

Graffiti.

Where did the word GRAFFITI come from?

Graffiti and graffito are from the Italian word *graffiato* ("scratched"). "Graffiti" is applied in [art history](#) to works of art produced by scratching a design into a surface. A related term is "[sgraffito](#)",^[4] which involves scratching through one layer of pigment to reveal another beneath it. This technique was primarily used by potters who would glaze their wares and then scratch a design into it. In ancient times graffiti was carved on walls with a sharp object, although sometimes [chalk](#) or [coal](#) were used. The word originates from Greek γράφειν — *graphein* — meaning "to write."

Since before the Italians had the word "Graffiti," people have been leaving their marks on walls. These people weren't viewed as criminals, nor were they likely seen as artists, but they could be hailed as forebears of modern journalism.



As a matter of fact, without ancient graffiti we wouldn't have...

the world's oldest example of written Latin, carved into the *lapis niger* in the Forum in 575 B.C. We wouldn't have nearly as much idea of how literate most ancient Romans were, or of how they actually pronounced their language (both of which we can tell from graffiti's misspellings and grammatical errors).



[...]m kalato-
rem hai[...]
[...].iod iourmen-
ta kapia dotau[...]
m.ite ri[...]
[...].m quoi ha
uelod nequ[...]
[...].od iouestod
loiuquiod [...]

quoi hoi[...]
[...]. sakros es-
ed sorl[...]
[...].ia[...].ias
recci ie[...]
[...].euam
quos re[...]

This graffiti is
**Political satire -
Roman graffito
by
Peregrinus, perh
aps the first
satirical
cartoonist.**



“Graffiti represents an art form that is unrestricted, one that rebels against conventional forms of artwork. It is intertwined into human history, dating back to the Roman Empires where they were plastered onto walls to make political statements and satirize current events.”

(<http://www.smashingmagazine.com/2009/05/06/40-stunning-and-creative-graffiti-artworks/>)



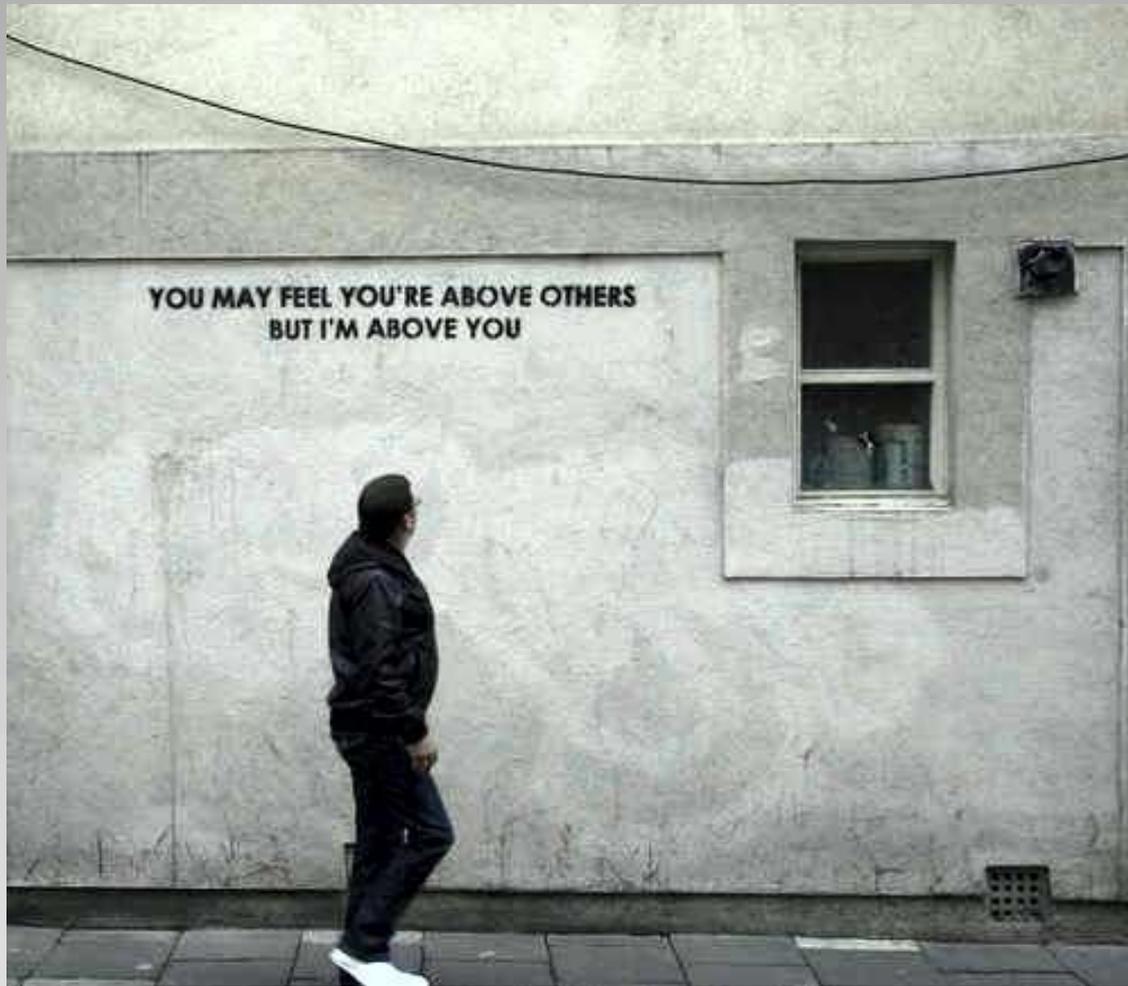
This is an example from a collection of ancient Roman graffiti immortalised in ash at Pompeii, which shows that people are the same, no matter where, or when, they live.



As culture has evolved over the millenia, so has art (including graffiti), and what we leave behind tells a story for those who follow.



Modern graffiti achieves many of the same things as ancient graffiti – to state a message that doesn't necessarily fit into the norms of society.



**Graffiti can send messages about
"EQUALITY"**



Graffiti can capture the culture of a time period... what decade does this capture?



What do you think this graffiti is making a point about?

Where did modern graffiti get its start?

Trains ...Why trains? They made their way all over the city, providing maximum exposure and a kind of communication channel. Graffiti writers got to see the work of writers in other boroughs and keep up on what they were doing. At the same time, trains collected tags wherever they went, creating a unique kind of mobile yearbook..





- When graffiti artists “tagged” places, this was a way of them “marking their territory” – specifically in places you cannot “purchase” (i.e. public property). **THIS IS VANDALISM AND IS ILLEGAL... DO NOT DO IT.**

GRAFFITI CAN BE VANDALISM SO YOU NEED TO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE.



- UNLESS YOU ARE DOING GRAFFITI ON AN ART SURFACE (PAPER, CANVAS) **IT IS ILLEGAL** SO DO NOT DO IT UNLESS YOU HAVE PERMISSION OR ARE COMMISSIONED (HIRED) TO DO A PIECE OF GRAFFITI ART.



There will always be a debate, so keep it appropriate!



Keep it on paper or canvas or any medium like this example that you can see in a museum by the famous artist Basquiat who collaborated with the famous artist Andy Warhol.

- Again, WE ARE LEARNING ABOUT IT BECAUSE IT IS STILL A HISTORICAL ART FORM THAT HAS EVOLVED OVER TIME.

Suppose that Leonardo, Monet, Picasso, or any of the recognized artisans of Western European culture were alive in the present day. Then, suppose that one of these famous artists decided to paint a masterpiece on the side of your house or on your front door or on a wall in your neighborhood. Would Picasso or Monet's markings be graffiti or art or vandalism or graffiti art? The answer may vary across people. Their markings would qualify as vandalism only **if they appeared on private or public property without permission**. The same answer holds for the present day, genre of graffiti known as graffiti art.



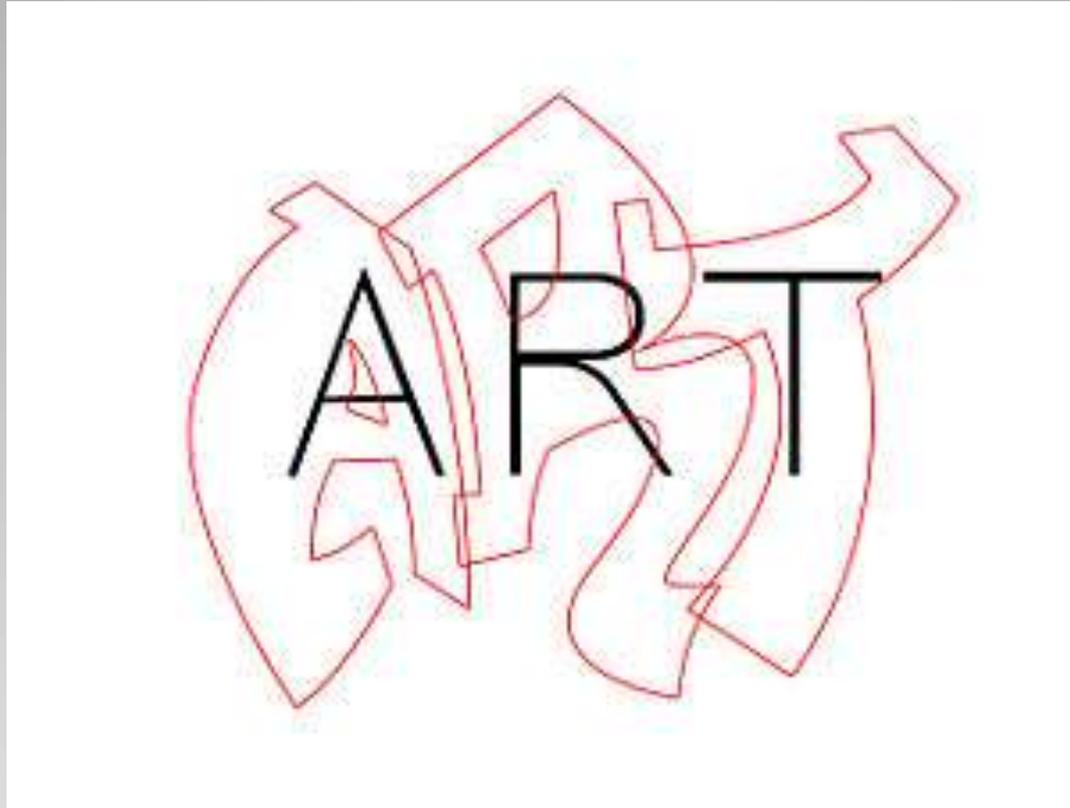
This piece was created for an outside installation art exhibit.

**So how do you do
this on paper?**



There are just too many styles of graffiti lettering to name them all. Even if they all had names, they tend to morph and combine when they're used, making it very difficult to say with any certainty what style a particular piece is done in.

**Let's look at one
example:**



Outline the letters you have written to approximate the style you are going for.



Vary line thickness. You can make all the lines the same thickness, but you can approximate shading and a 3D effect if the lines get thicker and narrower at different places.



Add details as desired. Once your letters are as you want them, you can add additional details - with light pencil - if you choose to. Perhaps a lightning bolt for the dot of an "i" would be good, or eyes peering out of the holes in your "b." You can put a bubble around the whole name, like in comic books. The possibilities are limited only by your imagination.



Blacken your pencil lines. Use pen or marker to darken the lines drawn with your pencil. These lines are more or less permanent, so be extremely careful.



Add color. To fill in your drawing with colored pencil or marker, as suggested already, it's a good idea to look at examples before doing this, but really you can do anything you want except crayon.

Let's also talk about ways to lay out your paper so you don't run out of room for your lettering... I will show you on the board and pass out some sample fonts. Additionally we will look at a website to get some brainstorming... Let's get started!