PART 3

Read the text below and answer questions 27–40.

STREET ART: VANDALISM, GENTRIFICATION, OR CULTURAL HERITAGE?

A

Street art occupies a disputed space between illegality and acclaim. A stencil on a railway arch or a painted slogan on a shutter may be treated as vandalism by authorities, yet similar visual practices are celebrated when they appear in sanctioned festivals, gallery retrospectives, or municipal "creative city" campaigns. The paradox lies in definition: the same mark can be read as damage, commentary, or cultural asset depending on who is authorised to name it. As a result, street art continually tests where the boundary between aesthetic value and unlawful trespass is drawn, and whose judgement carries the power to make that boundary "official."

B

Debates about street art are often framed through competing sociological lenses. One influential view is associated with Broken Windows Theory, which suggests that visible disorder—graffiti included—signals weak control and may invite further minor offences, prompting calls for rapid removal. In contrast, scholarship on subcultural expression interprets tagging, bombing, and mural-making as forms of symbolic participation by groups denied mainstream recognition. In many cities, early graffiti cultures were driven by visibility, risk, and peer status, turning urban surfaces into arenas for reputation and style. Over time, the repertoire expanded from signatures to elaborate pieces, visual polemics, and politically charged imagery, producing a public response that ranged from moral panic to admiration.

C

The conflict also hinges on who "owns" space, not only in legal terms but in socio-spatial ones. While property law typically treats unauthorised painting as a violation of the owner's rights, critics argue that the urban environment is already saturated with messages that citizens did not choose: advertising, corporate signage, and branded architecture. Henri Lefebvre's idea of the "Right to the City" reframes this dispute by insisting that urban life is collectively produced and that inhabitants should have a say in shaping its meanings. From this perspective, street art can be interpreted as a claim to visibility—an attempt to inscribe alternative narratives onto a landscape otherwise governed by commercial and administrative priorities. The argument is not that all illegal markings are beneficial, but that the distribution of visual permission is itself political.

D

When street art becomes popular, it can be absorbed into processes of gentrification, sometimes described as “artwashing.” Murals may attract visitors, cafés, and cultural entrepreneurs, helping to rebrand neighbourhoods as edgy and “authentic.” Yet the rise in attention can also raise rents and accelerate displacement, particularly for long-term residents who are least able to benefit from the new economy of place. This generates a bitter irony: work that begins as critique or resistance may be repackaged as an amenity for incoming consumers. In such cases, street art becomes less a challenge to power than a decorative alibi for redevelopment, converting rebellion into a marketable aesthetic.

E

A further dilemma concerns preservation versus ephemerality. Many practitioners treat street art as inherently temporary: it is meant to weather, be painted over, or disappear as the city changes. Attempts to “save” pieces—by placing protective screens over walls, relocating panels, or freezing surfaces behind institutional procedures—can contradict the form’s original logic. The so-called Banksy paradox captures the tension: when a work is created outside the permission structures of art institutions, should it later be conserved as heritage once it becomes famous? Communities sometimes campaign to protect iconic murals because they document social movements or local memory. Others insist that turning street art into a museum object misunderstands its purpose, substituting preservation for the lived, changing texture of the street.

F

Commodification intensifies these conflicts. Once a piece becomes valuable, it may be physically removed from a wall and sold, sometimes without the artist’s consent and sometimes against the wishes of the surrounding community. Ownership claims collide: the property owner may argue they own the surface, the artist may invoke moral rights over authorship, and residents may claim cultural rights over an image that shaped neighbourhood identity. The work’s meaning, once anchored in a particular site and audience, is transformed when it becomes a portable asset. In effect, the market can detach street art from its social relations, converting a public visual intervention into private property.

G

Digital circulation has further altered street art’s life cycle and its consequences. Photographs and social platforms allow a mural to travel globally within hours, granting artists recognition and preserving a record even if the original is quickly erased. Yet online visibility can also strip images of context, turning streets into backdrops for content creation and encouraging “destination” tourism focused on photo opportunities rather

than local histories. Viral attention may amplify the very gentrification pressures that communities fear, as neighbourhoods become branded through a stream of shareable images. Meanwhile, cities attempt compromises—legal walls, permit schemes, selective tolerance—but these can privilege already-connected artists and can be enforced unevenly, with aggressive clean-ups in poorer districts and leniency in tourist zones. Ultimately, street art forces an ongoing negotiation between public order, property rights, free expression, and cultural memory, and its meaning shifts as cities themselves are remade.

Questions 27–32

Choose the correct heading for each paragraph.

List of Headings

i How commercial value can remove street art from its original social setting
ii Two opposing interpretations of graffiti's social meaning
iii The development of graffiti from signatures to more elaborate and political forms
iv Why official approval changes how similar visual acts are classified
v The conflict between preserving famous works and respecting their temporary nature
vi Competing claims over who may shape the visual character of public space
vii The use of murals in neighbourhood branding and displacement
viii Economic benefits for long-term residents in newly fashionable districts
ix Property ownership as the decisive answer to disputes about urban expression
x Community efforts to protect murals linked to local memory

27 Paragraph **A**

28 Paragraph **B**

29 Paragraph **C**

30 Paragraph **D**

31 Paragraph **E**

32 Paragraph **F**

Questions 33–36

Complete the summary below. Choose **ONE WORD ONLY** from the text for each answer.

Digital circulation and urban responses

Digital images may preserve a **33 .....** after the original work has been erased. However, images separated from their surroundings may lose essential **34 .....**. This can encourage **35 .....** in which visitors mainly seek opportunities to take photographs. Legal walls and permit systems may also give an advantage to well-connected **36 .....**.

Questions 37–40

Choose **YES** if the statement agrees with the claims of the writer, choose **NO** if the statement contradicts the claims of the writer, or choose **NOT GIVEN** if it is impossible to say what the writer thinks about this.

37 Broken Windows Theory presents graffiti primarily as a positive form of participation for marginalised groups.

38 Attempts to preserve street art can conflict with the temporary character valued by some practitioners.

39 Selling a work removed from its original location can change its meaning by separating it from its site and audience.

40 Artists with established networks may benefit disproportionately from official schemes designed to manage street art.

Answer Key

27. iv
28. ii
29. vi
30. vii
31. v
32. i
33. record
34. context
35. tourism
36. artists
37. NO

38. YES

39. YES

40. YES