

Name: _____ Class: _____

Nipsey Hussle Street Art in Los Angeles Breathes Life Into Legacy

By Associated Press
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*Nipsey Hussle was an American rapper, business owner, and community activist from Los Angeles, California. This article discusses how fans began memorializing him after he was killed outside his clothing store in 2019. **Skill Focus:** In this lesson, you'll practice identifying an author's central idea and how they support it. This means paying attention to the evidence they give for their central idea and the details they provide to clarify it. As you read, identify evidence that reveals the impact Nipsey Hussle had on his community.*

- [1] Along busy highways, on the sides of buildings and inside a school basketball court, more than 50 colorful murals of Nipsey Hussle have popped up in Los Angeles since the beloved rapper and community activist was gunned down outside his clothing store.

Some show the rapper gazing into the sky or bowing his head. One has him standing with angel wings. Others include inspiring¹ quotes. The street artists who created the work said they want his legacy² to grow and his entrepreneurial³ spirit to live on.



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"He wasn't the biggest star, but I knew his music. His passing led me to rediscover him under a completely new light," said Levi Ponce, who created an elaborate blue, black and white mural on 26-foot-building with Hussle's image in one day. A lyric from his song "Victory Lap" was written above his head.

Hussle was fatally shot on March 31 while standing outside The Marathon, his South Los Angeles clothing store, not far from where he was raised.

- [5] "As a muralist, my philosophy is that we can do our part today with what we have now," Ponce said. "In my case, I'm a painter and paint in the streets. Nipsey was able to give it on a greater scale. He went out of his way to help the community. For me, that's motivation and inspiration. So I had to get my paint on the walls right away after hearing the sad news."

1. **Inspire (verb):** to encourage or energize
 2. **Legacy (noun):** something a person leaves behind for future generations to benefit from
 3. **Entrepreneur (noun):** a business person

Eric R. Holder Jr., who has been charged with killing Hussle, has pleaded not guilty. Police have said Holder and Hussle had several interactions⁴ the day of the shooting and have described it as being the result of a personal dispute.⁵

The death of the 33-year-old Hussle sent a shock wave through the hip-hop community and beyond. Fans poured out adoration⁶ for a man whose career hit new heights with *Victory Lap*, his first studio album that earned a Grammy nomination after he released much sought-after⁷ mixtapes for a decade. He was an up-and-coming rapper and beloved figure for his philanthropic work⁸ that went well beyond the usual celebrity “giving back” ethos.⁹

After he passed away, Hussle’s peers, from Jay-Z to Snoop Dogg, along with political and community leaders, were quick and effusive¹⁰ in their praise using words. For Ponce and others, paint was how they paid homage.

“The world is uniting because of him. You can see the revival¹¹ of all the murals going up,” said Nick Ansom, CEO of the Venice Basketball League. He spearheaded a project to create the Nipsey Hussle Memorial Basketball Court at the nonprofit charter school Crete Academy, a few blocks from Hussle’s clothing store.

[10] The basketball court is painted blue with a checkerboard border and a side view of Hussle at midcourt. Ansom said he felt the urge to push forward the initiative¹² to create a basketball court mural in honor of Hussle as a “thank you” to the rapper who he says was “starting to reach his peak.” He and his partner, Michael McLeod, drove around South Los Angeles looking for possible schools before Crete Academy founder-principal Hattie Mitchell agreed to embrace¹³ the idea.

Afterward, Ansom drew his vision for the mural on paper and called artist Gustavo Zermeno Jr. to design it. He said about 40 people gathered to paint and touch up the mural in a week’s time frame. Hussle’s father and sister attended the ribbon-cutting ceremony to unveil it just days after the rapper’s public memorial service, which drew more than 20,000 people to the Staples Center.

“Nipsey was an advocate¹⁴ and passionate (about) the game (of basketball),” said Ansom, who started his basketball league in 2006 after he moved to Los Angeles from France. He called himself a big fan of Hussle’s music and visited his clothing store to purchase apparel.

“He used to host charity games at Crenshaw High School,” he said. “He was always around the game. (This mural) is hip-hop, basketball and art all in one.”

4. **Interaction (noun):** communication or direct involvement with someone or something

5. **Dispute (noun):** argument; disagreement

6. **Adoration (noun):** deep love or respect

7. in demand or wanted by many people

8. charity work that supports people

9. attitude or belief

10. enthusiastic

11. **Revive (verb):** to give new energy or strength to something

12. plan or effort

13. **Embrace (verb):** to accept or support

14. **Advocate (noun):** a person who supports a cause or activity

Before Zermeno helped create Hussle's basketball court mural, he had already done some street art of the rapper elsewhere in town. He painted a mural of Hussle in between other popular Los Angeles figures including Lakers player LeBron James and Snoop Dogg on the side of a clothing store. When Ansom asked for his help, Zermeno said it was a "no brainer." The muralist feels he's just doing his part to celebrate Hussle by doing both for free.

- [15] "It's bigger than just painting a mural," said Zermeno, who has also created murals of the late Mac Miller and Selena. "A lot of the murals are solidifying¹⁵ Nipsey's legacy."

Mitchell shed tears while talking about Hussle's positive influence over her students at Crete Academy and the community. She was not only taken aback by the mural at her school, but also by the many others around town.

"These murals are popping up every day," she said. "There are photos that are truly memorializing this man. Most people are coming here to take photos with their family and etc. But I saw an individual who didn't have his phone out. He had his shoulders up, his head down. At that moment, I truly realized that our memorial in our court is somewhat of a gravesite... It's a place where you can remember someone, feel their spirit and grieve."¹⁶

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15. **Solidify (verb):** to make stronger

16. **Grieve (verb):** to feel sadness over someone's death

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. Which statement best expresses the central idea of the article?
 - A. People are still interested in Nipsey Hussle's music.
 - B. People admire Nipsey Hussle for his support of basketball.
 - C. People are creating murals to remember and honor Nipsey Hussle.
 - D. People are creating murals to show the role of music in the community.

2. Which piece of evidence reveals why people are creating the murals of Nipsey Hussle?
 - A. "The street artists who created the work said they want his legacy to grow and his entrepreneurial spirit to live on." (Paragraph 2)
 - B. "Fans poured out adoration for a man whose career hit new heights with Victory Lap, his first studio album that earned a Grammy nomination" (Paragraph 7)
 - C. "'Nipsey was an advocate and passionate (about) the game (of basketball),' said Ansom" (Paragraph 12)
 - D. "He painted a mural of Hussle in between other popular Los Angeles figures including Lakers player LeBron James and Snoop Dogg on the side of a clothing store." (Paragraph 14)

3. In paragraph 8, what does the author mean by saying that "paint was how they paid homage" to Nipsey Hussle?
 - A. People painted murals as a way to pay back Nipsey Hussle.
 - B. People painted murals to praise and honor Nipsey Hussle.
 - C. People painted murals to help sell Nipsey Hussle's music and clothing.
 - D. People painted murals as a way to raise money for Nipsey Hussle's charities.

4. What piece of evidence reveals that the "memorial in our court is somewhat of a gravesite"? (Paragraph 17)
 - A. "Mitchell shed tears while talking about Hussle's positive influence over her students at Crete Academy and the community." (Paragraph 16)
 - B. "She was not only taken aback by the mural at her school, but also by the many others around town." (Paragraph 16)
 - C. "'Most people are coming here to take photos with their family and etc.'" (Paragraph 17)
 - D. "'But I saw an individual who didn't have his phone out. He had his shoulders up, his head down.'" (Paragraph 17)

5. Summarize the article in 4-5 sentences.

Discussion Questions

Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. Do you think art is an effective way to honor someone's memory? Why?