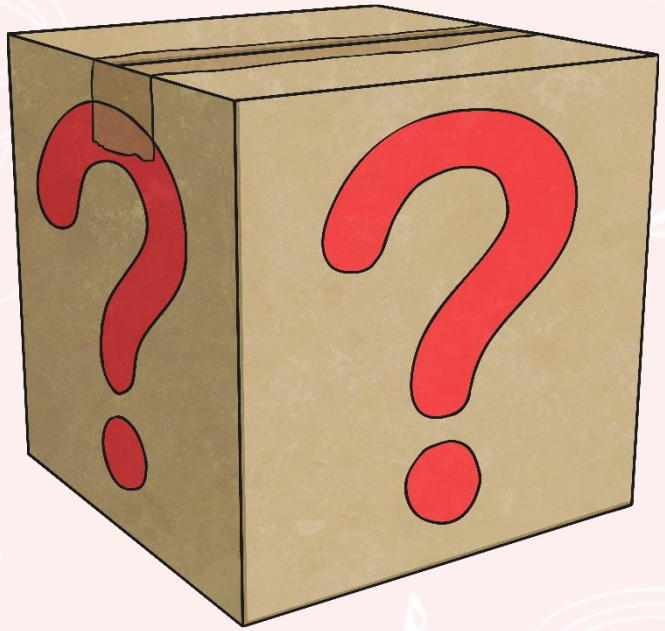
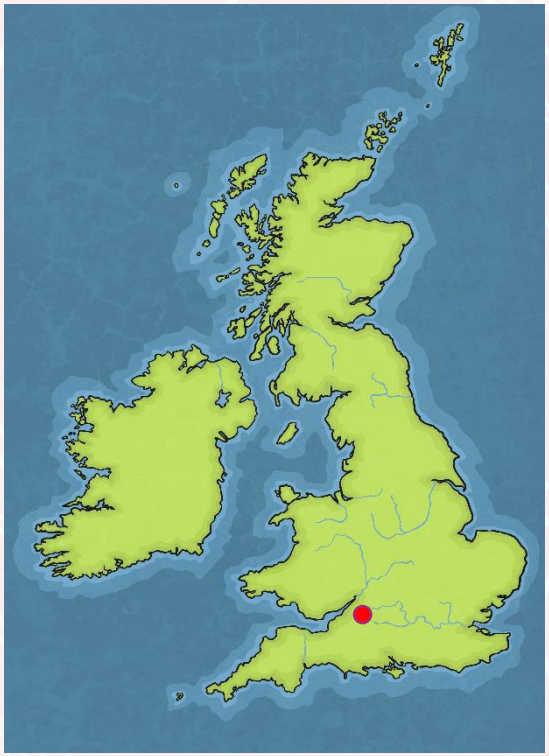
Who Is Banksy?

The simple answer is: no one really knows.

Banksy is an anonymous graffiti artist. That means he keeps his identity hidden. He will not do media interviews, he won't release his real name, and he will not allow photos or copies of his artwork to be made and sold.



Banksy's Beginnings



Banksy is originally from Bristol, England. He was part of the Bristol underground art scene, and he was inspired by the graffiti artist called 3D.

Bansky first started working as a freehand graffiti artist in 1990 and continued until 1994. He met a photographer called Steve Lazarides, who began selling his art for him. Steve then became Banksy's agent, which means he arranged exhibitions.

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Voicing His Opinion

Banksy uses his art to give his opinion on events that are happening in the world. He is known as a political activist. The graffiti he paints shows what he thinks. The most common themes are his views on greed, poverty, despair, the obsession with celebrities, the government and war.

Graffiti artists have a 'tag', which is like putting a signature on their work.





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Technique

Banksy uses stencils to create his artwork. He draws an outline onto card or acetate sheets and then cuts the shapes out by hand. He then uses spray paint on the stencil to create the graffiti.

Banksy has said that before he used stencils, he was very slow at painting, so he often got caught or didn't finish a piece at all.

Some graffiti artists think it is cheating to use stencils. They prefer to paint freehand.

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Mild Mild West, 1997



Mild Mild West was Banksy's first large wall mural. It was painted in Bristol.

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Rat in London



This rat is holding a camera. What message do you think Banksy is sending through this painting?

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Banksy in Liverpool



Banksy has painted on walls all over the country.

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Shoreditch, London



What is Banksy saying in this painting?

What is he saying about the elderly and the young people in society?

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The Balloon Girl - 2004



Balloon Girl, or Girl With Balloon, is one of Banksy's most important works, demonstrating the graffiti stencil technique for which Banksy has become renowned around the world.

The work shows a young girl, whose hair and dress are blowing in the wind, reaching for, or releasing, a red, heart-shaped balloon that has slipped from her grasp. The gesture and the red balloon, a symbol of childhood and freedom, present a powerful message that can be read in a number of ways. Whether you see the girl as losing the balloon, or about to catch it, the meaning can be interpreted as a loss of innocence or the arrival of new hope and love.

This work, which was accompanied by a quotation that read 'there is always hope', originally appeared on London's Southbank, although it was later painted over by the council. In response Banksy produced it again in a new context – a miniature version appeared on the cardboard backing of a cheap Ikea frame which was sold for £73,250 at an auction in 2012.

Another version of the Balloon Girl painted in Shoreditch, near Liverpool Street station, caused outrage when the owners of a shop proposed to peel it off the wall and send the work straight to auction. After 10 years hidden behind a billboard, it was removed in February 2014. It was shown at the exhibition, "Stealing Banksy?" and then sold.

In March 2014, Banksy reworked the stencil, which was by then very well-known, to mark the third anniversary of the civil war in Syria. The redesigned image was used to promote #withsyria, a campaign to raise awareness and rally support for the victims of the three-year-long conflict. In this version, the Girl With Balloon appeared with a headscarf to depict a Syrian refugee.

Mild Wild West -1999



Banksy drew the artwork over three days in broad daylight in 1999. It was drawn in response to various unlicensed raves and parties held in abandoned warehouses around Bristol in the 1990s. A specific trigger for the mural was such an event at Winterstoke Road, where riot police began to attack partygoers.

The artwork is popular with the local community who consider it a good symbol of the heritage around Stokes Croft. It is said to show how a relaxed hippie can still fight back against the government and commercialisation.

In April 2009, the artwork was vandalised with red paint by an anti-graffiti organization, but was quickly repaired. Bristol City Council announced plans to enclose the mural in glass in front of new flats, which was criticised by the local community because it would make it harder to see from the street. Coexist, an organisation managing regeneration of Stokes Croft, did not understand the vandalism. Their spokesman said, "I don't see how spraying red paint is helping with the positive change" and was happy that volunteers quickly came together to repair it.