Adapted from **Contemporary art isn't original – even copying has been done before.**Jonathan Jones, Friday 30 May, 2014 (source: <https://www.theguardian.com/>)

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| **15****10****15****202530** |  "Good artists copy, great artists steal," said Pablo Picasso. Or at least he gets the credit for saying it. Perhaps he pinched the words from Oscar Wilde. There truly is nothing new under the sun, or not entirely new, anyway. Originality does not burst from an artist's head like an alien entity, but is a subtle game of variations and transformations out of which, once in a while, comes the shudder of true artistic surprise. Any acquaintance with the Old Masters reveals that art has always been an exchange of ideas in which influence is not just omnipresent but proudly accepted. The story of art is largely a story of homages, remakes, rivalrous borrowings, nuanced imitations. Rembrandt's Self Portrait at the Age of 34 in London's National Gallery could hardly be a more personal work. It's a self-portrait, after all. The artist confronts himself in the mirror, adopts a pose and depicts it. As acts of intense self-scrutiny, Rembrandt's self-portraits are as radical as any piece of performance art. Yet Rembrandt is deliberately copying the pose of a portrait of a man in blue by Venetian Renaissance artist Titian: he is squaring up to Titian as an influence by literally restaging one of his portraits. The work he imitated also happens to hang in the National Gallery for all to see. For many, the roots of today's most radical art lie in the First World War. Dada is about to celebrate its centenary. The entire edifice of contemporary art is built on the idea of total revolution, of things so new and challenging they are like a diamond bullet in your head. Yet it's all been done before. Originality has always been a complex phenomenon, and the more interesting and valid point those art historians could have made - rather than focusing on the individual, is that advanced art in the 21st century now lives off the past in a way that is unhealthy, like some dead Byzantine culture that, paradoxically, worships the new. Art today is perpetually restaging ideas first enunciated in the 1960s or even the 1910s. |

I. *Introduce the document.*

II. *Here are some adjectives. Can you find their opposites in the article?*
a. obvious, unmistakable b. usual, familiar c. old, ancient
d. simple, evident e. minor, unimportant f. rare, scarce

III. *Here are some definitions. Find the expressions they refer to in the article.*

a. The fact of receiving acknowledgment or praise for some accomplishment
b. Many things/ideas that appear new aren't really innovative at all.
c. An abrupt or immediate recognition of an idea.
d. The examination of one's own thoughts and feelings.

IV. *The following verbs are in the article. Can you find their equivalents below?*
 a) To pinch – b) to burst – c) to borrow – d) to depict – e) to square up to

1) To deal with a problem in a direct way: \_ \_ \_ 2) To steal: \_ \_ \_
3) To acquire, to obtain : \_ \_ \_ 4) To explode, to erupt: \_ \_ \_ 5) to describe : \_ \_ \_

V. Say if the following statements are RIGHT or WRONG and justify your answer in your own words or by quoting from the text.

1. According to Picasso, what makes artists great is their own originality.
2. Most artists are too ashamed to admit drawing inspiration from others.
3. Rembrandt’s self-portrait is the perfect example of an original creation.
4. Dada is 150 years old.
5. Art today obviously feeds on the past.

*VI. Answer the following questions in complete sentences.*

1. Pick out all the key-words used to describe originality in the first paragraph. What lexical field do they belong to? What is the underlying idea?
2. Why do some people consider Rembrandt’s Self Portrait as anything but an original work of art? Find at least three expressions in the third paragraph to back up your answer.
3. What is the main source of inspiration for today’s radical art? Try to explain in your own words why this art movement may be seen as an endless source of inspiration for today’s artists.
4. “ ...art in the 21st century now lives off the past in a way that is unhealthy.” In your opinion, why did the journalist choose this particular adjective?

*VII. Written expression*

Sum up the main ideas of this article in about 120 words. Don’t forget to explain why defining originality is particularly difficult in today’s art world.