VINCENT VAN GOGH

Lesson For Ages 8 - 9
Step 1 - Introducing the Master Artist: Slideshow Guide

MOTIVATION

BEGIN READING HERE

Do you have a brother or sister? If your brother or sister went away would you write to them? Would you like to receive letters from them? I want you to listen to a letter one brother wrote to another brother about 100 years ago in Holland. If you listen carefully you will find out the names of the two brothers and what kind of work each did.

Click Start Lesson To Begin

1. LETTER TO THEO (Written in Dutch)

   Play Audio

SCRIPT: “Dear Theo, I’m hoping this finds you happy and well, brother! Is Paris treating you well? I would think running an art gallery is fascinating work but very troublesome, too. I like to read in your letters about the different new artists you meet and their work. I am discouraged with my own paintings and think it’s time I try something new. I find I am unable to work as a minister after studying so long and hard. It’s too sad to see the suffering of the poor farmers and coal workers. I feel the need to escape! Could I come to Paris and live with you while I paint? I’ll anxiously await your answer. Your brother, Vincent.”

End Of Audio - continue reading

Can you tell me the names of the two brothers? (THEO AND VINCENT) What kind of work does Theo do in Paris? (RUNS AN ART GALLERY) What does Vincent do? (AN ARTIST / A MINISTER) How was Vincent feeling? (DISCOURAGED, LONELY)

Vincent Van Gogh wrote many, many letters to his brother Theo. They were good friends and loved each other very much. Because of Vincent’s many letters we know a lot about his private thoughts and feelings. Today we are going to learn all about Vincent Van Gogh by listening to his letters to his brother and by looking at his paintings.

Would you like to see a picture Van Gogh painted of himself? When an artists paints him/her self, it is called a SELF-PORTRAIT.

Click Next To Change Slide
2. SELF PORTRAIT

While you look at Vincent, listen to his letter to Theo about his self-portrait. He was in a hospital suffering from problems when he wrote this.

Play Audio

SCRIPT: "Dear Theo, The desire I have just now to make portraits is terribly intense. I am working on two portraits of myself at this time – for want of another model – because it is more than time that I did a little figure work. I am working like mad and feel a blind rage to work more than ever. And I believe that this will contribute to my recovery. Then I can leave this hospital and be with you again. Love from your brother, Vincent."

End Of Audio – continue reading

Do you think Vincent looks quite old in this portrait? (YES) Actually, he was only about 30 years old when he painted this. All the lines you see on his face are not wrinkles, they are his BRUSHSTROKES. That is how he applied color. He didn’t smoothly blend his brushstrokes but allowed them to be visible.

Do you see any colors in his face that are not normal skin colors? (YES) Vincent always placed great importance on showing feelings in his paintings. How would you describe how he was feeling here? (SAD, UNHAPPY, TIRED, LONELY, DISCOURAGED)

Let’s meet one of Vincent Van Gogh's friends.

3. PERE TANGUY (Tan-gee)

Here is Van Gogh's portrait of a good friend, Pere Tanguy, a paint salesman. Van Gogh traded his paintings for paints, brushes, and canvasses. He never had enough money for supplies. What do you see in the BACKGROUND behind this man? (ASIAN, CHINESE, JAPANESE LADIES) Van Gogh had a collection of Japanese prints for decoration in his home. Even though he was poor, he was able to buy them because they cost so little. Japanese art fascinated Van Gogh and he used some of the techniques in his own work.

If the Japanese scene is the background, what is in the FOREGROUND? (MAN) Look carefully around the figure of the man. What do you see as an OUTLINE? (A RED LINE AROUND THE MAN) Does that red outline seem to separate the man from the busy background? (YES) Do you see a lot of brushstrokes in the foreground? (YES) If you could touch Mr. Tanguy’s beard, how would it feel? (BRISTLY, STIFF) How would his hands feel? (ROUGH, RUGGED, WRINKLED) The words you just gave me to describe his beard and hands are TEXTURE words. Van Gogh used a lot of texture in his paintings. He
VINCENT VAN GOGH – AGES 8 – 9 | ONLINE EDITION

created texture with his use of color and his brushstrokes. Where else do you see texture in this painting? (SHIRT, HAT, COAT, FACE) Van Gogh lived in France. Let’s visit a café near his home. - Click Next To Change Slide

4. THE SIDEWALK CAFÉ AT NIGHT

SCRIPT: "Dear Theo, I have painted two canvasses: one is the ugliest thing I have ever done! I painted a café, first from the outside view, then from the inside view. The outside view is very different because it is a night scene without any black in it. I tried to make it inviting-looking with the yellow lights and the bright, hopeful stars shining down. But once you get inside, in the second canvas, I tried to show that the café is a place where one can ruin oneself, go mad, or commit a crime. I used red and green to show opposing sides of man. I also painted with other clashing colors to show no comfort can be found here. In all my paintings, the study of color is wonderful! I am anxious, dear brother, to hear what you think of my two paintings. I worked for three nights on them, and tried to sleep during the day. Work is destroying me. An artist needs to save himself and not give all he has to his work. I am weak and rather uneasy and frightened. I feel the need to see you Theo. Love, Vincent."

End Of Audio – Click Next To Change Slide

5. NIGHT CAFÉ

I don’t know what Theo thought of his paintings but let me hear what you have to say? Do you think that Van Gogh was successful at showing his feelings about the café? (YES) Is this a place you would like to go? Does it seem warm and inviting? (NO) Which of the two paintings do you think is the ugly one Van Gogh talked about? (THE INDOOR SCENE) Do you think his choice of colors helped him do this? (YES) Look again at his use of red and green next to each other. Do you see red and green in the yellow floor too?

Click Next To Change Slide

6. STARRY NIGHT

When you look up at a starlit sky does it make you feel peaceful? (YES) That’s how most artists show a starry sky. Not Vincent Van Gogh! He looked out his hospital window at the starry night and painted this exploding picture. He didn’t see peaceful, quiet stars. He felt the power of stars as great suns whirling in space. How does he show the motion and action of the sky? (SWIRLING BRUSHSTROKES, WAVES OF LINES, BRIGHTNESS IN NIGHT SKY) He painted SPIRALS in his exciting sky. A spiral is a circle that keeps on going around and around.

Do you see much texture? (YES) His swirling brushstrokes and thick paint created so much texture that your eyes never rest while looking at it. This painting was a favorite of
Vincent’s. Do you like it? It is one of his most popular and famous paintings throughout the world today.

Click Next To Change Slide

7. PEACH TREES IN BLOOM

Have you ever seen a large original oil painting up close in a museum? When you look at a slide of an original painting, it is hard to really see the true color, texture, and brush work. Many times the real painting is very large. In a museum you can stand up close and see all those things very clearly. It makes it so much prettier and interesting.

Lets pretend for a moment that you are in a museum. You walk into a room featuring paintings by Vincent Van Gogh and this painting, titled “Peach Trees in Bloom”, immediately catches your eye. Let’s walk up closer to see just how he applied the color and see the texture and the brushstrokes. Focus on the fence in the foreground. Ready?

Click Next To Change Slide

8. PEACH TREES IN BLOOM (close up)

Does this look different up close? (YES) Except for the fence, what do you see now? (THE PEACH TREES BLOSSOMING) Do you see more texture now that we have moved closer? (YES) Can you tell what is creating that texture? (THICK PAINT, UNBLENDED BRUSHSTROKES, USE OF COLOR)

Today we’ve met Vincent Van Gogh through his letters to his brother and by looking at his paintings. He painted for ten years but during that time he painted furiously and produced about 1,700 pieces of art. That amounts to nearly a picture every other day for ten years! Do you know how many of all those he was able to sell? Van Gogh sold only ONE painting during his lifetime! Would you like to see it?

Click Next To Change Slide

9. THE RED VINEYARD

These are farm workers picking grapes in a field. What colors jump out at you? (RED, YELLOW, ORANGE) These are the colors of autumn, when the grapes are harvested. Are they WARM or COOL COLORS? (WARM) Most of us notice WARM COLORS like red, yellow and orange first in a painting. They are exciting and bold. The COOL COLORS of blue, green and purple are calm, peaceful colors.
Lesson Finished
You have answered
10 out of 10 questions correctly

Did you enjoy learning about our Master Artist? Now it’s time to practice the techniques you will use in your art activity.

Click Next And Read Pierre’s Final Thoughts On Van Gogh
(to exit this unit click Back To Units)
Step 2 - Learning From: van Gogh’s Textures

Drawing Textures

When you draw texture on an object, you show how it would feel to touch that object. You make it more lively. Make the shapes below more lively by filling them with the texture beside each shape.
Spirals

A closed circle with lines surrounding it looks like a rock being dropped into the water.

These are called **concentric** circles.

Draw some **broken** circles around this dot.

A spiral with broken lines has movement.

Draw some **broken** lines around this spiral. Change your colors often.

Van Gogh used concentric circles and spirals to create the illusion of movement in his masterpieces. Think of these broken line spirals as you create your own “Starry Night”.
Building Texture Around Shapes

Vincent van Gogh often outlined shapes with color to make them seem alive.

Draw 2 to 3 different shapes in the box below. Make a series of outlines around your shapes. Outline each shape one at a time. Make your lines broken. Do this again and again until your outlines start bumping into one another. Then look for new shapes to outline. Continue to outline until you fill the frame.
Using Texture

Color this landscape with the textures provided.

Agricultural texture  Sky texture  Cypress Tree texture
The last few pages of this section contain the Art Activity for Vincent Van Gogh’s Starry Night. This step-by-step outline will be a guide for instructing your child(ren) through the activity.

The parent/teacher should review all steps necessary to complete this project before beginning any work.

Cut out the Artist Profile Slip below and attach it to the back.

Vincent van Gogh
(van-GOE) - Dutch (1853-1890)

The results of Van Gogh’s unhappy and tragic life are beautiful, expressive paintings of a world that did not accept or understand him.

**ART ACTIVITY EMPHASIS:** Texture  
**MEDIA:** Oil Pastel on black construction paper.

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Step 3 - Working With: Art Activity Instructions

ARTIST
Vincent Van Gogh (GOE)
(1853-1890) Dutch

ART ELEMENTS
Texture

MEDIA
Oil Pastels

EMPHASIS
Van Gogh’s strokes of colored texture

VOCABULARY
Texture, spiral, broken line, stroke, pressure Foreground, horizon line

VISUALS
Print: The Starry Night (page xxv)

SUGGESTED MUSIC
"Vincent" by Don McLean
or Music of the 1800’s

MATERIALS FOR INSTRUCTOR AND CHILDREN

One 9” x 12” black construction paper
One sheet of newsprint paper (preferably 9” x 12”)
One paper towel (for wiping fingers)
Artist Profile Slip (page 23)
One box of oil pastels (broken and peeled work best!)
Glue

PREPARATION

Place the Van Gogh print where it can be easily seen. Construct an example to become familiar with the procedure. Place your 9” x 12” black paper on your work space. Have your oil pastels close by.

SET-UP [ 5 minutes ]

Distribute the following materials to each child:

SUPPLIES: oil pastels
PAPER: One black 9" x 12" construction paper, one sheet of newsprint, one paper towel, and the artist profile slip.

ORIENTATION [ 5 minutes ]

Texture shows us how something would feel if we touched it. There is texture we can feel, and in art there is texture we can see called visual texture. Texture often adds interest and movement to a work of art. Do you remember the artist who used texture in this painting, The Starry Night? (VAN GOGH) How did he make the stars swirl through the sky? (WITH
TEXTURE AND BRUSH STROKES) Does Van Gogh’s use of texture make you feel it was a calm, still evening? (NO, CLEAR & WINDY) What kinds of colors did Van Gogh use to make it seem like night? (COOL AND DARK, WITH BRIGHT YELLOW STARS) Let’s use oil pastels to make a starry night just like Van Gogh’s.

DEMONSTRATION AND ACTIVITY

ORGANIZE YOUR WORK AREA  [ 3 minutes ]

1. Put your black paper horizontally in the middle of your work space.
2. Open your oil pastels, and put them beside the black paper.
3. Put your artist profile slip and paper towel in the top corner of your work area.
4. Put your newsprint on top of your black paper.

DRAWING WITH OIL PASTELS  [ 3 minutes ]

How are pastels different from crayons? (SOFTER, BRIGHTER, OIL-BASED INSTEAD OF WAXBASED, THEY SMELL OF OIL, THEY ARE MESSIER)
1. Roll up your sleeves.
2. Peeled and broken pastels will work the best.
3. After you use each pastel, put them back in the box, not on the work area. Put one color per row.
4. Wipe your fingers on your paper towel if your hands get messy.
5. When you are done put all the pastels flat in the box, one color per row, before you close the lid.

PRACTICING A BROKEN LINE SPIRAL  [ 7 minutes ]

Demonstrate the three lines, and let the children practice the lines on their newsprint. Children can choose any color pastel.
1. Let’s first try a circular line that connects and becomes a shape. What shape is it? (A CIRCLE) Is that a closed line or an open line? (CLOSED)
2. Now let’s try a line that starts at the center dot and circles out…What do we call this type of line? (A SPIRAL) Is it open or closed? (OPEN)
3. Let’s try a spiral starting out from the center. Each time we will make a short stroke and pick up our pastel, make a small space, and start again. Each time we will go around at least twice, and then change colors. Is this line open or closed? (OPEN. IT IS A BROKEN LINE SPIRAL)
4. What happens if we go around once and stop? (IT LOOKS CLOSED!)
***Now set your newsprint aside.
DRAWING THE CYPRESS TREE IN THE FOREGROUND
(Instructor should use a light pastel for visibility) [ 10 minutes ]

1. On your black paper, draw the Cypress tree in the foreground (or front) to one side or the other, not right in the middle.
2. Use a black oil pastel to quickly outline the tree. Let it be a free interesting shape like a flame. Start at the bottom of the page, DRAWING THE SPIRAL STAR IN THE TEXTURED SKY [ 15 minutes ] and stop 2-3 fingers' width from the top.
3. Fill your tree with short, wavy textural strokes of at least three different colors, saving blue for the sky.

DRAWING A HORIZON LINE OF HILLS [ 3 minutes]

(Instructor should demonstrate with a light pastel for visibility)
1. Using your black pastel, measure one hand’s width up from the bottom of the paper and put a small mark. We want to save lots of sky area for our starry night.
2. Using the black pastel, at the mark draw an interesting horizon line that looks like hills. Let your lines wave and curve. Remember to stop at the Cypress tree, imagine it through the tree, and continue horizontally across the paper. Have the students notice where the horizon line stops on either side of Van Gogh’s painting. On the left, it is a quarter of the way up. On the right, it is almost half way up.

DRAWING THE SPIRAL STARS IN THE TEXTURED SKY [ 15 minutes ]

1. Using a white or yellow pastel, put 3 to 5 dots in the sky. A tiny crescent-shaped moon can also be added. (Not too close together or too close to the edge of the paper, tree or hills.)
2. Use any color to begin.
3. Start a broken line spiraling out from your center dot or moon.
4. When you change colors go around at least twice to keep the spiral open. Save the light blue for the sky behind the stars.
5. Keep the lines close together.
6. Use lots of different colors and use lots of pressure to keep your colors very bright.
7. Work out to the edges of the paper and the line of the
hills.
8. When a line bumps into the line of the hills, another star pattern, or the edge of the paper, you need to jump, imagine how it would continue, and then start it again.
9. Fill the rest of the sky with short strokes of light and/or dark blue that swirl around and behind the star patterns.

DRAWING THE HILLS WITH ANOTHER TEXTURE TECHNIQUE [ 8 minutes ]

1. Fill the hills with groups of lines of the same color, going in the same direction in sections. **Discourage solid coloring.** It will look like a patchwork of fields from the air.
2. Every time you change colors, turn your lines in another direction.
3. Black lines between the colored lines add richness.

MOUNTING THE ARTIST PROFILE SLIP [ 2 minutes ]

(Profile slips for each artist are provided. They give a brief description of the artist, the technique, and the media used in the art activity. They should be mounted on the back of each art project after it is completed.)
1. Write your name on the front of the artist profile slip.
2. Using glue, mount the profile slip on the back of your artwork.
3. Encourage students to discuss their artwork with others, using this artist slip of information.

CONCLUSION

I see very beautiful starry nights! The stars are shimmering with your wonderful texture. Pick up your artwork and let’s make the stars shimmer even more **(Demonstrate slightly moving paper)**. What magnificent movement you have created with your colors and texture!

**THIS CONCLUDES THE Vincent Van Gogh UNIT.**