

Lesson 2

A. Pre-Reading Preparation

Cultural Context

Writing your name or making your mark on classroom desks or drawers, on walls or property, on buses or toilet doors sounds like a naughty boy's act. In fact, the impulse to leave a mark in the world has been part of human nature since ancient times. You can trace it as far back as when humans lived in caves. The word graffiti originated in Roman times; it was a way citizens made their opinions known to the public. In modern days, the wall between East and West Berlin was a masterpiece of graffiti before it was torn down. Almost everyone in every culture has made a mark of some kind at least once in their lifetime, whether it was writing on a wall or carving into a tree.

1. Have you ever left a mark in a public place? When was the last time you did something like that?
2. Do you find a lot of graffiti on walls, property or toilet doors in your neighborhood? Do you find them interesting?
3. Do you think people should be allowed to leave their marks anywhere they want? Why?

About the text

In this story, the narrator observes the behavior of some students at the high school where he teaches. This observation triggers his memory of his brother's desire to leave his mark in the world. The narrator explains that he sees the same desire in his own children and concludes that is normal. He suggests that it is a creative outlet for young people who are exploring their emerging identities and that educators should help students channel this energy in more productive ways.

1. Do you think that personal experiences can help people understand others better? Why?
2. Can you explain what "leaving one's mark in the world" means?
3. Do you think that educators and parents should encourage children to leave their mark in the world? Why?

B. Reading

Read this text twice. Try to deduce the meaning of the words that you do not understand from the context in which they appear. The following vocabulary and comprehension sections will help you. By the end of this unit, you should have become familiar with many new words. If the different exercises and materials of this lesson do not enable you to understand all the words, use your dictionary to build up your vocabulary.

Making Your Mark in the World

By Michael Lattimer

- 1 **L**ast week during lunch hour, a group of workmen from City Hall **congregated** outside my school office window to begin some much needed cement work. It was a glorious day, with a brilliant blue sky and a bright yellow sun. Some students were outside enjoying the fine weather. As the workers went about their task, several students watched. Upon completion of the cement work and after placing the **obligatory** warning sign that there was "wet cement," the workmen left *en masse*. To most people, this probably sounds quite natural and normal. However, in the world of high school, this simple action was like a call to arms to all able bodied adolescents. I could imagine the students asking in disbelief: "Can you believe adults have left wet cement unprotected? Time is of the essence. Now's your chance to leave your mark. Quick! I think it's drying!"
- 2 For some unknown reason, the scene took me back to a moment from my past, when my older brother Steve finally decided to take me to his secret **hideout** in a local wooded area. We rode double on his new Mustang bike, which was equipped with the latest **innovation** —the **coveted** sparkling red "banana seat"! A seat that was long and wide enough to actually hold three passengers comfortably. When the bike came to a stop, I immediately noticed a number of cigarette **butts** and beer bottle caps **strewn** over the ground. Steve assured me that "older kids" must have come there for a smoke and a drink. This was just a guess, he said, adding that he too was puzzled by the **debris**.

(END OF SAMPLER)