



Sèrie 5

I. Listening comprehension (3 points)

A CONVERSATION WITH YAYOI KUSAMA ON THE POWER OF ART AND EMOTIONS

In this radio programme you are going to hear some new words. Read and listen to them. Make sure you know what they mean.

art installations: instal·lacions artístiques – creacions artístiques / instalaciones artísticas – creaciones artísticas

polka dots: estampat de topos / estampado de topos

boundless: sense límits / sin límites

tapestry: tapís / tapiz

Ready? Now read the questions on the following page. Read them carefully before listening to the radio programme. [Now listen to the interview.]

Interviewer: In the realm of contemporary art, few figures are as iconic and enigmatic as Yayoi Kusama. Renowned for her avant-garde **art installations**, **polka dots**, and infinite reflections, Kusama has captivated the world with her unique artistic vision. Today, we have the privilege of delving into the mind of this visionary artist, exploring her thoughts on the transformative power of art. Good morning, thanks for being with us today.

Yayoi Kusama: Good morning, thanks for the invitation.

Interviewer: Your art is often described as a celebration of love and hope. How do you envision the relationship between your work and these powerful emotions?

Yayoi Kusama: Love and hope are the essence of my art. They are the driving forces behind my creations. When people encounter my installations, I want them to feel a sense of **boundless** love and hope, transcending the boundaries of time and space. Through my work, I aim to cultivate a shared experience that unites people in a profound, positive way.

Interviewer: That was deep indeed! Your "Infinity Rooms" are immersive experiences that transport viewers into realms beyond this world. How do these installations contribute to the exploration of love and hope?

Yayoi Kusama: The "Infinity Rooms" are like cosmic vessels, offering a glimpse into the countless possibilities of love and hope. As visitors step into these spaces, surrounded by endless reflections, they are immersed in a universe of boundless



potential. It's a symbolic journey that mirrors the limitless nature of love and hope, inviting individuals to reflect on their own place within the cosmic **tapestry**. I believe sharing these positive emotions is the power of art. I fight anxiety and fear every day, and the only method I have found that relieves my illness is to keep creating this type of art.

Interviewer: Actually, in your autobiography, you mention struggling with mental health issues. How has art been a source of healing and hope for you?

Yayoi Kusama: Art has been my refuge, a sanctuary where I can channel my innermost feelings. In the darkest moments of my mental health struggles, creating art became a lifeline. It allowed me to transform pain into beauty, despair into hope. Art has been a cathartic journey, helping me to navigate the complexities of my emotions.

Interviewer: In any case, your use of polka dots is a signature element in your art. I perceive these motifs as a representation of hallucinatory visions. Similar to how episodes of depersonalization invoke fear, these dots create a visual manifestation of anxiety. The dots multiply and attach themselves to the surroundings, becoming a form of psychic obsession that you attempt to run away from.

Yayoi Kusama: Yes, I paint them abundantly; it's my way of trying to escape.

Interviewer: But can you also tell us about the significance of polka dots in conveying positive messages?

Yayoi Kusama: Polka dots are a symbol of the world, the cosmos, and our interconnectedness. When I cover surfaces with dots, I'm expressing the idea that we are all dots in this vast universe. The repetition of dots signifies the multiplicity of individuals, yet the pattern also reflects unity. It's a visual metaphor for the collective energy that binds us together, creating a sense of harmony and love.

Interviewer: Oh wow. Now, your installations are experienced by people from diverse backgrounds. How do you believe your art can bridge cultural gaps and speak a universal language of love and hope?

Yayoi Kusama: Art transcends cultural barriers, you know, it's a universal language that speaks directly to the heart. My installations are intentionally designed to be inclusive, offering a space where people from all walks of life can connect on a fundamental level. Love and hope, being universal emotions, provide a common ground for individuals to come together, fostering a sense of unity that surpasses cultural differences.

Interviewer: Can you tell us about your time in Japan before going to the US? You moved to New York at twenty-seven. By then, you must have already developed your unique style as a painter, rooted in Japan. Yet you didn't emphasize your identity as a Japanese artist.



Yayoi Kusama: I wasn't really aware of it. In Japan, the art community isolated me because of my mental health struggles. That's why I chose to leave Japan and pursue my art in New York. I picked America because of my connections and the belief that the future of art was in New York. However, I faced challenges due to restrictions on foreign exchange imposed by the Japanese government. I even had to sell my kimonos.

Interviewer: How do you see the role of art evolving in society, especially in fostering a sense of hope and unity in the face of global challenges?

Yayoi Kusama: In times of uncertainty, art becomes a ray of light. It has the power to inspire, uplift, and unite communities. As we confront global challenges, art catalyzes change, encouraging collective action and fostering a shared vision of a better future. It's a testament to the enduring capacity of art to instill hope and bring people together in the pursuit of a brighter tomorrow.

Interviewer: This interview has come to a close, leaving us with a profound understanding of how this visionary artist continues to shape the landscape of contemporary art with her timeless messages of love and hope.

Adapted from:

Yayoi Kusama on Sixties New York, Surviving Mental Illness and Why She's Never Thought About Feminism, Artspace, Akira Tatehata (May 5, 2020).

https://www.artspace.com/magazine/interviews_features/meet_the_artist/interview-yayoi-kusama-on-sixties-new-york-living-with-mental-illness-and-why-shes-never-thought-56560

Yayoi Kusama on love, hope and the power of art, Wallpaper, Megan C. Hills (March 22, 2023).

<https://www.wallpaper.com/art/yayoi-kusama-interview>



Choose the best answer according to the text. Only ONE answer is correct.

[3 points: 0.375 points for each correct answer. Wrong answers will be penalized by deducting 0.125 points. There is no penalty for unanswered questions].

1. The essence of her art lies in creating a collective supportive feeling.
2. our place in the universe.
3. Art has given her tools to reverse her suffering and despair.
4. To represent distress.
5. Polka dots symbolize how individuals are connected.
6. Because her art connects people at the core of their essence as human beings.
7. The Japanese artists did not support her because of her mental health issues.
8. Art inspires people to work together for the common good.



II. Reading Comprehension (3 points)

THE SCIENCE OF FEAR: HOW IT AFFECTS YOUR BODY AND MIND

Answer the questions below using complete sentences. Each question is worth 0.5 points with a total of 3 points. Up to 0.3 points might be deducted from the total mark for lack of intelligibility in the answers provided. You may use fragments from the text unless specified not to do so.

1. Sabre-tooth tigers are not usually encountered anymore.
2. The production of dopamine can cause a sense of joy/satisfaction/bliss when experiencing/during/in frightening moments/events.
(among others)
3. The hippocampus recalls familiar past events/thoughts/actions to aid the brain know whether the present danger is true or unreal.
(among others)
4. Frequent exposure to scary experiences can desensitize the brain, reducing its ability to react strongly to real threats.
5. weigh(s) (line 20)
6. It's important to understand what fear is so that you... can appreciate its role in survival and entertainment but also treat its impact on your health with respect.

III. Writing (4 points)

Choose ONE topic. Your answer should be 125-150 words in length. There is no specific penalty for exceeding 150 words in length. Extra points are not given for exceeding 150 words.

Including a title is optional.