

A Graffiti Glossary

ALL CITY

What a writer is considered to be when he/she is "up", but this term implies more status than being just "up". Many people can be "up", but only a select few could be considered "all city". Can also refer to a crew instead of just one writer.

BATTLE

This is done when two writers or two crews have some sort of disagreement. The battle can take two forms: skills battle or getting up - essentially quality vs. quantity. A skills battle is when two writers piece a wall within a certain time period (usually a day or a few hours) and whoever does the best piece is the winner. A getting-up battle is when the writers take a certain area of a city and whichever crew can get up the most in that area within a certain amount of time (say a week to a month), wins. For both kinds of battle, an outside crew or writer judges who is the winner. The terms of losing and winning are usually negotiated by the crews involved and can be payment in paint, pot, a sock in the jaw, the losing crew has to stop writing their name, etc., etc.

BEEF

Having a grudge with another street artist, writer or crew. Beef, in Graffiti, is very common, and can be spotted if a work of graffiti is lined, or crossed out, or even painted over with a tag.

BITE

To copy another writer's style. This is considered a no-no and is looked down upon, even though writers often borrow imagery from cartoons and comics.

BUFF

Any means employed by the transit authority to remove graffiti from trains. The more modern usage is when any graffiti is gone over or removed from any surface, not necessarily just from trains.

TO BUFF, BUFFED

to erase, erased.

DIS

To insult. Comes from "disrespect". Originally it was just a hip-hop/rap term but has found its way into the culture at large. Hey, even my mom says it! See "front".

FLY

Cool, same as "fresh". Early hip-hop term.

FRESH

New, cool, good. An early hip-hop term.

TO FRONT

To hassle someone, to want to fight. For example, "You frontin' on me?" Also a hip-hop/rap term. Probably comes from "confront".

GETTING UP

Originally, "getting up" meant to successfully hit a train. Now it means to hit up anything, anywhere, with any form of graffiti, from a tag all the way up to a wildstyle burner -- although the term implies the process of tagging repeatedly to spread your name. Tagging something once would be getting up, but would not make you an "up" writer.

HIT

To tag up any surface with paint or ink.

OLD SCHOOL

General term used to refer to the early days of writing, more specifically, the mid 70s to '82 or '83. Also may refer to hip-hop music of this period. Old-school writers are given respect for being there when it all started, and specific writers are remembered for creating specific styles. For example, Blade and Comet created blockbusters, Phase 2 created bubble letters, clouds, Skeme's "S", and so on.

MURAL

A large-scale type of piecing, done top to bottom on a wall; usually a large production involving one or two pieces and usually some form of characters.

PIECE

A graffiti painting, short for masterpiece. It's generally agreed that a painting must have at least three colors to be considered a piece.

TO PIECE

To paint graffiti, creating a piece, not just go out tagging.

PROPS

Respect, comes from "proper respect". From hip-hop/rap.

STICKERS

A form of tagging, most commonly saying "Hello, my name is". Can be anything from computer-generated, clear, generic blank stickers that have the writer's name on them to elaborate stickers with little pieces and characters. Some writers consider stickers to be for people who are "afraid" to use markers/paint, while other writers use a combination of stickers with markers and paint.

TAG

The most basic form of graffiti, a writer's signature with marker or spray paint. It is the writer's logo, his/her stylized personal signature. If a tag is long it is sometimes abbreviated to the first two letters or the first and last letter of the tag. Also may be ended with the suffixes "one", "ski", "rock", "em" and "er".

UP

Describes a writer whose work appears regularly everywhere and who is currently writing.

WRITER

Practitioner of the art of graffiti.