



EduTrend Contents

W4C · ART HISTORY AND APPRECIATION · HIGH SCHOOL

Art, Power and Public Space

Analyse murals and monuments and who they represent

Ages 15–18

Level: Advanced

75 minutes

Individual and small
groups

Activity 05

Inside: activity at a glance · step-by-step session plan · facilitator notes · 3 student worksheets · assessment checklist

ACTIVITY 05 · AT A GLANCE

Art, Power and Public Space

Students analyse examples such as Mexican muralism, commemorative monuments and temporary commissions. They examine patronage, audience, representation and changing meanings, debate contested monuments, and write a proposal for a public artwork for their community.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the session students can:

- analyse public art in its historical and social context;
- explain the role of patronage and audience;
- evaluate debates about contested monuments;
- propose a public artwork with a justified rationale.

KEY WORDS

public art · mural · monument · patronage · commission · representation · memory · site-specific · contested heritage

CURRICULUM LINKS

Art history: context and patronage. History and citizenship: memory and power. English: argument and proposal writing.

1**LOOK**

Slow looking

2**DESCRIBE**

What do you see?

3**ANALYSE**

How was it made?

4**CONTEXT**

When, where, why?

5**INTERPRET**

What does it mean?

6**RESPOND**

Judge and create

Materials (per group)

- Case study packs with images and sources (murals, monuments, temporary commissions)
- Maps or photos of local public spaces
- Sketchbooks
- Worksheets 1, 2 and 3

Before the session

- Prepare balanced case studies, including examples from different countries.
- Include primary sources such as commissioning statements.
- Agree discussion ground rules for sensitive topics.
- Photograph local public spaces.

SAFETY

Discuss contested issues respectfully. Site visits need supervision and permission.

ACTIVITY 05 · SESSION PLAN

Step by step

Keep the focus on evidence and context: students should explain positions, not just state opinions.

Time	What happens	Say or ask
0–10 min Hook	Show a public monument and a street mural.	<i>"Who decided these should be here?"</i>
10–30 min Case studies	Groups analyse a case: patron, artist, audience, message, reception.	<i>"Whose story is told, and whose is missing?"</i>
30–45 min Debate	Structured discussion of a contested monument using evidence.	<i>"What options exist: keep, move, add context, replace?"</i>
45–65 min Propose	Students plan a public artwork for a local site.	<i>"Who is your audience and what should it mean?"</i>
65–75 min Pitch	Short pitches with peer questions.	<i>"How might its meaning change over time?"</i>

CHALLENGE CARD (print or copy onto the board)

Analyse a public artwork in context and write a justified proposal for a new public artwork that considers patronage, audience and representation.

ACTIVITY 05 · FACILITATOR NOTES

The art history in brief

Public art is made for shared spaces and is often commissioned by governments, institutions or communities. Mexican muralism, led from the 1920s by artists such as Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco and David Alfaro Siqueiros, used large public walls to tell national and social histories.

Monuments express what a society chooses to remember, and their meanings can change as values change, leading to debates about contested heritage. Temporary commissions, such as the rotating works on the Fourth Plinth in London's Trafalgar Square since 1999, show another model for public art. Analysing patronage asks who pays, who decides and who is represented.

Common ideas to listen for

- "Public art is neutral decoration." It usually carries messages chosen by patrons.
- "A monument's meaning is fixed." Meanings shift with time and audience.
- "There is only one response to contested monuments." Communities choose many options.

Adapting the activity

Support

Use a guided analysis frame with sentence starters for each question.

Stretch

Compare how two countries have handled contested monuments and evaluate the approaches.

WORKSHEET 1

Case study analysis

Name: _____

Class: _____ Date: _____

Analyse your public artwork.

Analysis

Question	Evidence
Patron	
Artist	
Audience	
Message	
Reception then and now	

WORKSHEET 2

Debate notes

Record arguments.

Arguments and evidence

Position	Evidence	Counter-argument
Keep		
Add context		
Move or replace		

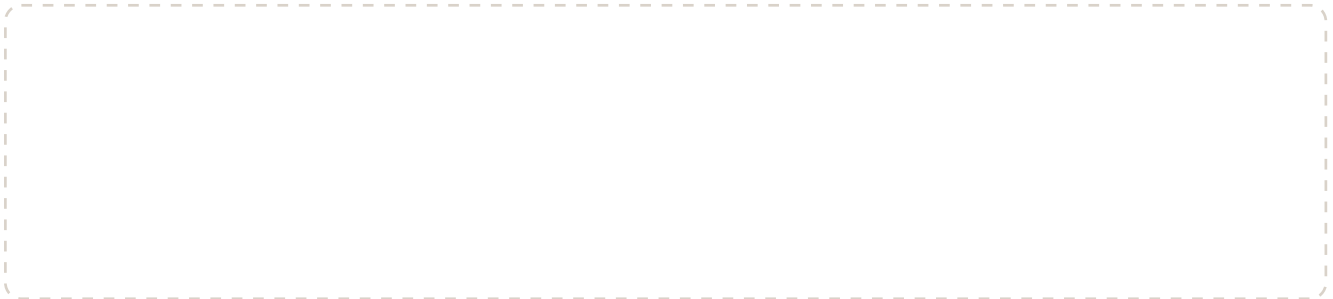
WORKSHEET 3

Public art proposal

Propose an artwork.

Site, audience and concept

Sketch



Sketch your artwork in its site.

Rationale

FOR THE TEACHER

Assessment checklist

Use during the session. One sheet covers up to eight students; copy as needed.

Student	Analyses in context	Evaluates debates with evidence	Justifies a proposal

Suggested codes: W = working towards · E = expected · G = greater depth

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

Art, Power and Public Space is a sample activity from the EduTrend Contents W4C Art History and Appreciation programme (high school, level: advanced). Every activity in the programme follows the same format: a practical challenge, a clear session plan, facilitator notes and ready-to-print worksheets, so that teachers, club leaders and parents can run it without extra preparation.

Full 15-, 20- and 32-week programmes are available from EduStore at edutrend.org.

© 2026 EduTrend Contents. This activity may be printed and copied for use with students in your own school, club or home. It may not be resold or published elsewhere. Photos: Domenico Loia / Unsplash.