famous works is called "The Son of Man".

It shows a man in a suit with an apple in front of his face. The man's face is hidden, so we don't know who he is. Some people think the apple represents knowledge or temptation, while others think it's just a random object. The background is a cloudy blue sky, which adds to the mysterious feeling of the painting. Another painting by Magritte is called "The Treachery of Images". It shows a pipe with the words "Ceci n'est pas une pipe" written underneath, which means "This is not a pipe" in French. This is a strange thing to write because the picture clearly shows a pipe. But Magritte wanted people to think about how we see things and how they are shown in art. Just because we see something in a painting doesn't mean it's real.

Magritte used simple colours in his paintings. He often used these colours to create a dream-like atmosphere. Overall, René Magritte was a unique and interesting artist who created some of the most recognisable paintings of the 20th century.

Now check your understanding.

1. What was René Magritte known for?

- a)** Painting realistic objects
- b)** Painting things that were not real or were impossible in real life
- c)** Painting landscapes
- d)** Painting portraits

2. How did René Magritte feel about explaining the meanings of his paintings?

- a)** He enjoyed it
- b)** He didn't like to talk about his paintings or explain their meanings
- c)** He only explained the meanings of his most famous paintings
- d)** He wanted people to come up with their own interpretations, but he also explained his



3. What is the name of one of René Magritte's most famous works?

- a)** The Man with the Apple
- b)** The Son of God
- c)** The Son of Man
- d)** The Man with the Suit

4. What is the apple in "The Son of Man" thought to represent?

- a)** Knowledge or temptation
- b)** A random object
- c)** The man's face
- d)** The mysterious feeling of the painting

5. What is the background of "The Son of Man"?

- a)** A clear blue sky
- b)** A cloudy blue sky
- c)** A green field
- d)** A dark forest

6. What is the name of another painting by René Magritte?

- a)** The Betrayal of Images
- b)** The Treachery of Images
- c)** The Deception of Images
- d)** The Illusion of Images

7. What is written underneath the pipe in "The Treachery of Images"?

- a)** "This is a pipe"
- b)** "This is not a pipe"
- c)** "This is a painting"
- d)** "This is not a painting"

8. What was René Magritte trying to make people think about with "The Treachery of Images"?

- a) How we see things and how they are represented in art
- b) The difference between a pipe and a painting of a pipe
- c) The meaning of the French language
- d) The importance of writing in art

9. What kind of atmosphere did René Magritte often create in his paintings?

- a) Realistic
- b) Dream like
- c) Dark
- d) Bright

Exercise 3. Reading comprehension B: Read the following text about the joker (the movie) and do the comprehension questions.

Joker (2019) - writing, cast, and production

Joker is a 2019 American psychological thriller movie directed by Todd Phillips, who co-wrote the screenplay with Scott Silver. The film is inspired by the characters of an American comic book company referred to as *DC Comics*. The movie stars Joaquin Phoenix as the *Joker*. The supporting roles are played by Robert De Niro, Zazie Beetz, Frances Conroy, Brett Cullen, Glenn Fleshler, Bill Camp, Shea Whigham, and Marc Maron. The movie was produced by Warner Bros. Pictures, DC Films, and Joint Effort in association with Bron Creative and Village Roadshow Pictures, and distributed by Warner Bros.



Phillips conceived *Joker* in 2016 and wrote the script with Silver throughout 2017. The two were inspired by 1970s character studies and the films of Martin Scorsese, who was initially attached to the project as a producer. The graphic novel *Batman: The Killing Joke* (1988) was the basis for the premise.

The plot

The story is set in 1981 and follows Arthur Fleck, a failed stand-up comedian who turns to a life of crime and chaos in Gotham City. Always feeling alone in a crowd, the joker looks for getting connected to others as he walks the streets. He lives a poor life with his mother. He is isolated, bullied and disregarded by society. As a result, Arthur embarks on a slow descent into madness as he transforms into the criminal mastermind known as the *joker*.

Reception

Joker premiered at the 76th Venice International Film Festival on August 31, 2019, where it won the Golden Lion and was released in the United States on October 4, 2019. The film polarized critics; while Phoenix's performance was praised, the dark tone, portrayal of mental illness, and handling of violence divided responses. *Joker* also generated concerns of inspiring real-world violence. The movie theater where the 2012 Aurora, Colorado mass shooting occurred during a screening of *The Dark Knight Rises* refused to show it. The film set box office records for an October release and has grossed over \$934 million worldwide, making it the seventh highest-grossing film of 2019 and the highest-grossing R-rated film of all time.

Now check your understanding.

1. Robert De Niro played the main role in *Joker*.
2. The story is set in 2019.
3. The joker has many relationships.
4. The film can't be seen by an audience of all ages.
5. The joker became a criminal due to he was isolated, bullied and disregarded by society.
6. The joker inspired real-world violence.