

## A

## Useful adjectives for describing works and performances

That TV series is **overrated**. [not as good as people say]

The plot was so **hackneyed**! [done so often it is boring]

The play was **disjointed** and difficult to follow. [unconnected and not in a clear order]

The film *Green Aliens from Mars* was a bit **far-fetched**. [impossible to believe]

The play was a bit **risqué**, and some religious leaders criticised it. [/rɪ'skeɪ/ against accepted social standards and likely to shock some people]

It was a **gripping** film from start to finish. [exciting and keeping your attention the whole time]

It was a **harrowing** documentary about war and refugee camps. [extremely upsetting]

It's a **moving** story about a child whose mother dies. [making you feel pity or sadness]

What a truly **memorable/unforgettable** performance. [you remember it long after]

The ballerina's performance was **understated**. [done or expressed in a simple but attractive style]

The play was long and **tedious**. [boring]

That new stand-up comedian is **hilarious**. [extremely funny]

## Language help

The adjectives above can also be used about writing, e.g.  
The plot of the novel is **far-fetched/hilarious/gripping**, etc.



## B

## Success and failure

The audience clearly loved the play – the **applause** was deafening. [clapping to show enjoyment] So it's not surprising that it got **glowing reviews**. [excellent reviews]

The audience called for several **encores** after his concert.

[/'ɛŋkɔːz/ calls from the audience to perform some more]

She got a **standing ovation** as Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*. [the audience stood up and applauded at the end of the performance]

Her latest album has already won three **awards**. [prizes/honours, e.g. 'Best album of the Year']

Sam Dell won the award for 'Best **up-and-coming** actor'. [likely to become very successful]

The critics generally agree that her new symphony is a **masterpiece**. [very great work of art]

She has become **typecast** as a middle-aged mother in TV drama series. [always associated with that type of role]

His latest opera was **panned/slanted** by the critics, which is strange, since all his previous works have been universally **lauded**. [very negatively criticised] [highly praised]

The play **bombed** in London's West End, although it had been really successful in New York. [was a failure]

The show was **booed** on the first night. [got disapproving noises from the audience]

The new TV soap has turned out to be a **total flop**. [complete failure]

Novak **was** definitely **miscast** as the father in that film; he was very **unconvincing**. [was the wrong person for the role] [not seeming real or true]

## C

## Nouns relating to performing

Megan did well in the **audition** and is now busy going to **rehearsals** for the play. [short performance where actors show what they can do, hoping to get a role] [practice performances]

I liked her **interpretation** of the song 'Yesterday'. [way of understanding and performing it]

I prefer the original **version** by the Beatles. [one of several performances that exist] None of the **covers** are as good, in my opinion. [versions of songs that are not the original]

The actor's **portrayal** of the mother in the film was very tender. [the picture she created]

# Exercises

## 20.1 Give an adjective from A which is *opposite* in meaning to the following words.

- |                              |                                  |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 credible, believable ..... | 4 exaggerated .....              |
| 2 original, innovative ..... | 5 coherent, smooth-flowing ..... |
| 3 underrated .....           | 6 fascinating .....              |

## 20.2 Now use other adjectives from A instead of the underlined words in these sentences. Make any other changes that are necessary.

- The musical shocked some people because they thought it was immoral and was attacked by several politicians and religious figures.
- Her dance performance was one of those you will never forget, simply marvellous.
- I can't remember the last time I saw such a film that keeps you in suspense and totally absorbed all the time.
- It was a play that aroused very deep emotions in me.
- It's a film that is difficult to watch without getting very upset.
- His first stand-up routine had the audience falling off their seats with laughter.

## 20.3 Fill the gaps in this paragraph with words from the opposite page. The first letter is given to help you.

Two new musicals opened last week. The first, *Dogs*, turned out to be a total <sup>1</sup>f..... It was loudly <sup>2</sup>b..... by the audience and <sup>3</sup>p..... by critics, who had praise only for the male lead's <sup>4</sup>i..... of his role. The other show, *Danger*, has, however, received <sup>5</sup>g..... reviews and has been given a standing <sup>6</sup>o..... at every performance so far.


## 20.4 Read the text and underline the words or phrases that match the eight definitions. Use a dictionary if necessary.

- the way an actor creates a picture of a person
- he/she is the wrong actor for that part
- a film/book/play that keeps you in suspense
- keep you in suspense / constantly excited
- up-and-coming
- a film which huge numbers of people will go and see
- a police or crime theme
- a very great work of art

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↺ 🔍 ↻

### Cliffhanger not to be missed

In this latest blockbuster cops-and-robbers movie from the Holdart Studios, budding Hollywood star Fletch Packline plays country-boy Ricky Smart, who gets involved with a gang of criminals intent upon stealing ten million dollars from a Chicago bank.



Packline's portrayal of the confused small-town boy caught up in big city crime is convincing, but Julia Fischer as his long-lost sister is somewhat miscast. Not a masterpiece, but it will certainly keep you on the edge of your seat.

## 20.5 Over to you

Think about performances that you have seen. What words from this unit could you use to describe them or to talk about them?

## A

## Changing tastes



Throughout the centuries, people have tended to be suspicious of the new art movements of their period. At the end of the 19th century, for example, people were shocked by **Impressionism**<sup>1</sup>, criticising its practitioners as careless **daubers**<sup>2</sup>. Later, when faced with **Cubist**<sup>3</sup> paintings, the public were puzzled by those too. The **Surrealists**<sup>4</sup> were initially **deemed**<sup>5</sup> crazy. **Op-art**<sup>6</sup> was criticised because its **subject matter**<sup>7</sup> was said to consist of nothing of significance. However, nowadays, liking **Surrealism**<sup>8</sup> or Op-art is considered perfectly acceptable, and images from these **schools of art**<sup>9</sup> appear everywhere, from posters to advertising campaigns. Perhaps because of the ubiquity of advertising, people tend to be more **visually literate**<sup>10</sup> than they used to be, and so are perhaps **inured to**<sup>11</sup> surprises. Perhaps new movements in art will meet with less hostility in future.

1, 3, 4, 6, 8 types of artist and schools of art of the last 150 years    2 someone who paints quickly and carelessly (disapproving)    5 considered; *formal*    7 content    9 art movement    10 educated with regard to art    11 not affected by

## B

## Words for commenting on art

**original**: new in a special and interesting way (*opp.* = **predictable**)

**highbrow**: intended for educated, intelligent people (often disapproving) (*opp.* = **lowbrow**)

**impenetrable**: extremely difficult to understand (*opp.* = **transparent**)

**sophisticated**: showing advanced skills and understanding (*opp.* = **primitive**)

**challenging**: demanding considerable effort to be understood (*opp.* = **undemanding**)

**dazzling**: inspiring great admiration because it is brilliant in some way (*opp.* = **pedestrian**)

**evocative**: calling up images and memories (*opp.* = **uninspiring**)

**thought-provoking**: making people think (*opp.* = **unstimulating**)

**exquisite**: having rare beauty or delicacy (*opp.* = **clumsy**)

**intriguing**: interesting because it is strange or mysterious (*opp.* = **dreary**)

**peerless**: better than any other (*opp.* = **run-of-the-mill**)

**tongue-in-cheek**: not intended to be taken seriously, despite appearing serious (*opp.* = **earnest**)

**priceless**: extremely valuable (*opp.* = **worthless**)

**skilful**: clever, masterly, done well (*opp.* = **poorly done**)

## C

## Art and metaphor

Notice how words connected with art can be used when talking about literature.

The writer **paints** his hero in a fascinating **light**. Minor characters are more **shadowy** or **sketchy** but they are also **depicted** quite powerfully, even though the focus is, inevitably, on the two central characters. These are **portrayed** with great sensitivity. The heroine is particularly **colourful** and we see how her character is **shaped** and **moulded** by events. Some say the author **illustrates** his **motifs** in a black-and-white fashion, but the **image** he creates to **illuminate** the evils of slavery will remain with me for ever.

# Exercises

## 21.1 Choose a word from the text in A opposite to answer the questions.

- 1 What is the early 20th century school of art which shows unusual or impossible things happening?
- 2 What is the mid 20th century school of art which has its origins in optical illusions?
- 3 What is the early 20th century school of art which depicts people or objects as a set of geometric shapes?
- 4 What is the late 19th century school of art whose aim was to represent the effects of light on people or scenes?
- 5 What phrase can be used to mean the content of a painting or other work of art?
- 6 What phrase can be used to describe someone with an educated understanding of art?

## 21.2 Read the sentences and answer the questions.

- 1 Finn enjoys painting but he's a dauber not an artist.  
Does the speaker have a high or low opinion of Finn's work?
- 2 Curious as it now seems, the artist's work was deemed morally dangerous.  
Is this sentence more likely to come from a formal or informal source?
- 3 The sculptor is now inured to criticism.  
How is the sculptor affected by criticism?
- 4 While at art school, Matilda was particularly interested in the Cubist school of art.  
What is the difference between art school and school of art?

## 21.3 Look at the adjectives in B opposite. Divide them into these categories:

usually positive associations   usually negative associations   negative or positive associations

## 21.4 Choose one of the words from each pair of opposites in B and think of a work of art (of any kind) that you could apply it to. Write a sentence explaining why it applies.

EXAMPLE *I think that the paintings by Salvador Dali could be called intriguing, because he uses such curious and surprising images.*

## 21.5 Choose the correct word to complete these sentences.

- 1 I think that the artist's cartoons are usually rather *highbrow* / *dreary* / *lowbrow* as they are intended to appeal to a mass audience.
- 2 When an artist sent in an ordinary red brick to an exhibition, no one was sure whether it was *impenetrable* / *run-of-the-mill* / *tongue-in-cheek* or intended as a serious statement.
- 3 Although the artist's early work is very sophisticated, some of his later pieces are surprisingly *primitive* / *thought-provoking* / *original* in style.
- 4 I find pictures of dull grey street scenes rather *dreary* / *peerless* / *dazzling*.
- 5 The design on that china plate is *earnest* / *exquisite* / *transparent* – however did they manage to paint such fine detail?
- 6 Although his photographs are quite *challenging* / *evocative* / *intriguing*, it is worth making the effort to understand them.

## 21.6 Make a verb-noun-adjective word formation table with these words from C opposite.

paint	sketch	depict	portray	colour	shape	illustrate	illuminate
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## 21.7 Over to you

Visit the websites of well-known museums and art galleries and look at some of the works of art in them. Use words from this unit to describe the works you see.

- 19.2**
- 1 It's always good to see Theo, but somehow he always manages to **outstay his welcome**.
  - 2 I'm going to a dinner at the Royal Plaza Hotel tonight. It's a **black-tie** event.
  - 3 Don't forget your old friends when your film becomes a hit and you're **rubbing shoulders / hobnobbing / hanging out** with the rich and famous.
  - 4 We're going to have **a girls' night out** on Friday.
  - 5 We must invite Jasmine to our do. She's a real **party animal**!
  - 6 Don't always wait for people to do things for you. You should be more **proactive**.
  - 7 It's good to see you! We must **do lunch** sometime and discuss business.
  - 8 It irritates me the way he's always **hobnobbing** with the managers.

- 19.3**
- 1 He usually hangs **out** with his college friends at the weekend and they go to football matches and things.
  - 2 Nella and her friends are very **cliquey**. They don't mix with anyone else.
  - 3 I'd better go home now. You've been very kind, but I don't want to **outstay** my welcome.
  - 4 She said she wanted to go out with me, then she stood me **up**!
  - 5 Rita and Nick are an **item**. They've been together for months. Didn't you know?
  - 6 Laurie's **crowd** are really fun people. I often meet up with them in town.

## Unit 20

- 20.1**
- 1 far-fetched
  - 2 hackneyed
  - 3 overrated
  - 4 understated
  - 5 disjointed
  - 6 tedious

- 20.2** *Suggested answers:*
- 1 The musical **was (rather/a bit) risqué** and was attacked by several politicians and religious figures. (*Risqué* is often used with a modifier such as *rather, very, a bit*, etc.)
  - 2 Her dance performance was **memorable/unforgettable**, simply marvellous.
  - 3 I can't remember the last time I saw such a **gripping film**.
  - 4 It was a **very/deeply moving** play.
  - 5 It's a **harrowing** film.
  - 6 His first stand-up routine **was hilarious**.

- 20.3**
- |          |                  |
|----------|------------------|
| 1 flop   | 4 interpretation |
| 2 booed  | 5 glowing        |
| 3 panned | 6 ovation        |

- 20.4**
- 1 portrayal
  - 2 miscast
  - 3 cliffhanger
  - 4 keep you on the edge of your seat
  - 5 budding (like the buds of a flower, which will open up and grow)
  - 6 blockbuster (film/movie)
  - 7 cops-and-robbers
  - 8 masterpiece

## Unit 21

- 21.1**
- 1 Surrealism
  - 2 Op-art
  - 3 Cubism
  - 4 Impressionism
  - 5 subject matter
  - 6 visually literate
- 21.2**
- 1 Low – as is made clear by the use of the word *dauber*, which suggests speed and lack of care.
  - 2 Formal – because *deem* is typical of more formal speech or writing.
  - 3 Not affected at all – the use of the word *inured* suggests that the sculptor has developed a hard skin when it comes to criticism.
  - 4 An art school is a place where students study art, while a school of art is an artistic movement.
- 21.3**
- usually positive associations:* dazzling, evocative, exquisite, intriguing, original, peerless, priceless, skilful, thought-provoking
- usually negative associations:* predictable, highbrow, lowbrow, impenetrable, undemanding, pedestrian, uninspiring, unstimulating, clumsy, dreary, run-of-the-mill, worthless, poorly done
- negative or positive associations:* transparent, challenging, tongue-in-cheek, earnest, sophisticated, primitive
- 21.4** *Possible answers:*
- I think Picasso's painting called *Guernica* is very original because he treated his subject matter in such an unusual and powerful way.
- I think the pictures on chocolate boxes could be called rather lowbrow as they are intended to appeal to a mass audience.
- I find some modern sculpture rather impenetrable as I don't know what it is meant to represent and I don't find it beautiful in any way.
- I think you could call some classical paintings sophisticated in that you appreciate them more if you have had some artistic education.
- I find paintings by the surrealist artist Salvador Dali rather challenging as they contain so many curious and unexpected images.
- I went to an exhibition of a new art school graduate which I thought was rather pedestrian because it contained nothing original.
- I find paintings by Toulouse-Lautrec very evocative because they make me feel as if I am there myself.
- I find the sculptures by Anish Kapoor very thought-provoking in that you want to look at them for a long time to work out what he intended to convey.
- In my opinion, the designs on ancient Chinese porcelain are often exquisite as they are so delicate and so carefully executed.
- I found a recent work that won a prestigious art prize – an unmade, rather grubby bed – extraordinarily dreary as it made me feel miserable rather than uplifted, as I believe art should.
- I believe that Turner's paintings of the sea are peerless as no other painter seems to capture the colour and light of the sea so effectively.
- Most political cartoons in newspapers are tongue-in-cheek as they do not take anything too seriously.
- The beautiful paintings of Leonardo da Vinci are, of course, priceless.
- I can see that the works of the modern British painter Tracey Emin are skilful, but personally I don't like them very much.
- 21.5**
- |                   |               |
|-------------------|---------------|
| 1 lowbrow         | 4 dreary      |
| 2 tongue-in-cheek | 5 exquisite   |
| 3 primitive       | 6 challenging |

## 21.6

verb	noun	adjective
paint	painting, painter	painted
sketch	sketch	sketchy
depict	depiction	depicted
portray	portrayal, portrait	portrayed
colour	colour	colourful, colourless
shape	shape	shapely
illustrate	illustration, illustrator	illustrative
illuminate	illumination	illuminating

## Unit 22

- 22.1**
- 1 memoir/memoirs
  - 2 manual
  - 3 anthology
  - 4 journal

**22.2** *Suggested answers:*

- 1 I just could not **get into** the story, so I stopped reading it.
- 2 It's **lightweight**.
- 3 It's **heavy going**.
- 4 It's **good bedtime reading**; it's just right when you're settling down at night. All the time I was reading it, I just couldn't **put it down**.
- 5 It's **compulsive reading**, it's so fascinating. / It's a **gripping story**.
- 6 The book is **very informative**.
- 7 Her second novel did not attract a large **readership**.
- 8 This book contains some great moments of **insight**.
- 9 It is an **engaging tale** about a boy who nurses an injured bird.
- 10 Mena Harrap's self-help book was a **product of its time**, but what was true in the 1980s doesn't necessarily apply nowadays.

- 22.3**
- 1 The story takes place against a rather **lugubrious** background in 18th-century London.
  - 2 It's full of **wry** comedy and satire.
  - 3 The book is a **chilling** documentation of abuse in a prison.
  - 4 The novel is full of **evocative** passages depicting life in Australia at the turn of the 19th century.
  - 5 It's a very **enigmatic** novel; you never really know what is happening until right at the end.
  - 6 The novel is a **poignant** portrayal of life in a coal-mining community during the last economic recession.
  - 7 John Farr's latest novel is a **breathtaking** masterpiece.
  - 8 *House of the Dead* is a **macabre** story of torture and death in a medieval castle.
  - 9 The novel's **eponymous** heroine, Maria Selune, leaves home at the age of 18 and travels through Asia.
  - 10 Laisha and Asoka are the **protagonists** in this unusual tale of rural family life.

- 22.4** 1 c 2 a 3 d 4 b

## Unit 23

- 23.1**
- 1 Rowan
  - 2 Thomas
  - 3 Atsuko
  - 4 Hannah
  - 5 Beth
  - 6 Carlos