NEWS LESSON

# Can Art Bring New Life to a Crumbling Village?



## BEFORE YOU READ

### 1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. Would you live in a beautiful village with very few neighbours?
2. What makes a place feel alive beyond having visitors?
3. Can an arts event change how people see a town?

### 2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | **erosion** | ☐ | A | careful to avoid risk |
| 2 | **medieval** | ☐ | B | attention from newspapers, television and the internet |
| 3 | **picturesque** | ☐ | C | a small place where people live |
| 4 | **settlement** | ☐ | D | the slow wearing away of land by wind or water |
| 5 | **publicity** | ☐ | E | pretty in a way that looks good in a picture |
| 6 | **ambitious** | ☐ | F | needing a lot of effort and aiming for great success |
| 7 | **cautious** | ☐ | G | from the Middle Ages, a very long time ago |
| 8 | **reverse** | ☐ | H | to change something back, or make it go the other way |

## 3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

### A footbridge, a famous view and a crumbling cliff. Civita draws visitors all summer, but keeping people there through the winter is the harder problem.

1 Halfway across the footbridge to Civita di Bagnoregio, the village seems to float above the valley. Its medieval buildings attract cameras from every direction, but the dramatic view is also a warning. Erosion has been eating into the soft rock for centuries. The hilltop is not merely picturesque; it is unstable. Civita's nickname, the Dying Town, describes both the land falling away and the tiny community trying to remain on it.

2 The settlement dates back more than 2,500 years, yet only a handful of people now live permanently in its old centre. Tourism keeps businesses going, but it does not automatically restore the services, employment and ordinary routines that make year-round life possible. In summer, the bridge can be full. In winter, the difference between a successful attraction and a living village becomes much harder to ignore.

3 In October 2026, Civita and the nearby lakeside town of Bolsena received an unexpected opportunity. The two places were chosen together as Italy's Capital of Contemporary Art for 2028, beating other finalists including Capri, Padua and Pozzuoli. The winning project, called "Arte che viene, arte che va", will receive one million euros in public funding. Its organisers hope to develop exhibitions, creative spaces and programmes involving schools and young artists.

4 The decision is more ambitious than simply organising a festival for visitors. Supporters want contemporary art to become part of local life, connecting old buildings and landscapes with new ideas. If the programme attracts artists, students and cultural organisations, it could generate work and help businesses outside the main tourist season. Small communities can sometimes benefit more from steady activity than from occasional crowds.

5 There are reasons to be cautious, however. Tourism does not automatically reverse population decline. A village can become a popular place to visit while becoming too expensive or inconvenient for local people to live in. Civita also faces an unusually serious physical threat. The erosion of its hilltop requires engineering expertise, careful planning and long-term investment. Art cannot hold the ground together.

6 Still, the award changes the conversation. Instead of being known only as a beautiful place that may eventually disappear, Civita has a chance to become a centre for new cultural activity. The true test will come after 2028, when the exhibitions have ended and the publicity has died down. If the project helps people work, create and remain in the area, it may offer the village something more valuable than another successful tourist season.

Sources: Ministero della Cultura. Picture: AI illustration.

## 4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. The writer suggests that a busy summer does not prove Civita is a healthy community. T F NG
2. The text suggests that art can protect the hilltop from further erosion. T F NG
3. Organisers have already chosen the first artists to take part. T F NG
4. Capri, Padua and Pozzuoli all failed to win the 2028 title. T F NG
5. The writer expects the project's real success to be judged before 2028. T F NG

## 5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

| convert | decline | excessive | expertise | funding | generate | occasional | unstable |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

1. Engineers closed the path because the slope above it had become _____ .
2. Repairing an old stone wall takes specialist _____ that few builders have.
3. Festivals can _____ income for local shops, restaurants and hotels.
4. Many rural areas face a steady _____ in population as young people move to cities.
5. Without public _____ , the small theatre would have to close.
6. Visitors in winter are rare, and the _____ tourist usually leaves by lunchtime.

## 6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. By the time the engineers arrived, the rain _____ part of the path away. (WASH)
2. The summer festival _____ in the main square every year. (HOLD)
3. If the village had more jobs, fewer young people _____ . (LEAVE)
4. Since the festival was announced, local hotels _____ many more bookings. (RECEIVE)
5. The two towns _____ together in October 2026. (CHOOSE)

## 7 Language focus: phrasal verbs

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Check the form after the gap (-ing, -s or the base form). The small word that follows, such as into, away, back or down, tells you which verb to choose.

| dates | die | eating | falling | hold | spread | stand |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

1. Rising repair costs are slowly _____ into the village's budget.
2. The ground at the edge of the village is _____ away.
3. The oldest church in the town _____ back to the twelfth century.
4. When the summer crowds _____ down, most cafés close for the winter.
5. Engineers will need to _____ the hillside together.

SPEAK

## 8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. What would persuade younger people to stay in a small town?
2. Would you rather protect a place exactly as it is or let it change?
3. What should still be there after a big cultural festival ends?

## 9 Role-play: how to spend the money

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

**Student A · a neighbour who wants practical repairs**

Your small town has won 100,000 euros. You think the money should pay for a safer bridge and a better bus service. Explain why, and ask your neighbour two questions about their idea.

**Student B · a neighbour who wants an art festival**

Your small town has won 100,000 euros. You think the money should pay for an art festival that brings visitors and young people. Explain why, and ask your neighbour two questions about their idea.

**Useful phrases**

I'd rather spend the money on something people can use.

That's a fair point, but it won't last.

What would happen if nobody came?

I'm not sure that's the best idea.

We're not going to agree on everything.

Could we split the money between both plans?

**Afterwards, tell the class: how did you decide to spend the money, and was it a fair deal?**

ANSWER KEY

**2 Key words**

1 D · 2 G · 3 E · 4 C · 5 B · 6 F · 7 A · 8 H

**4 True, false or not given**

1 T · 2 F · 3 NG · 4 T · 5 F

**5 Vocabulary**

1 unstable · 2 expertise · 3 generate · 4 decline · 5 funding · 6 occasional

**6 Verb forms**

1 had washed · 2 is held · 3 would leave · 4 have received · 5 were chosen

**7 Language focus**

1 eating · 2 falling · 3 dates · 4 die · 5 hold

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