



## Lesson Plan: Graffiti

*PSHE and Citizenship      Key stages 3 and 4      11 – 16 years*

### **Overview**

Graffiti is a complex issue to tackle. Many people, regardless of their age or experience, think of graffiti as something quite harmless, something that is cool, a form of art, or a way of expressing oneself.

On the railway, graffiti can be a matter of life or death.

### **Learning objectives**

By the end of the lesson, pupils should understand the following points:

- Spraying graffiti on the railway is extremely dangerous: you could be hit by a train, electrocuted, fall from a height or trip and fall in the hazardous environment.
- Graffiti on the railway is a crime and carries serious penalties.
- Graffiti on the railway contributes to people's fear of crime.
- Cleaning up graffiti costs the rail industry millions of pounds that could be invested in improving the infrastructure and services.

### **Ice-breaker**

Ask the pupils about their opinions on graffiti:

**Is it cool? Is it annoying? Is it a crime?**

**Does graffiti enhance your environment? Or does it make your environment more unpleasant?**

**Is it right to spray graffiti on someone else's property without permission?**

**Are there places where spraying graffiti could be dangerous?**



### **The thrill is gone**

In this short video, two boys are spraying graffiti on a railway line. They are excited and having fun – then things go quite wrong.

The video was filmed with actors, entirely safely, but it is based on real-life incidents in which young people died whilst spraying graffiti on the railway.

Play the video to the class.

Give the class some time to reflect after the video has ended.

### **Discussion: What happened here?**

The video is purposefully left open-ended to trigger discussion in the class:

#### **What was going on?**

#### **What happened? Did Luke die? Or was he injured?**

- Luke and his friend could have both died. In many parts of the railway the gap between the track and an adjacent structure, for instance a fence or wall, is too narrow for a person to survive when a train passes. You may suffer a glancing blow from the train even if you are not right on the track.
- Luke could have died if he fell on the track or right near it. There's nothing the driver could have done. The train may take a mile to stop after the driver has applied the emergency brake.
- Luke could be seriously injured, either from the fall or from being hit by the train.
- Luke's friend may be unharmed but has to watch Luke being killed or injured.

#### **Can you think of dangers involved in spraying graffiti on the railway?**

- You could get electrocuted, either from the electrified rail running along the railway track, or from the over-head power lines.

**The rail industry's key message to young people is:  
spraying graffiti on the railway puts your life at risk.**

### **Extension: Other consequences of graffiti**

While the risk of loss of life or serious injury associated with graffiti is the rail industry's most pressing concern, graffiti also has other consequences:

- Spaces sprayed with graffiti make many people concerned for their personal safety.
- Cleaning up graffiti costs the rail industry millions of pounds each year – money that could be spent on improving the services and the infrastructure.
- Spraying graffiti on the railway will have serious consequences for the young people who do it: ranging from a heavy fine, to a prison sentence, to having to pay damages of tens of thousands of pounds.