

AE Academic English UK

TED-Ed Art Listening Worksheet



Black Square (1913)

By Kazimir Malevich

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Lecture Listening Comprehension

Aim: *To develop the students' ability to listen to a short lecture, to take notes, use those notes to answer a number of comprehension questions and then reflect on the lecture critically.*

Lesson Time: *Approximately 1:00 hour*

Lead in

- Ask Students to read the 'title' & predict the content of the lecture.
- Ask students to write down key terms & language from the discussion.
- Feed in / check key vocabulary.

Differentiation

Challenging

1. Students listen once & take notes (*Use the blank note-taking pages or pages with section headings*).
2. Give 3 minutes to tidy notes.
3. Listen again & add to notes (use a different **colour** pen).
4. Distribute questions. Set 10 minutes to answer using their notes.
5. Feedback: Distribute or project **ANSWERS**.

Medium

1. Students listen once & take notes (*Use the blank note-taking pages or pages with section headings*).
2. Distribute questions. Set 10 minutes to answer using their notes.
3. Listen again. Students answer the missed questions as they listen.
4. Give an extra 5 minutes to consolidate answers.
5. Feedback: Distribute or project **ANSWERS**.

Easier

1. Distribute questions. Students have 5 minutes to read the questions.
2. Students listen & answer the questions.
3. Give 5 minutes to tidy answers.
4. Students listen again. Check answers & answer the missed questions.
5. Give 5 minutes to tidy answers.
6. Feedback: Distribute or project **ANSWERS**.

Critical thinking questions

Option 1: Students individually reflect on the lecture by answering the questions, making notes of their responses, and writing a short critical response paragraph to submit for teacher or peer feedback.

Option 2: Students take part in a seminar by discussing the questions in small groups.

Option 3: Students prepare and deliver a short presentation on one of the questions.

Full URL Link: https://www.ted.com/talks/allison_leigh_why_is_this_painting_of_a_black_square_famous

Why is this painting of a black square famous?

[Listening Comprehension Questions]

Author: Allison Leigh

Subject: Art

Date: September 2023

Time: 5:14

Level: **** [B2/C1]

Link: https://www.ted.com/talks/allison_leigh_why_is_this_painting_of_a_black_square_famous

Check these words and phrases before listening:

Key vocabulary

1. Radical.
2. Controversial.
3. Religious icons.
4. Scoffed.
5. Simplicity.
6. Critique.
7. Form.
8. Parallel.
9. Off-kilter.
10. Craquelure.
11. Brushstrokes.
12. Ingrained.
13. Embedded.
14. Avant-garde.
15. Impressionism.
16. Abstraction.
17. Not-objectivity.
18. Distortion.
19. Representational.
20. Undeterred.
21. Soviet realism.
22. Figuration.
23. Mechanisation.
24. Quadrilateral.
25. Refuge.

Note-taking sheet (blank) Page 1

Note-taking sheet (blank) page 2

Note-taking sheet (section headings) page 1

1. Introduction to the Exhibition and the 'Black Square'

2. Visual Features of the Painting

3. Kazimir Malevich's Artistic Journey

4. The Birth of Suprematism

Note-taking sheet (section headings) page 2

5. Critical Reception and Political Climate

6. Later Work and Subtle Resistance

7. Legacy and Artistic Message

Why is this painting of a black square famous?

https://www.ted.com/talks/allison_leigh_why_is_this_painting_of_a_black_square_famous

Task

Use your notes to answer the following questions using the sections headings to help you.

1. Introduction to the Exhibition and the *Black Square*

1.1. When and where was kazimir Malevich's *Black Square* first exhibited?

i.		ii.	
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1.2. What were some of the early reactions to this painting? Tick ✓ the statements that are true according to the talk.

Statement	Yes	No
Someone said it was so simple that a child could have painted it.		
A critic praised it as a masterpiece of modern innovation.		
One person claimed the painting would lead to doom.		

2. Visual Features of the Painting

2.1. What is unusual about the shape and placement of the *Black Square*?

i.		ii.		iii.	
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2.2. What does technical analysis reveal beneath the surface of the painting?

i.		ii.		iii.	
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2.3. What physical traces of Malevich were found in the paint?

i.		ii.	
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3. Kazimir Malevich's Artistic Journey

3.1. When and where did Malevich move to begin his art career? **ONE-word answers only.**

i.		ii.	
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3.2. Which styles influenced Malevich before he developed his own approach? **ONE-word answers only.**

i.		ii.		iii.		iv.	
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4. The Birth of Suprematism

4.1. What did Malevich mean by the following two terms?

	Suprematism		Non-objectivity
i.		ii.	

5. Critical Reception and Political Climate

5.1. What happened to Malevich's art under Stalin, and how did he respond? Complete the five gaps in the paragraph. **ONE-word answers only.**

Malevich wrote _____ and taught his ideas to _____. However, after Stalin came to power, the government only allowed _____, which supported the _____ state.

End of page 1

6. Later Work and Subtle Resistance

6.1. Tick ✓ the statements that are true according to the talk.

	Statement	Yes	No
i.	Malevich continued painting Suprematist works after his arrest.		
ii.	His later paintings showed peasants with missing arms and faces.		
iii.	He completely abandoned symbolism in his final self-portrait.		
iv.	His self-portrait included a tiny black square and a hand forming a shape.		

7. Legacy and Artistic Message

7.1. What does the *Black Square* represent in Malevich's later work and life?

i.	
ii.	

Critical Thinking Questions

These questions are designed to support seminar discussion, presentations or extended writing tasks. Ask your teacher what they would like you to do next as a follow activity.

	Questions	Notes
1.	Why do you think Malevich chose such a simple form 'a black square' to express complex ideas about art and emotion? → <i>What might the simplicity suggest about his message or intentions?</i>	
2.	The painting was placed in a corner traditionally used for religious icons. What message do you think this placement was meant to convey? → <i>How might it challenge traditional beliefs or values?</i>	
3.	How does political power influence what kind of art is allowed or celebrated? → <i>Can you think of other examples where governments controlled artistic expression?</i>	
4.	Do you agree with Malevich's idea that true art should avoid representing real objects? Why or why not? → <i>Is emotion alone enough to create meaning in art?</i>	
5.	In today's world, how might a piece like the <i>Black Square</i> be received? Would it still be considered revolutionary? → <i>What does this say about how our views on art have changed (or not) over time?</i>	

Why is this painting of a black square famous? (KEY)

https://www.ted.com/talks/allison_leigh_why_is_this_painting_of_a_black_square_famous

1. Introduction to the Exhibition and the *Black Square*

1.1. When and where was kazimir Malevich's *Black Square* first exhibited?

i.	<i>December 19th 1915</i>	ii.	<i>St Petersburg, Russia</i>
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1.2. What were some of the early reactions to this painting? Tick ✓ the statements that are true according to the talk.

Statement	Yes	No
Someone said it was so simple that a child could have painted it.	✓	
A critic praised it as a masterpiece of modern innovation.		✓
One person claimed the painting would lead to doom.	✓	

2. Visual Features of the Painting

2.1. What is unusual about the shape and placement of the *Black Square*?

i.	<i>It is not perfectly black or square.</i>	ii.	<i>Its sides are uneven and not parallel.</i>	iii.	<i>It is placed slightly off-centre, giving a sense of movement.</i>
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2.2. What does technical analysis reveal beneath the surface of the painting?

i.	<i>The canvas was used for two earlier paintings.</i>	ii.	<i>Cracks (craquelure) reveal colours like dusty yellow, red, and emerald.</i>	iii.	<i>It shows multiple stages of Malevich's creative process.</i>
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2.3. What physical traces of Malevich were found in the paint?

i.	<i>Fragments of hair.</i>	ii.	<i>Malevich's fingerprints.</i>
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3. Kazimir Malevich's Artistic Journey

3.1. When and where did Malevich move to begin his art career?

i.	<i>1904</i>	ii.	<i>Moscow</i>
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3.2. Which styles influenced Malevich before he developed his own approach?

i.	<i>Impressionism</i>	ii.	<i>Post-Impressionism</i>	iii.	<i>Futurism</i>	iv.	<i>Cubism</i>
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4. The Birth of Suprematism

4.1. What did Malevich mean by the following two terms?

	Suprematism		Non-objectivity
i.	<i>Feeling alone was made supreme.</i>	ii.	<i>Departure from the world of objects so extreme it went beyond abstraction.</i>

5. Critical Reception and Political Climate

5.1. What happened to Malevich's art under Stalin, and how did he respond? Complete the five gaps in the paragraph.

Malevich wrote essays and taught his ideas to students. However, after Stalin came to power, the government only allowed Socialist Realism, which supported the Communist state.

6. Later Work and Subtle Resistance

6.1. Tick ✓ the statements that are true according to the talk.

	Statement	Yes	No
i.	Malevich continued painting Suprematist works after his arrest.		✓
ii.	His later paintings showed peasants with missing arms and faces.	✓	
iii.	He completely abandoned symbolism in his final self-portrait.		✓
iv.	His self-portrait included a tiny black square and a hand forming a shape.	✓	

7. Legacy and Artistic Message

7.1. What does the *Black Square* represent in Malevich's later work and life?

i.	<i>It symbolised his belief in pure feeling and non-objective art</i>
ii.	<i>It showed that even under pressure, he stayed true to his artistic vision.</i>