

PORTFOLIO COPY

BACKGROUND FOR ART PRESENTER

Vincent van Gogh (GO) (1853-1890)

Source: Teaching Guide for My Weekly Reader Art Gallery, 1966-67

Vincent van Gogh spent his childhood in Holland. He was one of six children; his father was a minister. As a young man Vincent wanted to help the poor. His family was happy when he decided to become a minister. Unfortunately, this job did not work out for him.

He did study to become a minister and worked among the poor. Vincent tried his best, but somehow he couldn't succeed, so when he was twenty-seven, unable to find work, he lost all hope of happiness.

Fortunately he decided to become an artist. He worked hard at his drawings; this time his hard work brought good results. His brother, Theo, especially encouraged him and believed in Vincent's artistic talent. For the first time in Vincent's life, he found contentment. His first paintings were dark pictures of the poor people he had once tried to help. Later he found more lively subjects to paint.

The shades of yellow, orange, and blue that van Gogh mixed and used seemed as bright as the sun itself. The artist would load his brush with paint. He moved the brush with strong, short, swirling strokes. Color and brush gave movement and excitement to a painting by van Gogh. His favorite subjects to paint were sunflowers, landscapes of southern France and portraits of himself and his neighbors.

During these years Vincent had one friend--his brother Theo. When the brothers were apart they wrote letters. Theo's letters brought Vincent kind advice and encouragement. Vincent had no money except an allowance that Theo sent him. Theo wasn't wealthy, but he loved his brother. Without Theo's help, van Gogh would have starved.

Vincent van Gogh produced many great paintings. Unhappily, his short career as an artist ended in tragedy. He died in the south of France at the age of thirty-seven. It was after his death that his fame grew. Today his paintings hang in great museums throughout the world. Recently, one of his paintings sold for 39 million dollars.

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ART PRESENTER PROGRAM

Artist's Bedroom at Arles

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Vincent van Gogh
Second Grade

The following is a letter from van Gogh to his brother Theo about this painting. You might want to read it to them as they look at the painting.

"This time it's simply my bedroom, only here color is to do everything, and giving by its simplification a grander style to things, is to be suggestive here of rest or of sleep in general. In a word, looking at the picture ought to rest the brain, or rather the imagination. The walls are pale violet. The floor is of red tiles. The wood of the bed and chairs is the yellow of fresh butter, the sheets and pillows very light greenish-citron. The coverlet scarlet. The window green. The toilet table orange, the basin blue. The doors lilac. And this is all--there is nothing in this room with its closed shutters. The broad lines of the furniture again must express inviolable rest. Portraits on the walls, and a mirror and a towel and some clothes. The frame--as there is no white in the picture--will be white."

1. What do you see in the painting?
2. Did the painter want this painting to look real? Could you sit on the chairs, the bed? Are details made simple or left out?
3. Does the artist use few or many colors? Do they look true to life?
4. Are the colors bright or dull?
5. Would you like your room to be in these colors?
6. How would the painting feel if you could touch it? (rough, he liked to apply paint thickly)
7. Does he use different textures or all the same?
8. Do the textures make you think you know what the objects feel like?
9. Are the lines sharp and clear? Thick, rough, or blurry? (clear outlines)

10. Would you say this room looks angry or quiet and peaceful?
11. What is the main basic shape in the painting? Square or rectangle? Does he repeat shapes? (yes)
12. Do the objects seem near or far away to you?
13. How does he show perspective? (near things are large, things farther away are smaller)
14. Could you change the title and still understand the painting as well?
15. Do you think the artist liked his room? Explain your opinion.

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Second Grade
Artist's Bedroom at Arles

van Gogh

MONMOUTH ART PRESENTER PROGRAM

EXTENDED ACTIVITIES

1. Self Portrait

Materials: paper, crayons, colored pencils

Van Gogh did many portraits, including his own self portrait. Draw your own portrait. Show how you feel, who you are, what you like.

2. Bedroom Scene

Materials: paper, pencils, crayons, colored pencils

Draw and then color your own bedroom. Show your bedroom as it really is, OR as you imagine it to be. Use the colors as desired to show your feelings. Let your strokes as you color show your feelings, as well.

3. Perspective Study

Materials: paper, pencils, crayons

Place some furniture in the middle of the room (table, chair, for example) Take a position somewhere around this. Keep that position as you draw what you see.

Squint

your eyes and pretend to look through a spyglass at the scene. Notice the angles of the lines and the comparative length of lines. This will give your drawing what we call perspective.

