

Andy Warhol Teacher's Notes **B2**

Andy Warhol certainly remains one of the most famous and iconic American artists. He contributed to bridging the gap and blurring the boundaries between pop culture and fine arts and his work is a wonderful way into American 20th century history, culture, and values. Some thirty years after his death, the New York Whitney Museum of American Art has organized the first major retrospective of his work in the US.

The subject fits the cycle *terminale's* "Power, types and sites" notion and lead to a reflection on the power of arts, Pop Art as part of a counter-culture movement and the importance and influence of museums or art galleries.

In this B2 sequence, students brainstorm Warhol and Pop Art before watching a short video announcing the Whitney Museum exhibition opening. Then, they do some research work to complete their knowledge about Warhol and Pop Art before reacting to and commenting on a video showing many works by Warhol. Finally, they write or record a review presenting Warhol, commenting on their own selection from his work and expressing what they liked or disliked about it.

Culture, language and structures

- Andy Warhol
- Pop Art
- USA and the world in the 1950s onwards
- Vocabulary related to arts and Pop Culture

Introducing the topic – Speaking

- Tell students they are going to watch a video, but that you want them to react to its title first.
- Write: Andy Warhol Retrospective – Whitney Museum' and have students react freely. Try and see if they know something about Andy Warhol or Pop Art, and encourage them to develop their points. Whenever possible, help them gradually produce longer utterances. Ask them if they can think of famous works by Warhol and have them describe and comment on them.

Watching a report about the exhibition – Listening

- Then, show them the video (www.youtube.com/watch?v=oU67thAqf8A). See what students understand and help them gradually reconstruct meaning – jot down suggestions on the board, encourage to re-organize things, play the passages they struggle with again (but no more than three times) and improvise minimal pair exercises on the board depending on their difficulties ("And *like/Unlike* other shows, this one goes beyond what many consider his prime..." "Warhol is celebrated for *putting up a mirror/political a mirror* to American society and culture" for example). Have them gradually connect the words and expressions they recognized and develop their own recap.

Learning more about Warhol and Pop Art – Reading and Interaction

■ Divide the class into two groups. One group reads a short biography of Warhol from the BBC website (www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/warhol_andy.shtml) while the other reads a short definition of Pop Art (www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/p/pop-art). **Activity 1** guides their reading and encourages them to take notes and get ready to share their knowledge.

Pair-up students – one student from each group. They exchange their findings and complete their notes.

Watching a video and exchanging about it – Interaction

■ Tell the class they are about to watch a series of works by Warhol. Explain to them it is not an oral comprehension, there is no soundtrack, but you want them to take notes upon what they see according to what they already know about Pop Art and Andy Warhol. See **Activity 2**.

■ Play the video (www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZW1MXbHYug).

■ In small groups, students share their findings and impressions. Have one or two groups recap and let others react and complete. Elicit discussion whenever possible.

Writing and recording a review – Writing and speaking

■ Students write a review about what they liked or disliked about Warhol and his work based on what they have learnt. To help them, they can explore the Whitney Museum webpage dedicated to the exhibition (<https://whitney.org/Exhibitions/AndyWarhol>) providing them with a several commented works. (The site

works better on some internet browsers than others. We got better results on Chrome. On Firefox, we didn't get the useful succinct information on each featured artwork <https://whitney.org/Exhibitions/AndyWarhol#exhibition-secondary>) Students may also record their presentations and edit a PowerPoint with a few selected pictures and their commentary as a soundtrack. **Activity 3**

Going further and getting ready for the oral examination – Interaction

■ Ask the class what notion from the Cycle *Terminale* syllabus they could deal with using Warhol's life and work. Have them justify their choices and elicit discussion. Students work in groups and prepare a short presentation fitting the oral examination demands.

It would be interesting to help them wonder whether pop artists were celebrating consumerism or whether they were also showing a critical view of it... or both. (Extracts from the following website might be of interest and provide food for thought – www.widewalls.ch/consumerist-art-culture-critique/)

Video Transcripts

New Andy Warhol Exhibit Opens At The Whitney

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oU67thAqf8A>

Aundrea Cline-Thomas: “Andy Warhol from A to B and Back Again” is the first retrospective look at his career in an American museum in 30 years.

Man: I have now been through the show about five or six times just as we've opened and I feel like I've just scratched the surface.

Aundrea Cline-Thomas: The artwork at the Whitney Museum is displayed

chronologically, starting from the 1950s. Unlike other shows, this one goes beyond what many consider his prime, showcasing Warhol's work until his death in the late '80s. It includes many of the iconic pieces such as the Campbell's soup cans. Andy Warhol is celebrated for putting up a mirror to American society and culture. Many say his interpretation was ahead of his time.

Man: He basically said the things that are in our world, these are things that are our lives. We should accept it, we should think about it, we should experience it, we should deal with it.

Aundrea Cline-Thomas: Donna DeSalvo, who worked with Warhol, curated the show that features more than 300 hand-picked pieces.

Donna DeSalvo: The power of Warhol's work really stems from this acute awareness of how images both live in the culture, and how powerful they can be, and how they need to be presented.

Aundrea Cline-Thomas: Among the guests given a special preview was Warhol's nephew James Warhola.

James Warhola: I think he'd be thrilled that he's being recognized in such an important way.

Aundrea Cline-Thomas: More than three decades after his death. Warhol's art continues to draw crowds and remains relevant in Chelsea. Aundrea Cline-Thomas
CBS2 News

Presenter: The exhibition opens to the public on Monday and runs through March.

Andy Warhol Retrospective | Whitney Museum

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZW1MXbHYug>

Onscreen text: Everybody has their own America and then they have pieces of fantasy America that they think is out there but they can't see. You live in your own dream America

that you've custom-made just as much as you live in your real one.

Portraits

Death and Disaster

1968

1970s and later

There is no country in the world that loves "Right now" like America does.

Solutions

Activity 1

Group A

Personal details: Andrew Warhola born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania – parents had immigrated to the USA from Ruthenia, a region now in the Slovak Republic – 1949 moved to NY – 1968 shot and wounded by a Valerie Solonas – 22 February 1987, Warhol died unexpectedly in a New York hospital

Career: studied at the Carnegie Institute of Technology between 1945 and 1949 – worked as a commercial artist for magazines and also designed advertising and window displays – early 1960s started artistic experiments – 1962 took part in the New Realists exhibition in New York, the first important survey of Pop Art – 1963 film experiments, a studio in NY, the Factory – 1960s and 70s fame and international recognition

Sources of inspiration: advertisements, newspaper headlines and other mass-produced images from American popular culture such as Campbell's soup tins and Coca Cola bottles – portraits of celebrities

Group B

Origins of Pop Art: emerged in the 1950s (first in Britain, then in the U.S.) and flourished in the 1960s in America and Britain, drawing inspiration from sources in popular and commercial culture

Objectives and sources of inspiration: a revolt against the dominant approaches to art and culture and traditional views on what art

should be – Young artists felt that what they were taught at art school and what they saw in museums did not have anything to do with their lives – sources such as Hollywood movies, advertising, product packaging, pop music and comic books

Way it was welcomed: critics were horrified by the pop artists' use of such 'low' subject matter

Distinctive features of American Pop: a return to representational art – a desire to move away from the emphasis on personal feelings and personal symbolism that characterised abstract expressionism

Activity 2 (a few examples of what students may notice)

Influences from his personal life in his

work: he started his career as a commercial artist, which may have influenced him for the Campbell soup cans or Coca Cola series – he turned a newspaper article about his shooting into a work...

A pop artist: sources of inspiration such as advertising, comic books, famous artists from the movies, newspapers...

Various sources for his inspiration: current affairs such as the death penalty, the gun culture or segregation, but also the cold war (Mao's portrait and a variation on the Soviet flag); pop culture (comics, famous singers, actors and actresses, ads...); earlier works of arts (Mona Lisa or Vinci's Last Supper)

Variety of his art: collage, oil painting, abstraction, figurative arts, prints, photos...