

Oxford ELLT Reading

Text 1 – Black Lives Matter:

Protesters around the world have been "taking a knee" at demonstrations following the death of George Floyd in police custody in the US state of Minnesota. The UK's foreign secretary has been criticised for wrongly saying the gesture seemed to be taken from TV show Game of Thrones.

American Football quarterback Colin Kaepernick sat on the bench during the US national anthem to protest against police brutality and racism in a pre-season game on 26 August 2016. Kaepernick said at the time: "I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of colour." He discussed his motivations with Nate Boyer, a military veteran and former National Football League (NFL) player, who advised him to kneel because he thought it was more "respectful". Kaepernick switched from sitting to kneeling on one knee on 1 September 2016, generating national media attention.

Some fans were not happy with Kaepernick's actions, calling them unpatriotic and accusing him of disrespecting the flag. US President Barack Obama defended the player's constitutional right to make a statement and pointed to the long history of sports figures protesting. But the following year, recently inaugurated President Donald Trump said that Kaepernick, and any other players who joined him, should be fired by their teams. His comments divided opinion and led to scores of athletes, managers and coaches - across several sports - performing some kind of protest or gesture of solidarity in September 2017. In 2018, the NFL introduced a rule requiring players to stand during the anthem, but this has since been repealed. Kaepernick himself stopped playing for the 49ers in 2017 and has not had a contract since.

Taking a knee has become a common sight at demonstrations in the wake of George Floyd's death. Starting at the end of May in Minnesota, protesters took the knee and called on the police to join them. Kaepernick offered support to the protesters and offered to help those arrested with legal fees. An image of Martin Luther King going down on one knee while in prayer at a civil rights march in 1965 has been widely used in recent years. As well as prayer, in some US sports participants take a knee when a player is injured.

At the Mexico Olympics in 1968, Tommie Smith and John Carlos gave the black power salute on the medal rostrum. Basketball star Mahmoud Abdul Rauf refused to stand for the US national anthem in 1996 and described the US flag as a symbol of oppression. In 2014 in the NFL, five St Louis Rams Players did a "hands up don't shoot" pose after Michael Brown was killed by a police officer in Missouri. LeBron James and other basketball players wore T-shirts with the words "I can't breathe" written on them in 2014, echoing the last words of Eric Garner, who died after being restrained by police officers in New York.

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Questions

1. The word gesture in the paragraph is closest in meaning to?

1. Action
2. Move
3. Sign
4. symbol

2. The word solidarity in the paragraph is closest in meaning to?

1. Demonstration
2. Love
3. Opposition
4. Support

3. The word restrained in the paragraph is closest in meaning to?

1. Arrested
2. Released
3. Hit
4. Chased

4. The word injured in the paragraph is closest in meaning to?

1. Hurt
2. In pain
3. Crying
4. Tackled

5. The word brutality in the paragraph is closest in meaning to?

1. Fairness
2. Violence
3. Equality
4. Corruption

6. According to the paragraph, where does the current idea of taking the knee as a form of protest come from?

1. Nate Boyer suggested the idea to Kaepernick.
2. Nate Boyer and Kaepernick decided that it was more respectful than sitting
3. Nate Boyer and Kaepernick disagreed about taking the knee as a form of protest.
4. Nate Boyer and military veterans believe that taking the knee is respectful

7. According to the paragraph, what was the reaction to Kaepernick taking the knee at the time?

1. It attracted a lot of positive attention from the national press.
2. It attracted a lot of negative attention from the national press.
3. The national press reported Kaepernick's actions widely.
4. The national press called Kaepernick unpatriotic.

8. According to the paragraph, what impact has Kaepernick's actions had on the Black Lives Matter Movement?

1. It has prompted the world to start taking racism seriously.
2. It has made taking the knee a popular form of protest.
3. It has made Kaepernick a leading voice in the Black Lives Matter Movement.
4. It has encouraged other minorities to speak out and start demonstrating.

9. According to the paragraph, what other meanings does the gesture of taking the knee have?

1. It is an act of worship and a sign of empathy.
2. It is a common form of celebration in some US sports
3. It is used to show respect to Martin Luther King and injured sportsmen.
4. It is a sign of support for the civil rights movement.

10. Which of the following can be inferred from the paragraph about Colin Kaepernick taking the knee?

1. Donald Trump and Barack Obama both support Colin Kaepernick taking the knee
2. Donald Trump and Barack Obama have different opinions about Colin Kaepernick taking the knee
3. Donald Trump and Barack Obama believe that taking the knee is unpatriotic and unconstitutional.
4. Donald Trump and Barack Obama support Colin Kaepernick's constitutional right to take the knee.

11. The paragraph supports which of the following statements about Martin Luther King:

1. Martin Luther King was the first person to take the knee as a form of protest.
2. The reason for Martin Luther King taking the knee is often misrepresented in the media.
3. Martin Luther King and Colin Kaepernick both took the knee as a sign of protest.

4. The photograph of Martin Luther King taking the knee inspired Colin Kaepernick to take the knee.

12. Which of the following is FALSE according to the paragraph?

1. Mahmoud Abdul Rauf refused to sing the US national anthem as he saw it as a sign of oppression
2. John Carlos and Tommie Smith gave a gesture of support for the black power movement in 1968
3. Mahmoud Abdul Rauf thought that the US flag did not stand for freedom and liberty for all.
4. John Carlos, LeBron James and Mahmoud Abdul Rauf used their sporting fame to highlight racial injustice

13-16. Do the following statements agree with the information in the Reading Passage? (READ THE WHOLE TEXT)

Select TRUE, FALSE, or NOT GIVEN based on each statement

1. Taking the knee had a negative impact on Colin Kaepernick's career.
2. The UK's Prime Minister believed that taking the knee originated from a TV programme.
3. The law requiring all NFL players to stand for the US national anthem is no longer valid.
4. Three police officers have been convicted for the murder of George Floyd.

Text 2: The Smile in Portraiture.

Today when someone points a camera at us, we smile. This is the cultural and social reflex of our time, and such are our expectations of a picture portrait. But in the long history of portraiture the open smile has been largely, as it were, frowned upon.

A walk around any art gallery will reveal that the image of the open smile has, for a very long time, been deeply unfashionable. Equivocal ‘smirks’ do however make more frequent appearances: a smirk may offer artists an opportunity for ambiguity that the open smile cannot. Such a subtle and complex facial expression may convey almost anything — piqued interest, condescension, flirtation, wistfulness, boredom, discomfort, contentment, or mild embarrassment. This ambiguousness allows the artist to offer us a lasting emotional engagement with the image. An open smile, however, is a signal moment of unselfconsciousness.

Such is the field upon which the mouth in portraiture has been debated: an ongoing conflict between the serious and the smirk. The most famous and enduring portrait in the world functions around this very conflict. Millions of words have been devoted to the Mona Lisa and her smirk – more generously known as her ‘enigmatic smile’. But to write about the smile in portraiture without mentioning her is perverse, for the effect of the Mona Lisa has always been in its inherent ability to demand further examination. Leonardo impels us to do this using a combination of skillful sfumato (the effect of blurriness, or smokiness) and his profound understanding of human desire. It is a kind of magic: when you first glimpse her, she appears to be issuing an invitation, so alive is the smile. But when you look again, and the sfumato clears in focus, she seems to have changed her mind about you. This is interactive stuff, and paradoxical. The Mona Lisa is thus, in many ways, designed to frustrate — and frustrate she did.

It remains a commonly held belief that for hundreds of years people didn’t smile in pictures because their teeth were generally awful. This is not really true – bad teeth were so common that this was not seen as necessarily taking away from someone’s attractiveness. Lord Palmerston, Queen Victoria’s prime minister, was often described as being devastatingly good-looking, and having a ‘strikingly handsome face and figure’ despite the fact that he had a number of prominent teeth missing as a result of hunting accidents.

Nonetheless, both painters and sitters did have a number of good reasons for being disinclined to encourage the smile. The primary reason is as obvious as it is overlooked: it is hard to do. In the few examples we have of broad smiles in formal portraiture, the effect is often not particularly pleasing, and this is something we can easily experience today. When a camera is produced and we are asked to smile, we perform gamely. But should the process take too long, it takes only a fraction of a moment for our smiles to turn into uncomfortable grimaces. What was voluntary a moment ago immediately becomes intolerable. A smile is like a blush – it is a response, not an expression per se, and so it can neither be easily maintained nor easily recorded. In this sense, a portrait was never so much a record of a person, but a formalized ideal. The ambition was not to capture a moment, but a moral certainty.

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Questions

1. In the paragraph, the word “**reflex**” is closest in meaning to:

- a) reaction
- b) joint
- c) plan
- d) exception

2. In the paragraph, the word “**unfashionable**” is closest in meaning to:

- a) tacky
- b) trendy
- c) out-of-date
- d) expired

3. In the paragraph, the word “**paradoxical**” is closest in meaning to:

- a) mysterious
- b) fluid
- c) contradictory
- d) engaging

4. In the paragraph, the word “**disinclined**” is closest in meaning to:

- a) convinced
- b) eager
- c) willing
- d) reluctant

5. According to the paragraph, authors paint smirks to convey...

- a) Vagueness
- b) Convenience
- c) Happiness
- d) Openness

6. According to the paragraph, the Mona Lisa

- a. Was the best portrait of its time
- b. Intentionally distressed onlookers
- c. Demonstrated human craving unnaturally
- d. Invited artists to create similar works

7. According to the paragraph, what is “sfumato”?

- a. An art technique
- b. A type of smirk
- c. Leonardo Da Vinci’s favourite painting
- d. A period of time in art history

8. According to the paragraph, what is the principal reason for not painting smiles?

- a) Not considered beautiful
- b) Long process of painting

- c) Level of difficulty
- d) Speed of the smile

9. What is the main topic of the text?

- a) Why people smile for the camera today
- b) The absence of the smile in paintings
- c) The Mona Lisa's history
- d) Human desire in art

10. Which of the following is **NOT TRUE** according to the passage? (Make sure you read the whole passage)?

- a) People had awful dental habits
- b) Smiles were difficult to draw
- c) Painting smiles took too much time
- d) They were not culturally relevant at that time

11. According to the whole text, all of the statements about smiling in photographs are true **EXCEPT**:

- a) A smile is a reaction
- b) They are quick
- c) They are a social and cultural feature of our time
- d) It is rude to frown

12. Which of the following can be inferred from the paragraph?

- a) Missing teeth made one attractive
- b) Having bad teeth was normal
- c) Poor dental hygiene was a serious concern.
- d) Only government members had good teeth

13. Which of the sentences below best expresses the essential information in the following sentence? **The effect of the Mona Lisa has always been in its inherent ability to demand further examination**

- a) The Mona Lisa is studied by arts students.
- b) The Mona Lisa showcases great art ability.
- c) Museums demand the Mona Lisa be on display.
- d) The Mona Lisa was designed to be closely analyzed.

14. Which of the sentences below best expresses the essential information in the following sentence? **It takes only a fraction of a moment for our smiles to turn into uncomfortable grimaces**

- a) It is unnatural to smile for a short time.
- b) Smirks are more common than smiles.
- c) Smiling is awkward for people.
- d) Smiles are quick actions.

15. According to the paragraph, what is meant by “a formalized ideal”?

- a) A realistic goal
- b) A model of perfection
- c) An honest representation
- d) An accurate memory

16. What can be inferred by “a smile is like a blush” in the paragraph?

- a) They are both reactionary
- b) They are both tinted red
- c) They both make a statement
- d) They both last