

Sixth Grade
Vincent van Gogh

The Starry Night

Background Reading

Vincent van Gogh (go) was born on March 30, 1853, in the Netherlands, also known as Holland. For a quiet, serious child, life seemed gloomy, and he experienced problems in school. Eventually he worked in an art gallery, then studied to be a pastor for a while, and did some mission work. At the age of 27, he briefly studied art, but decided to just teach himself—by practicing and experimenting to develop his own style.

An artist's work can change over time. That happened to van Gogh. Eventually he began to use a variety of brushstrokes and brighter colors.

Although van Gogh painted over 900 paintings in just ten years, only one of them sold in his lifetime. He died at the young age of 37. His brother Theo, who was his closest friend, died six months later. Theo's wife dedicated herself to getting van Gogh's art the recognition it deserved. Van Gogh also wrote 800 letters, mainly to his brother.

Our painting today, *The Starry Night*, was painted while van Gogh was hospitalized. Usually he painted things that he had seen, but the idea for this painting came entirely from his imagination. *The Starry Night* is one of the most recognized pieces of art in the world.

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***The Starry Night*
Vincent van Gogh**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

ART PRESENTER PROGRAM

1. What is the first color that you see?
2. Van Gogh used color for effect. What effect does placing the dark and light side by side do for the overall painting?
3. Describe the town.
4. What appears to be in the background of the painting, behind the town?
5. Describe the object that is closest to the viewer. How did van Gogh make it seem closer?
6. The artist used broad strokes that appear to swirl throughout the painting. What effect does that have on the painting?
7. Remember that mood is a feeling. What mood do you think van Gogh was striving for in his painting?
8. If you had a copy of this painting to hang in your house, in what room would you hang it?

Portfolio Copy

Sixth Grade Vincent van Gogh *The Starry Night*

Extended Activity

Materials:

Heavier paper, such as card stock or construction paper
Blue, white, and black paint or chalk, or crayons

1. Create your own nighttime scene. Since van Gogh used a mixture of blues to depict the starry night sky, mix some shades of blue—white or black could be added to the blue. Experiment.

If you prefer, use chalk or crayons in place of paint.

Try brushstrokes going in several directions to create an effect like in
The Starry Night.

Add some background like hills or mountains.