

**FLEYDO ENGLISH SCHOOL**

Reading Challenge

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# The Rise of AI Art

*Can a machine be creative? The debate that is dividing the art world.*

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**Level:** B1

**Skill:** Reading

**Duration:** ~20 min

**Age:** Teens (11-16)

**Topic:** Technology

**Words:** ~1200

## The Article

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In September 2022, a man named Jason Allen entered a digital art competition at the Colorado State Fair in the United States. His piece, called *Theatre d'Opera Spatial*, was a beautiful, dreamlike painting of figures in flowing robes standing in a grand hall filled with golden light. It won first place. The judges praised its **composition** and emotional power. There was just one problem: Allen had not painted it. He had typed a description into an **Artificial Intelligence** program called Midjourney, and the computer had **generated** the image for him. When the truth came out, the art world exploded with **controversy**.

### How Does AI Art Work?

To understand why this matters, you need to understand how AI art generators work. Programs like Midjourney, DALL-E, and Stable Diffusion use a type of **Artificial Intelligence** called machine learning. They have been trained on billions of images taken from the internet — paintings, photographs, illustrations, designs — along with descriptions of what those images show. The **algorithm** learns patterns: what a sunset looks like, how a face is structured, what "painted in the style of Van Gogh" means. When a user types a **prompt** — for example, "a cat wearing a space suit on the moon, oil painting style" — the AI combines what it has learned to **generate** a completely new image that matches the description.

The results can be stunning. In seconds, these tools can produce images that would take a human artist hours or days to create. They can imitate almost any artistic style — impressionism, photorealism, anime, watercolour, digital illustration. They can create landscapes, portraits, abstract designs, and fantastical scenes that look as if they were made by a skilled professional. And they are getting better every month. Each new version of these programs produces images with more detail, more accuracy, and fewer of the strange errors — like hands with seven fingers — that marked earlier versions.

### The Artists Fight Back

But here is the question that has divided the creative world: is this really art? And more importantly, is it fair? Many professional artists are furious. Their anger centres on one crucial fact: the AI systems were trained on their work without their permission and without payment. When an AI "learns" to paint like a particular artist, it does so by studying thousands of that artist's images — images that the artist spent years developing, that represent their unique vision and skill. The AI then uses that learning to **generate** new images that can look remarkably similar to the original artist's style.

"It is **plagiarism** at scale," says illustrator Sarah Chen, whose distinctive style has been widely imitated by AI generators. "I spent fifteen years developing my technique. Now anyone can type my name into a program and get something that looks like my work in thirty seconds. They do not need to hire me. They do not need to credit me. They do not need to pay me. My life's work has been turned into a data point in someone else's **algorithm**."

The legal situation is complicated. In most countries, **copyright** law was written long before AI existed. Courts are now trying to answer questions that nobody anticipated: Can an AI own **copyright**? Is training an AI on existing artwork a form of theft? If an AI generates an image "in the style of" a living artist, does that violate their **intellectual property**? Several major lawsuits are currently working through the courts, and the answers will shape the future of creative work for decades.

## The Bias Problem

There is another issue that receives less attention but may be equally important: **bias**. AI art generators learn from the internet, and the internet is not a neutral place. Studies have shown that when asked to generate images of "a doctor," AI systems disproportionately produce images of white men. When asked for "a beautiful landscape," they tend to produce European-looking scenery. When asked for images related to certain countries or cultures, they sometimes produce stereotypical or offensive results. The AI is not deliberately prejudiced — it is reflecting the **biases** in the data it was trained on. But the effect is the same: AI art can reinforce stereotypes and marginalise perspectives that are already underrepresented.

## The Other Side

Not everyone is opposed. Some people see AI art as an exciting **innovation** — a tool that democratises creativity, allowing people who cannot draw or paint to express visual ideas. "I have always had images in my head that I could never get onto paper because I do not have traditional art skills," says teenager Marco Oliveira, who uses AI tools to create concept art for the video games he designs. "AI does not replace my creativity. It translates it. I still decide what to make. I still choose the **prompts**, adjust the results, and combine elements. The AI is a tool, like a camera or a computer."

Some professional artists are also finding ways to **collaborate** with AI rather than compete against it. Digital artist Refik Anadol uses AI to create enormous, immersive art installations in museums and public spaces — swirling, living data sculptures that could not exist without machine learning. "AI is not my replacement," he says. "It is my instrument. Just as a photographer uses a camera, I use algorithms. The creativity is still human. The intention is still human. The meaning is still human."

## What Makes Art... Art?

This is perhaps the deepest question raised by AI art. For thousands of years, art has been understood as a fundamentally human activity — an expression of emotion, experience, and imagination. A painting by Frida Kahlo is powerful not just because of its colours and **composition**, but because it carries the weight of her life — her pain, her identity, her vision of the world. A song by a musician moves us because we know a human being felt something and found a way to express it. Can a machine do that? Can an **algorithm** feel loneliness, joy, or wonder? Can it create something **authentic** if it has no experience to draw from?

Most **ethics** experts agree: AI can produce beautiful images, but it cannot create meaning. The meaning comes from humans — from the person who writes the prompt, from the viewer who interprets the result, from the culture that gives context to the image. AI art is like a mirror: it reflects what we put into it. But it does not know what it is reflecting. It does not care. It does not feel. And that difference, many argue, is the difference between an image and a work of art.

## Where Do We Go from Here?

The debate is far from settled. New regulations are being proposed in the European Union, the United States, and other countries to address **copyright**, consent, and transparency in AI-generated content. Some art competitions have created separate categories for AI-assisted work. Some platforms now require AI-generated images to be labelled. And a growing movement of artists is demanding that AI companies obtain permission and pay licensing fees before using existing artwork to train their systems.

What is clear is that AI art is not going away. The technology is improving rapidly, becoming more accessible, and being used in everything from advertising to architecture to education. The question is not whether AI will change art — it already has. The question is whether we can shape that change in a way that respects human creativity, protects artists' rights, and uses this powerful **innovation** to expand what art can be rather than to replace the people who make it. The brush is in our hands. What we paint with it is up to us.

## Vocabulary Cards

## Comprehension Quiz

## Key Vocabulary

Term	Definition
<b>Algorithm</b>	A set of rules or instructions that a computer follows to solve a problem or complete a task
<b>Artificial Intelligence</b>	Computer systems designed to perform tasks that normally require human thinking and learning
<b>Generate</b>	To produce or create something, especially using a computer program
<b>Prompt</b>	A text instruction given to an AI system telling it what to create
<b>Copyright</b>	The legal right to control who can copy, share, or sell a creative work
<b>Controversy</b>	A public disagreement or debate about something that people feel strongly about
<b>Plagiarism</b>	Copying someone else's work and pretending it is your own
<b>Authentic</b>	Genuine and original; created by a real person with real feelings and intentions
<b>Curator</b>	A person who selects and organises works of art for an exhibition or collection
<b>Ethics</b>	The study of what is morally right and wrong; principles of good behaviour
<b>Innovation</b>	A new idea, method, or invention that changes how something is done
<b>Composition</b>	The arrangement of elements in a work of art, such as colour, shape, and space
<b>Intellectual Property</b>	Creations of the mind — such as art, music, or inventions — protected by law
<b>Bias</b>	An unfair preference for or against something, often built into data or systems
<b>Collaborate</b>	To work together with someone to produce or create something

## Comprehension Quiz

### 1. What does an AI art generator need from a human to create an image?

- A) A paintbrush and canvas
- B) A text prompt describing what to create
- C) A photograph to copy exactly
- D) Permission from a museum

### 2. Why are some artists angry about AI-generated art?

- A) Because AI art is always ugly
- B) Because AI systems were trained on their work without permission or payment
- C) Because AI art takes too long to create
- D) Because artists do not understand technology

### 3. What happened when an AI-generated image won an art competition in Colorado?

- A) Everyone celebrated the achievement
- B) It caused a major controversy about whether AI art should be allowed in competitions
- C) The judges did not notice it was AI-generated
- D) The competition was cancelled permanently

### 4. According to the article, what can AI art NOT do?

- A) Create realistic images
- B) Produce work in different artistic styles
- C) Feel genuine emotions or have personal experiences that give art deeper meaning
- D) Use colours effectively

### 5. What is the main message of the article?

- A) AI art should be completely banned
- B) AI art is a powerful tool that raises important questions about creativity, ownership, and what makes art meaningful
- C) AI will replace all human artists within five years
- D) Technology and art should never be combined

## Answer Key

#	Ans	Question
1	B	What does an AI art generator need from a human to create an image?
2	B	Why are some artists angry about AI-generated art?
3	B	What happened when an AI-generated image won an art competition in Colorado?
4	C	According to the article, what can AI art NOT do?
5	B	What is the main message of the article?

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