

INTRODUCING ART

Artist: Vincent van Gogh

1. Born March 30, 1853, died 1890. As an adult he wore a beard and had bright red hair.
2. Vincent was the oldest of six children, his father was a minister. His best friend was his brother Theo.
3. At 16 years old he worked as an art dealer. It was during this time that he fell in love, but became very withdrawn and sad when he was rejected. However he read constantly and visited many art museums.
4. He worked one year as a teacher, then he worked in a bookstore for a time. After that he decided to become a minister. Being a minister was not for him either. He worried too much about his people.
5. In his late 20s he realized that art was his work. Brother Theo helped him by supporting his efforts. Theo was an art dealer, he pretended to be selling Vincent's paintings, instead storing them in a garage. Theo felt strongly that his brother was a very gifted artist.
6. Vincent lived for a time with artist Paul Gauguin, in Arles, France, but they could not get along and often fought. It was during one of these arguments that Vincent took after Paul with a razor. When he realized what he was doing he went home and cut off his own ear. Legend has it that he then mailed his ear to his girl friend. Suggested Activity: Show where Arles, France is on a map.
7. Van Gogh's mental illness progressed, he checked himself into a hospital, however it did not help and he finally committed suicide.
8. Vincent van Gogh created 800 paintings and 900 drawings. He was a very prolific artist. He began by using very somber earth tones, but when he was introduced to the Impressionists the colors in his work became very bright and vibrant. Suggested Activity: What does prolific mean?

TITLE: "Starry Night"

1. What do you see in this painting?
2. What color did van Gogh use? Did he repeat colors?
3. Think about rhythm in music. The drums beat a repeating sound that helps to give the music rhythm. Do you think van Gogh's use of repeating colors helps give a visual rhythm to the painting?
4. What is perspective? Suggested answers: Depth, distance, or perspective is what makes a painting look like you can walk into it. The last definition may be worth having the class repeat it.
5. How has van Gogh created depth or distance in this painting?
There are several ways: **Overlapping**
Big is near, far is small.
Things high in the painting are far away, things lower are closer
6. Why is this painting called "Starry Night"? Is this the way the sky looks at night?
Suggested activity: Obtain a map of the night sky so that you can compare star placement. Astronomers have found that van Gogh's painting is accurate for the location and time of year he created "Starry Night". How would stars look through a powerful telescope?
7. How do you think van Gogh felt when he created this painting? Did the starry sky make him happy? What do you feel when you look at this painting? Is it peaceful, frightening, exciting?
8. What is the focal point of this painting? What purpose does the old tree stump perform in the work?
It directs your eye into the starry sky. The swirls of the stars bring you back to earth and around the eye goes.
9. Texture is the feel of things. Is this real texture? Visual texture? Why?
Can you see the brush strokes that created the stars, mountains, tree stump?
10. What shapes do you see?
11. If you were going to use words to describe how you feel when you look at this painting, what would they be? Develop a group vocabulary. The classroom teacher may want to use it for spelling, creative writing, etc. This is an excellent painting to begin a science lesson on astronomy.
12. Do you feel van Gogh's mental condition had anything to do with the way he painted?
13. Vincent van Gogh was a Post Impressionist artist. He was influenced by the Impressionists because he painted outdoors on site and he studied the effects of light on color. Tell the children about the Impressionist, perhaps show something of Monet's work, then ask them to make comparisons.