

Still catching up on incidents that happened in the holidays, here is another one that is great for discussion.

This is about the 'sticker lady' who sprayed "my grandfather road" on roads and placed stickers on traffic signal buttons, some in amusing Singlish that deprecated our need to press the button more than once, like "Press once can already". Others on sidewalks and pavements tellingly said "stop looking at your phone" which everyone admits is a hit.

As there were many calls for her work to be recognised as art rather than vandalism, this might be a good opportunity to discuss the difference.

The authorities have deemed it vandalism because it was done on public property and albeit done discreetly and even amusingly, would need to public funds to clean it up.

The public is divided. There are some who are uncomfortable with Singapore's squeaky-clean image as a rule-upholding society because it connotes a lack of creativity, a lack of fun and a lack of flexibility. On the other hand, others are afraid we are on a slippery slope.

I bring this up because you might well get a similar situation in school. It is easy enough to condemn crass and crude obscenities that you see now and then outside and even inside schools. But what would you do if you had a 'vandal' who had as much humour and resonance in your school?

When you have so many other crises possibly facing you, some of you may say the less we talk about this, the less we put ideas in our students' heads. But students don't need you to put ideas in their heads. The ideas come courtesy of cyberspace.

Questions for possible use in a class setting

1. What is vandalism? It is generally defined as *The intentional and malicious destruction of or damage to the property of another*
2. What is art? This one is much more difficult to define, so get your art teacher to do it for you.
3. Why do you think people think the sticker lady's work was not vandalism?
4. If it is art, should it be preserved? If so, whose job is it to preserve the art?
5. If it is not preserved, what happens to the public property it is on? Does it have to be cleaned up? If so, whose job is it to clean it up?
6. How could the sticker lady have still put up the stickers and yet keep on the side of the law? (Could she apply to the authorities to put up what is called installation art? Could she have involved a school in her project so that the students took ownership over looking after what they had installed including its removal?)

With such questions, it would be possible to lead students to think about being responsible even while putting up a work of art. Taking them to a museum to see how art is curated will give them an idea of what goes into looking after a work of art.