Lesson 9

CONTEXT: Expression

Art Beyond Reality: Surrealism

Many art viewers would say that something really strange happened to art in the 1920s—surrealism. Painters in the surrealist movement attempted to portray the unconscious mind as revealed in dreams. As you might expect, surrealist art is characterized by irrational, illogical, fantastic images. Sometimes these images are quite unsettling; they make the viewer uncomfortable. One of the movement’s founders was French poet and art critic André Breton (1896–1966).

In the following exercises, you will have the opportunity to expand your vocabulary by reading about the surrealist movement in art and about two of the leading surrealist artists. Below are ten Vocabulary Words that will be used in these exercises.

- axiom
- compliance
- inanimate
- indestructible
- innate
- mutable
- perception
- prevalent
- recourse

EXERCISE 1

Wordbusting

Directions. Follow these instructions for this word and the nine words on the next page.

- Figure out the word’s meaning by looking at its context, its structure, and its sound. Fill in at least one of the three CSS boxes. Alternate which boxes you complete.
- Then, look up the word in a dictionary, read all of its meanings, and write the meaning of the word as it is used in the sentence.
- Follow this same process for each of the Vocabulary Words on the next page. You will need to draw your own map for each word. Use a separate sheet of paper.

1. axiom

Surrealism did not follow the axiom “Art mirrors life.” In his first Manifesto of Surrealism (1924), André Breton advocated freeing the subconscious mind, a total rejection of realism.

Dictionary:
2. Compatible

Many artists were not in agreement with Breton's ideas, but a group of young artists found his thinking to be compatible with theirs.

3. Compliance

Of course, no one was forcing compliance with Breton's ideas. Artists of the time did not have to adapt to his emphasis on dreams and new associations of thoughts and objects.

4. Inanimate

In surrealist art, the mixture of inanimate objects with realistic living figures creates highly unusual effects. The Spanish painter Salvador Dalí (1904–1989) used some of this technique in his artwork.

5. Indestructible

Much surrealist art shows distorted objects—sometimes parts of objects—in odd scenes. The style destroys reality, thus suggesting that nothing is indestructible.

6. Innate

Dali and another Spanish painter, Joan Miró (1893–1983), seemed to have an innate talent for looking at the world unrealistically. Miró's naturally whimsical style is seen in The Harlequin's Carnival.

7. Mutable

An interesting aspect of surrealist art is its mutable nature: It changes the same way dreams change, and just as quickly.

8. Perception

Surrealists such as Dali and Miró must have had sharp perceptions of the world through all their senses in order to alter reality so successfully.

9. Prevalent

Interest in the surrealist style of painting is prevalent today, although it is perhaps not as widespread as when Dali and Miró were producing surrealist masterpieces.

10. Recourse

What recourse does anyone have who does not understand surrealism? That person may want to seek help and advice from books, videos, art instructors, and even local art professors or museum directors.
EXERCISE 2  Context Clues

Directions. Scan the definitions in Column A. Then, think about how the boldface words are used in the sentences in Column B. To complete the exercise; match each definition in Column A with the correct Vocabulary Word from Column B. Write the letter of your choice on the line provided; then write the Vocabulary Word on the line preceding the definition.

COLUMNS A

11. word: ______________________
   adj. inborn; natural; inherent

12. word: ______________________
   n. a person or thing looked to for help, safety, and so on; a turning for help, safety, and the like, to a person or thing

13. word: ______________________
   adj. capable of change; inconstant

14. word: ______________________
   n. the act of adapting to or giving in; a tendency to yield; conformity with official requirements

15. word: ______________________
   adj. not capable of being destroyed

16. word: ______________________
   adj. widespread; in general use; having general acceptance

17. word: ______________________
   adj. able to get along; agreeing; in agreement with; harmonious

18. word: ______________________
   n. an observation, a concept, or an awareness gained by use of the senses; an understanding or impression of something; appreciation; discernment

19. word: ______________________
   n. a statement assumed to be true; a self-evident truth; an established principle

20. word: ______________________
   adj. dull; spiritless; lifeless

COLUMNS B

(A) What is your perception of the work of surrealist artist Salvador Dalí? Do you grasp, for instance, his depictions of the human body?

(B) For artistic purposes, Dalí certainly found the human body mutable: He freely altered its basic form in a number of paintings.

(C) Dalí’s view in the painting Soft Construction with Boiled Beans: Premonition of Civil War seems to be not only that humanity is not indestructible, but also that it is capable of its own destruction.

(D) The painting clearly illustrates Dalí’s ability to defy reality on canvas. Such an ability can’t, I think, be learned: It must be inbred, or innate.

(E) In that disturbing painting, Dalí shows compliance, or agreement, with the surrealist belief that feelings and ideas must be expressed.

(F) Don’t you think Dalí’s paintings prove the old axiom “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder”?

(G) Of course, Dalí’s paintings are inanimate objects, yet they are hardly dreary.

(H) Although surrealism was a popular movement in its day, the surrealist style never became prevalent in the art world. It was confined to a small group of artists.

(I) Frankly, I have never been compatible with anyone who likes surrealist art, but maybe we can reach an understanding.

(J) Perhaps you are my last recourse for assistance in learning to appreciate surrealist art.
**EXERCISE 3  Sentence Completion**

**Directions.** For each of the following items, circle the letter of the choice that best completes the meaning of the sentence or sentences.

21. Our art teacher said that his favorite painter is Joan Miró. Miró’s humor is ____ , or consistent, with his own.
   (A) prevalent
   (B) innate
   (C) inanimate
   (D) compatible
   (E) mutable

22. “I used to think Miró had an ____ artistic talent, but I now believe that his skills were learned.”
   (A) axiomatic
   (B) innate
   (C) incompatible
   (D) indestructible
   (E) inanimate

23. We are lucky that Miró was not rigid and unchanging but flexible and ____ in his choice of materials and forms. This enabled him to work in painting, sculpture, and ceramics.
   (A) innate
   (B) compatible
   (C) inanimate
   (D) indestructible
   (E) mutable

24. “Follow your dreams” is a truism, a(n) ____ , that applies to Miró.
   (A) axiom
   (B) recourse
   (C) compatibility
   (D) perception
   (E) compliance

25. “Miró’s desire to be an artist was ____ , and we should be glad that his desire could not be crushed,” Mr. Alvarez said.
   (A) compatible
   (B) prevalent
   (C) indestructible
   (D) inanimate
   (E) prolific

26. “I enjoy the way the ____ shapes actually seem to come to life in some Miró paintings,” Mr. Alvarez said. “They have a vibrant quality that is naturally their own, a(n) ____ spirit that is very appealing.”
   (A) innate ... compatible
   (B) inanimate ... mutable
   (C) indestructible ... prevalent
   (D) compatible ... perceptive
   (E) inanimate ... innate

27. “Certain images were ____ , or often used, in Miró’s paintings. Perhaps they were ____ symbols that changed with his ideas.”
   (A) innate ... compatible
   (B) prevalent ... indestructible
   (C) axiomatic ... mutable
   (D) prevalent ... mutable
   (E) indestructible ... innate

28. “Your ____ of Miró is largely that of a humorous painter, isn’t it? That observation is certainly ____ , or in complete accord, with my own,” Mr. Alvarez said.
   (A) recourse ... prevalent
   (B) axiom ... mutable
   (C) perception ... compatible
   (D) compliance ... inanimate
   (E) prevalence ... mutable

29. “You will be in ____ with class requirements if you write an essay about a Miró painting. Tell me your ____ of it, explaining what you understand it to mean.”
   (A) compliance ... perception
   (B) recourse ... compliance
   (C) compatibility ... axiom
   (D) axiom ... recourse
   (E) perception ... personification

30. “If you need help, your best ____ will be to consult reference works at the library,” Mr. Alvarez said. “In your essays, tell me if you think the ____ ‘Art for art’s sake’ applies to Miró’s work.”
   (A) perception ... recourse
   (B) recourse ... axiom
   (C) axiom ... compliance
   (D) recourse ... compliance
   (E) compliance ... axiom