



New Internationalist
The world unspun

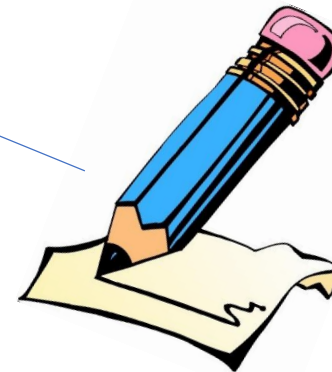
Saudi street artist

New Internationalist Easier English
Ready Upper Intermediate Lesson

Where do you think this is? What can you see? What do you think it is about?



this lesson





Match:

- 1) guardian
- 2) open-minded
- 3) scholarship
- 4) go viral
- 5) illegal
- 6) symbol
- 7) oppression
- 8) challenge
- 9) geopolitical
- 10) hula hoop

- a) describes someone who accepts new ideas
- b) make us think about a new or difficult idea
- c) use of power over someone in an unjust way
- d) someone who looks after and protects another person
- e) money to help a student pay for their studies
- f) against the law
- g) something which shows an idea
- h) linked to geography and politics
- i) become very popular very quickly on the internet
- j) ←



What do you think?



- 1) You are open-minded. True or false?
- 2) In Saudi Arabia women need a male guardian's permission to travel abroad. True or false?
- 3) In Saudi Arabia women need a male guardian with them when they drive a car. True or false?
- 4) In Saudi Arabia it is illegal to protest in the street. True or false?
- 5) Art should make people angry. True or false?
- 6) Saudi women only dress in black. True or false?



We are going to read an interview with Ms Saffaa.
This is what the interview is about. Put the words in
the correct order.

is a Ms artist Saffaa street Saudi .

***She art to about activists wall Saudi
uses Arabia's talk her women brave .***

What do you think the answers are?

- 1) **Ms Saffaa made pictures of Saudi women wearing men's clothes. True/false?**
- 2) **Ms Saffaa lives in Riyadh. True/false?**
- 3) **The Saudi government offered to finance her studies. True/false?**
- 4) **She has a male guardian with her. True/false?**
- 5) **She couldn't get a new Saudi passport. True/false?**
- 6) **She is a political activist. True/false?**
- 7) **She thinks the Saudi government might want her in prison. True/false?**

Now read and check:



Alessio: People first noticed you when you showed the paintings of women wearing traditional male headdresses. They were called “I am my own guardian”. This was a protest against Saudi laws that make women have a male guardian. What gave you the idea?

Ms Saffaa: I come from an open-minded family. I didn't feel the effect of the guardian laws until I came to Sydney, Australia. I got a scholarship from the Saudi government, and one of the conditions is that women must have a male guardian with them. I didn't have one with me. So they said they would only give me my scholarship when my male guardian arrived in Sydney. That's what gave me the idea for the art. The only other time the guardian laws affected me was after my picture went viral on the internet and I was reported me to the Saudi authorities. I tried to get a new passport in 2016, and they told me to go back to Saudi Arabia to do it. By then I was a political activist, and they were probably trying to get me back to stop me from travelling or put me in prison.

What do you think the answers are?

- 1) **Feminist protesters took the name of one of her pictures. True/false?**
- 2) **Feminists cannot protest in the street in Saudi Arabia. True/false?**
- 3) **In the past Saudi women could not drive. True/false?**
- 4) **She thinks the right to drive is more important than the right not to have a guardian. True/false?**
- 5) **The Saudi government put some feminist protesters in prison. True/false?**
- 6) **She enjoys people seeing her work in art galleries. True/false?**
- 7) **Social media has helped her art most. True/false?**

Now read and check:



Alessio: Many activists on social media shared ‘I am my own guardian’. It even helped name a 2016 feminist movement against the guardian laws. How do you think the movement is doing after three years

Ms Saffaa: It was quite interesting because, in Saudi Arabia, protesting in the street is illegal – they say protests are against God. But this was online. It brought guardian laws to the attention of the West. For a long time, the driving ban was the big symbol of the oppression of women in Saudi. But after ‘I am my own guardian’, people started understanding that there are more important issues. I always believed that stopping guardian laws is more important than allowing women to drive. If I can drive, but then my male guardian says no and I go to jail. What good is driving for me?

Recently, they put in prison and tortured Loujain al-Hathloul, Eman al-Nafjan, and Aziza al-Yousef. They are the women involved in the movement to allow women to drive. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch documented this.

Alessio: Has this made social media the most important part of your art?

Ms Saffaa: Absolutely. Social media gave my work a platform. I live in Australia but speak to a mixed geopolitical audience, and I’m far away from Saudi Arabia and the Middle East. How else could I express my ideas? Social media allows me to talk to people and bypass those who control media. I don’t like to show my art in galleries any more, I only do a couple of shows per year.

Match the three topics to the three paragraphs:

a) Ms Saffaa is very different from most Saudi women.

b) Ms Saffa wants her art to change the world.

c) Street art gives Ms Saffaa freedom.



1) You said that ‘if art is not challenging how things are now, I’m not interested’. Why?

If it’s not challenging how things are now, if you’re not creating something new, or imagining a better life from the bad situation we have now, what are you doing? You’re just showing life as it is That’s not interesting to me. I can see life as it is now, I can see how bad it is. I want something that helps me imagine a better world – women with more power or communities. Art should make people angry. If your work is not making people angry, I don’t think it’s good work!

2) You said that your art is a way of showing that you exist. Why do you need to prove it?

It’s a way of showing that there are different kinds of Saudi women. Just a few years ago, you only saw Saudi women dressed in black in Western media. Now you google ‘Saudi women’ and you see some of my pictures! And you will see that there’s a lot more colour when Saudi women show themselves in art. There are a lot of women who dress in black because they’re forced to or because they choose to. But that isn’t me! My head is shaved, I dress in colours, I wear shorts, I skate, I hula-hoop. And every time I googled Saudi women I didn’t see myself there. As if I didn’t exist.

3) What makes street art the art you prefer?

It’s perfect for my messages because it’s easy to do and see and it’s political. I don’t need permission – I just go to a building, ask the owner, and create my art. No one controls me.

Complete this sentences about Ms Saffaa in six different ways.

**She is a Saudi street artist,
who....**



Homework:
Now read the original and note 5 useful new words.

<https://newint.org/features/2019/07/01/interview-ms-saffaa>

