

## "Starry Night" - 1889

(Most of the second graders I presented to were familiar with the painting but did not know the name of the artist.)

- questions to lead discussion... (*list key concepts on the board*)
  - What do you see in the painting? (night sky, village, moon, stars)
  - Is the scene realistic or an artist's impression? What makes it look like an artist's rendition? (point out the short, thick brush strokes, thick paint, **texture**, dark outlines)
  - What colors do you see? (many shades of **blues, yellows, oranges...**)
  - Discuss color wheel and use of complimentary colors. Juxtaposing two **complimentary colors** next to each other heightens the intensity of the colors.
  - Discuss **movement** and how the artist creates motion with **swirling clouds**, radiating rings of yellow around the stars make the painting seem alive. leading the viewers eye around the whole painting.
  - What kind of **emotions** do you have about the painting? (peaceful, exciting, frightening...)
  - What do you think the mood of the artist who painted this was? (sad, happy, angry... leads to discussion of who Van Gogh was.)

## Vincent Van Gogh : 1853 - 1890

- Vincent Van Gogh was one of the most tragic artists who ever lived.
- He was born in Holland in 1853 and died in France in 1890 at a very young age. He was only 37.
- He was unfortunately a very sad man and had no idea how much joy his paintings would bring to people after he died.
- Although he didn't live very long, he painted over 800 paintings. And during his lifetime he sold only 1 or 2. People didn't learn to appreciate his art until after he was dead.
- As a young man he tried many different professions before becoming an artist. He worked in a bookstore, he tried teaching, he tried being a preacher working with the poor... but could never find happiness.
- At the age of 27, he decided to become an artist. He took some lessons but was mostly a self taught painter. Although he was a very sad, lonely man he did find joy in painting.
- In 1886 he moved to France to pursue his art career. His brother, Theo, lived there and he tried to help Vincent by introducing him to other artists. Unfortunately Vincent had a lot of problems getting along with people.
- He was a very sad, lonely man, who would often become very angry. We know about his extreme emotions by the many letters he wrote to his brother (over 700). The letters are now on display in Amsterdam, in the Van Gogh museum.
- He would often pour all of those strong emotions into his paintings, using strong brush strokes and intense colors. He often painted day and night without food and spent all his money on paint.
- Eventually he became so troubled that he committed himself to a mental institution. He continued to paint while in the asylum (over 200 paintings... including "Starry Night.")
- Sadly in 1890, at the age of 37, he ended his life.

Show YouTube video of Van Gogh slide show set to the lyrics of Don Mclean's song "Vincent"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZTHrTOZfqhg>

*project* : Create your own image of a "Starry Night" in the style of Vincent Van Gogh. I supplied blue and black construction paper for foreground and sky, foil star stickers and crescent moons, and oil pastels to create swirls and detail. I pre-cut the moon shapes, the students cut their own black foreground.



Mrs. Casey





# VanGogh Starry Night

This afternoon your child participated in an Art Appreciation lesson. We started by reading The Dot by Peter Reynolds, which shows anyone can be an artist. If they insist on signing all of their artwork, this is why.

Then we presented Vincent VanGogh's Starry Night. We talked a little about VanGogh's life and his style of painting.

Some ideas we discussed were:

1. During his life VanGogh was not considered a good artist by the art world and only sold one painting. Now his paintings are considered masterpieces and are worth many millions of dollars. So to go with this weeks theme of character we learned it is important to believe in yourself;
2. We talked briefly about Impressionism, post-Impressionism and Expressionism. VanGogh's paintings are usually thought of as post-Impressionism or sort of between Impressionism and Expressionism. Impressionism was the movement in the 1800s from painting realistic pictures to capturing the impression the subject and lighting made on the viewer. Expressionism is work that expresses the artist's feelings and blossomed at the end of the 1800s and early 1900s;
3. We talked about their science unit on motion and how VanGogh's paintings showed motion; he painted with dashes and lines;

Lastly each student created their own starry night with chalk and oil pastels on blue paper. They cut out black skylines for the shadowy forefront of the painting. It was amazing to see all of the creativity, detail and attention to the ideas we discussed.

We had a lot of fun, and we hope your children did too.

Sincerely,  
Your Art Appreciation Volunteers.