



Abstract Art



Reading Test

EXAMPLE

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Teacher's Notes

Lesson Contents	
1.	Instructions
2.	Text 1 without reference words underlined.
3.	Text 2 with reference words underlined.
4.	Reading test questions.
5.	Reading test answer key.

Instructions

Option 1 [Medium] *** ** [B2/C1]

1. Distribute **text 1 (without reference words underlined)** a week before the test. Students read, check vocabulary and meanings.
2. Test day. Distribute **text 2 (with reference words underlined)** and the **questions** (no dictionaries or notes allowed).
3. Set **ONE** hour to read the text and answer the questions.
4. Take in and correct or go through answers in class (pass mark is 70%).

Option 2 [More challenging] **** * [C1]

1. Test day. Distribute **text 2 (with reference words underlined)** & the **questions** (no dictionaries allowed).
2. Set **ONE** hour to read the text and answer the questions.
3. Take in and correct or go through answers in class (pass mark is 70%).

Extension Task

1. Students take a set of notes and write a *summary (add 60 minutes to the test or complete as a standalone task).

⇒ Note: the summary lesson also contains additional critical thinking questions as an extension task.

Link for Additional Material

Summary writing	www.academic-englishuk.com/summary
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Understanding Abstract Art (Text 1)

By A. Watson (2025) **EXAMPLE**

Abstract art is a style of visual art [redacted] reality. Instead, it uses shapes, colours, forms, and gestural marks to achieve its effect. Emerging in the early 20th [redacted] a radical break from traditional forms of art, such as realism or naturalism, where the goal was to create [redacted] (Chilvers, 2019).

[redacted] Russian painter Wassily Kandinsky. He believed that art should express the inner life of the artist and that colour and form could convey emotion in the same way music does (Kandinsky, 1912). [redacted] instead to capture spiritual or emotional truths. Around the same period, Dutch artist Piet Mondrian [redacted] Using grids of vertical and horizontal lines and primary colours, Mondrian reduced visual elements to their most basic forms, believing that this would [redacted] (Blotkamp, 2011).

Another significant figure in abstract art was [redacted] most famous work, *Black Square* (1915), challenged viewers to confront a canvas with no recognisable [redacted] to pure geometric form was a way of freeing art from the burden of representation and engaging directly [redacted] to distil visual language into its essential components, setting the stage for mid-century developments [redacted]

The rise of abstract art was not merely an aesthetic movement but also a reflection of changing [redacted] the world underwent rapid industrialisation, technological change, and political upheaval, [redacted] captured the complexity of modern life. Abstract art, with its emphasis on subjective experience and [redacted] visual language to express uncertainty, transformation, and freedom (Harrison and Wood, 2003). [redacted] conventions [redacted] art could be. Philosophers and theorists, too, began to consider abstraction as part of a broader cultural shift toward modernity, breaking with [redacted]

In the United States, abstract art reached new [redacted] of Abstract Expressionism. Artists like Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, and Willem de Kooning used scale, [redacted] the unconscious mind and emotional intensity. Pollock's drip painting technique, for example, [redacted] canvases laid on the floor. This method allowed him to engage directly with the medium and produce [redacted], and energy. Rothko, in contrast, used vast fields of colour to evoke deep emotional states, inviting viewers into a contemplative space. De Kooning's work combined abstraction with traces of [redacted]

Despite its popularity, abstract art has often divided opinion. Critics have sometimes dismissed it as [redacted] argue that its value lies in its ability to evoke personal interpretation and emotional response. Unlike figurative art, [redacted] to participate actively in making meaning. The viewer's reaction becomes part of the artwork's experience, [redacted]. This openness [redacted] and public circles, where questions about artistic intention, technique, and value continue to surface (Corris, 2013).

Today, abstract art [redacted] installation, and performance. Contemporary artists build on the legacy of early abstract pioneers while experimenting with new [redacted] minimalist [redacted]

perception, identity, and the boundaries of visual language. As global communication and technology as a vital and adaptive form of creative expression. Many artists now explore issues such as abstract forms, connecting personal experience with global concerns (Elkins, 2020).

References

Blotkamp, C. (2011) *Mondrian: The Art of Destruction*. London: Reaktion Books.

Bowlit, J. E. (2021) New York: Thames & Hudson.

Chilvers, I. (2019) *The Oxford Dictionary of Art and Artists*. 5th edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

of *Modernism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Elkins, J. (2020) *What Painting Is: How to Think About Oil Painting Using the Language of Alchemy*. 2nd edn. London: Routledge.

Harrison, C. and Wood, P. Oxford: Blackwell.

Kandinsky, W. (1912) *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*. Translated by M.T.H. Sadler. London: Tate Publishing.

New York: The Museum of Modern Art.

Understanding Abstract Art (Text 2)

By A. Watson (2025) **EXAMPLE**

1. Abstract art is a style of visual art [redacted] reality. Instead, it uses shapes, colours, forms, and gestural marks to achieve its effect. Emerging in the early 20th [redacted] a radical break from traditional forms of art, such as realism or naturalism, where the goal was to create [redacted] (Chilvers, 2019).
2. [redacted] Russian painter Wassily Kandinsky. He believed that art should express the inner life of the artist and that colour and form could convey emotion in the same way music does (Kandinsky, 1912). [redacted] instead to capture spiritual or emotional truths. Around the same period, Dutch artist Piet Mondrian [redacted] Using grids of vertical and horizontal lines and primary colours, Mondrian reduced visual elements to their most basic forms, believing that this would [redacted] (Blotkamp, 2011).
3. Another significant figure in abstract art was [redacted] most famous work, *Black Square* (1915), challenged viewers to confront a canvas with no recognisable [redacted] to pure geometric form was a way of freeing art from the burden of representation and engaging directly [redacted] to distil visual language into its essential components, setting the stage for mid-century developments [redacted]
4. The rise of abstract art was not merely an aesthetic movement but also a reflection of changing [redacted] the world underwent rapid industrialisation, technological change, and political upheaval, [redacted] captured the complexity of modern life. Abstract art, with its emphasis on subjective experience and [redacted] visual language to express uncertainty, transformation, and freedom (Harrison and Wood, 2003). [redacted] conventions [redacted] art could be. Philosophers and theorists, too, began to consider abstraction as part of a broader cultural shift toward modernity, breaking with [redacted]
5. In the United States, abstract art reached new [redacted] of Abstract Expressionism. Artists like Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, and Willem de Kooning used scale, [redacted] the unconscious mind and emotional intensity. Pollock's drip painting technique, for example, [redacted] canvases laid on the floor. This method allowed him to engage directly with the medium and produce [redacted], and energy. Rothko, in contrast, used vast fields of colour to evoke deep emotional states, inviting viewers into a contemplative space. De Kooning's work combined abstraction with traces of [redacted]
6. Despite its popularity, abstract art has often divided opinion. Critics have sometimes dismissed it as [redacted] argue that its value lies in its ability to evoke personal interpretation and emotional response Unlike figurative art, [redacted] to participate actively in making meaning. The viewer's reaction becomes part of the artwork's experience, [redacted]. This openness [redacted] and public circles, where questions about artistic intention, technique, and value continue to surface (Corris, 2013).
7. Today, abstract art [redacted] installation, and performance. Contemporary artists build on the legacy of early abstract pioneers while experimenting with new

minimalist perception, identity, and the boundaries of visual language. As global communication and technology as a vital and adaptive form of creative expression. Many artists now explore issues such as abstract forms, connecting personal experience with global concerns (Elkins, 2020).

References

- Blotkamp, C. (2011) *Mondrian: The Art of Destruction*. London: Reaktion Books.
- Bowlit, J. E. (2021) . New York: Thames & Hudson.
- Chilvers, I. (2019) *The Oxford Dictionary of Art and Artists*. 5th edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- of Modernism. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Elkins, J. (2020) *What Painting Is: How to Think About Oil Painting Using the Language of Alchemy*. 2nd edn. London: Routledge.
- Harrison, C. and Wood, P. (. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Kandinsky, W. (1912) *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*. Translated by M.T.H. Sadler. London: Tate Publishing.
- New York: The Museum of Modern Art.

Comprehension Questions

EXAMPLE

1. Headings: Choose **ONE** subheading for each paragraph (P). One title is NOT needed.

P1.	A	The role of abstract art modern American culture
P2.	B	
P3.	C	Abstract art as a response to societal transformation
P4.	D	Debates and controversies surrounding abstract art
P5.	E	
P6.	F	Abstract art on the contemporary world
P7.	G	Abstract expressionism and the power of emotion
	H	

___ / 7

2. Multiple Choice: Choose **ONE** answer for each paragraph (P).

P1.	Which of the following best explains the difference between abstract art and traditional realism?	a.	
		b.	Abstract art applies perspective to increase realism.
		c.	
		d.	Abstract art prioritises photographic detail.
P2.	Piet Mondrian's style of neoplasticism can be recognised by:	a.	
		b.	Grids and colours expressing universal order.
		c.	
		d.	Abstract drip techniques with layered textures.
P3.	What idea was central to Malevich's Suprematism?	a.	
		b.	Using Renaissance techniques of proportion.
		c.	
		d.	Emphasising the beauty of decorative patterns.
P4.	Why did abstract art resonate with some early 20th-century artists?	a.	They aimed to preserve classical harmony.
		b.	
		c.	They wanted to revive mythological subject matter.
		d.	
P5.	Abstract Expressionists such as Pollock and Rothko sought to:	a.	Capture precise detail of the external world.
		b.	
		c.	Explore unconscious emotion and states of mind.
		d.	
P6.	What is one common criticism of abstract art?	a.	It may seem obscure or insignificant.
		b.	
		c.	It eliminates emotion from painting.
		d.	
P7.	What characterises much of today's abstract art?	a.	An exclusive focus on geometric purity.
		b.	
		c.	A rejection of all previous art traditions.
		d.	

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End of page 1

3. True / False: Choose **ONE** answer for each paragraph (P).

		T / F
P1.	Abstract art began in the 20th century as a break from realism.	
P2.		
P3.	Malevich's <i>Black Square</i> was intended to celebrate a political event.	
P4.		
P5.	All Abstract Expressionists used drip painting techniques similar to Pollock.	
P6.		
P7.	Modern abstract art blends historical influences with innovation.	

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3. Reference words: Choose what the underlined word in each paragraph (P) refers to.

	Word	Connection
P1.	its	
P2.		
P3.	His	
P4.	It	
P5.	This	
P6.	Where	

___ / 6

4. Key language: Search for the word in the paragraph (P) that means:

	Explanation	Word
P1.	A style of art showing objects or scenes as they appear in life.	
P2.		
P3.	A strong factor that helps shape or guide later developments.	
P4.		
P5.	A large painting surface, often made of fabric, used by artists.	
P6.		
P7.	A form of work that incorporates varied media into one artistic outcome.	

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5. Citations: Match the source with the point they make about abstract art.

	Source		Point
i.	Kandinsky (1912).	a.	
ii.	Blotkamp (2011)	b.	Early abstract art aimed to communicate emotional truths through colour and form rather than direct representation.
iii.	Bowlit (2021)	c.	
iv.	Harrison and Wood (2003)	d.	
v.	Varnedoe and Karmel (1998)	e.	These artists developed new techniques to explore the unconscious mind and emotional intensity.
vi.	Elkins (2020)	f.	

i.		ii.		iii.		iv.		v.		vi.	
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Overall Total: ___ / 40

That is the end of the reading test.

Comprehension Questions KEY

1. Headings: Choose **ONE** subheading for each paragraph (P). One title is NOT needed.

P1.	<i>E</i>	A	The role of abstract art modern American culture
P2.	<i>H</i>	B	A turning point in abstract art
P3.	<i>B</i>	C	Abstract art as a response to societal transformation

ALL ANSWERS INCLUDED IN PAID VERSION...