



The Arts

Task: Pablo Picasso and Guernica

Activity 1: Listening

Welcome to a practice listening task for the GESE 11.

You are going to hear a talk about **a critique of a famous artwork**. You will hear the talk twice. The first time, just listen. Then I'll ask you to tell me generally what the speaker is talking about. Are you ready?

Audio Script

People see art and appreciate it in different ways and on different levels. Certainly one controversial piece for its time was that of Pablo Picasso's artwork, Guernica. Many people and art critics have talked endlessly about this piece of artwork and it is known extremely well worldwide. It did not return to Spain until Franco's death, which was in 1981. So, what is so interesting about this work? There is no doubt that it was a political piece that brought to light the tragedies that happened to Guernica during the war. It is true that not everybody is a huge fan of a piece of artwork like this, that dips in deeply into the surrealist and cubist movements. However, clearly it is thought-provoking with all its symbolism. To examine one example, there is a lightbulb that seems to be flaming out its lightsource, which is to represent the bomb that fell on the town of Guernica. Not only does this give exposure to the war through this symbolism, but it also brings out the emotional aspects, as can be seen through the image of a horse that has been pierced through the body with an arrow while howling in pain. This obviously is displaying the suffering that the Spanish people had to endure from the dictators and German bombers, which must have been terrifying.

Recently, there was a theory that has been questioned and left everybody involved in the art world extremely surprised by what may be a second hidden story to this work of art. To many it was absolutely jaw-dropping because they couldn't even come to guess it. A University lecturer and an art dealer both claim, surprisingly enough, that this painting displays certain moments in Picasso's life, three main moments to be exact. They are thought to be a horrible earthquake that happened in Malaga, the suicide of his friend and relationship problems that he had had in the 1930s. Notwithstanding, this would also bring to light that the figures portrayed in the artwork would represent other people, for instance that of his first wife, who had been displayed as an animal in other works of art done by Pablo Picasso. As a matter of fact, Picasso never offered an official interpretation of Guernica, not wanting to be pegged as a political artist. Be that as it may, the work in itself had a subject matter that was obviously of a political nature to virtually all people who had seen it. It has been marked as a symbolic representation of protest for peace.

It is safe to say that it has been one of the most talked about pieces of art in Spain's political history. So startling was this artwork at its time that it can be found at the best possible location, in the Museo de Reina Sofía in Madrid, amongst other famous works of art. I reckon that if other countries had realized what was happening before this painting was created, it would be a different outcome for that of Guernica. Artwork like this must always

be talked about in schools so that the younger generations can acknowledge the importance artwork has had not only in the past, but in the present and future as well.

Can you tell me in one or two sentences what the speaker was talking about?

Now listen to the talk again. This time make some notes as you listen, if you want to. Then I'll ask you to tell me how the speaker analyzes the artwork and what reflections are made about the artwork.

Now tell me how the speaker analyzes the artwork and what reflections are made about the artwork. You have one minute to talk.

This is the end of the listening task.

Answers:

How the artwork is analyzed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● political piece of artwork ● surrealist and cubist movements ● symbolism: lightbulb, horse ● displays suffering of Spanish people ● second meaning: earthquake in Malaga, suicide of friend, and relationship problems ● not wanting to be a political artist, no official interpretation
What reflections are made	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● not everybody likes it ● most talked about pieces of art ● best possible location, Museo de Reina Sofía ● must be talked about in schools for younger generations

Marks: +_ / +10